

A CASE STUDY OF:  
THE FORMAL MENTORSHIPS OF  
NOVICE PRINCIPALS IN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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Educational Leadership

(ABSTRACT)

There is increasing recognition of an impending shortage of educational leaders to fill vacant administrative positions. Consequently, interest in finding ways to support, guide, and retain novice principals has emerged. Mentoring is a popular and effective means of transferring knowledge from an experienced principal to a newly appointed one. Little attention, however, has been given to the process of formal administrative mentorships and how they can be shaped to meet the varied needs of new school principals. The purpose of this study was to explore the personal experiences of novice and veteran principals and the underpinnings of the formal administrative mentoring program in one local school district in Virginia. Seventeen principals were interviewed as participants in this case study. The study was implemented through the use of qualitative research methods of inquiry, including interviews with an administrator of the mentoring program, in-depth interviews with principals, and examination of available documents. This research presents the perspectives of both novice and veteran principals regarding the extent to which their formal mentoring experiences helped them.

The data that emerged from this study demonstrated that the formal administrative mentoring experience provided the participants with a greater clarity of role, developed their understanding of the organization, thus facilitating their socialization into it, and helped with diminishing their feelings of isolation. The participants reported that mentoring helped increase their understanding of three major roles of the contemporary principal: (a) instructional leader; (b) school visionary; and (c) team builder. According to the novices, mentors helped them learn how to integrate into the school system through interaction with their communities and how to negotiate their needs within the school division. Novice principals' responses reflected ambivalence about this particular area of their mentoring experience and the help it afforded, however; their responses appeared to be related to their years of experience and the positions they had previously held in the division. Mentees and mentors alike reported that mentoring helped reduce their feelings of isolation through the development of camaraderie with one another as well as a network of colleagues. Most of the participants in the study reflected overall positive perceptions related to their formal administrative mentoring experiences.

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Over the past 40 years the principalship has been the subject of a multitude of studies describing the principal as building manager, administrator, change agent, and instructional leader. The attributes examined over the years have been derived from the importance assigned to these roles. Recently, instructional leadership has risen to the forefront as one of the most important roles in education. Research has supported this perception by identifying the principal's leadership as crucial to effective schools (NAESP & NASSP, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1990).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment of educational administrators will increase 10% – 20% through 2005 (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000; Borja, 2001). Nearly 40% of the current principals are at or nearing retirement age (Muse & Thomas, 1991; Parkay & Currie, 1992; Olson, 1999). Therefore, pre-service and professional development programs to identify, groom, train, support, maintain, and retain the novice principal have become vital to school districts as they grapple with the task of filling positions with qualified administrators.

The proliferation of programs for administrator development has generated a need for understanding the various approaches and the manner in which they may affect the development of instructional leadership (Murphy, 1992; Rogus & Drury, 1988). In the field of adult learning, conditions have been

identified under which professional development programs are most likely to provide assistance. Such programs should involve participants in decisions about the program, encourage self-direction, show participants how to profit from previous experiences, and assist them in developing critical and reflective thinking skills. Transfer of knowledge to the job is more likely to occur if participants receive personal assistance with the application of learned skills (Playko & Daresh, 1993). Mentors, peer coaches, and informal support groups are means of assisting and supporting new principals (Ginty, 1995).

The concepts of the mentor and of mentoring relationships can be traced as far back as the descriptions used in Greek mythology. The notion of the mentor/guide was developed in Homer's Odyssey. Before leaving for the Trojan War, the King of Ithaca left behind his trusted companion, Mentor, to assume responsibility for his son, Telemachus. Odysseus charged Mentor with the task of guiding Telemachus and teaching him those things that would make him a ruler (Daresh, 1995). Homer outlined three requirements for Mentor. First, Mentor was requested to serve as a tutor within the context of his wider range of responsibilities for the care of Odysseus' household. Second, he was charged to function as a channel for guidance and wisdom coming from beyond and to serve as a "spiritual guide" and gatekeeper to a larger world. Third, Mentor was petitioned to serve as a companion in Telemachus' quest for his father during which Telemachus passes into adulthood. Thus, Mentor served as a counselor,

teacher, trusted advisor, friend, and father figure to Telemachus, offering encouragement, advice, and wisdom from the adult world.

As time has passed, the concept embodied in this literary description has evolved into the term “mentor” that is used today. Throughout history there are many examples of great mentoring pairs: Socrates and Plato; Aristotle and Alexander the Great; Freud and Jung; Medici and Michelangelo; and Haydn and Beethoven (Merriam, 1983).

In its most basic state, mentoring is about teaching, about transferring skills and knowledge, and about encouraging others to stretch their boundaries of understanding and perspective. Commonly held values and feelings of mutual respect create a bond between mentor and mentee. The exemplary mentor shares and provides experiences that stretch the novice’s skills. The knowledgeable mentor places the novice in challenging, sometimes difficult situations, to develop his mind and instincts. “Growth comes through challenges, and mentoring is about growing” (Mitchell, 1998, p.48).

### The Problem

School leadership has emerged as one of the keys to school improvement. As educators and boards of education examine new methods to improve the performance of their new administrators, mentor programs should be given strong consideration. The needs of principals are often overlooked in our efforts to meet the needs of students and teachers (Duke, 1988). In this study the role mentors play in the development of new principals was examined. Also

studied was the effect of the mentor program from the mentee's perspective. Key characteristics of administrative mentoring and support information (e.g., unwritten school system rules or "tricks of the trade") that mentors provided to new principals were identified, suggesting how the needs of new leaders can be met.

#### Research Question

One fundamental question guided the focus of the study: How do school administrators who have participated in a formal administrative mentoring program describe their experiences?

#### Principal Shortage

Supply and demand for school leaders is a complex issue. Public and professional demands for accountability are increasing the challenges of leadership; there is a need for talented leaders. Concerns exist today about an upcoming shortage of qualified principals. Many principals are nearing or reaching the age at which they could choose to retire, and there is evidence indicating a decline in the number of candidates for each position. As early as 1991 there were estimates that by the year 2000, between 50% and 60% of the current principals in the United States would reach the age of retirement (Muse & Thomas, 1991; Parkay & Currie, 1992; Olson, 1999). "The literature about potential administrator shortages is replete with alarms based upon estimates that as many as one-half of all public school principals are at retirement age" (NAESP & NASSP, 1998, p. 4).

The employment of educational administrators is expected to grow at about the same rate as the average for all occupations through the year 2005; this means a projected 10% – 20% increase. Many of the job openings for principal and assistant principal will likely result from the need to replace retiring administrators (NAESP & NASSP, 1998). A Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1993-94) reported that the average age of principals rose from 46.8 in 1987-88 to 47.7 in 1993-94, with 37.0% over age 50, 53.6% between ages 40 and 49, and only 9.5 % age 39 or under. Faced with the data from this report, it was not surprising that national groups such as the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and other reformers were calling for changes in principal recruitment and preparation in order to ameliorate potential shortages of high-quality candidates (NAESP & NASSP, 1998).

The National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP), in an effort to gather data about principal/administrative shortages, contracted with the Educational Research Association (ERA) in the fall of 1997 to conduct a study to focus on the experiences of school districts when hiring principals. The purpose of the study was to discern what superintendents perceived to be barriers that might discourage qualified people from applying.

The Gordon S. Black Corporation Telephone Research Center, an established supplier of consulting and market research services, was hired to

conduct the research. A telephone interview survey was developed to elicit responses from school district superintendents in order to begin informed discussions about the direction and content of future research.

The Black Corporation surveyed a random sample of superintendents in districts with enrollments of 300 students or more with at least one principal vacancy in the preceding year. Approximately 400 telephone calls were made. Three major areas were addressed through the survey. First, the researchers queried the level of difficulty that superintendents encountered in attracting qualified applicants for principal positions and their perceptions of barriers that might discourage qualified applicants. Qualified applicants were described as those who possessed leadership qualities above the necessary principal credential endorsement. The second area included questions surrounding issues of diversity and the availability of qualified women and minority applicants for principal positions. The last area addressed by the survey was the existence of programs in districts to develop candidates for the principalship and the existence of any formal induction opportunities for new principals.

Results of the Black Corporation's survey affirmed that the United States was facing a shortage. The report indicated that superintendents were not dissatisfied with the principals they had hired, but expressed concern about the number of available qualified candidates to fill future vacancies (NAESP & NASSP, 1998). Shortages of qualified principal candidates occurred among 52% of rural schools, 45% of suburban schools, and 47% of urban schools. The

shortages of qualified principal candidates occurred at all levels: elementary (47%), middle/junior high (55%), and high school (55%).

Paralleling the survey conducted by the Black Corporation, a study conducted for the Montana School Boards Association reported that 10 of the 67 superintendents who hired at least one principal in the past 3 years reported no problem in hiring people for those positions. Both superintendents and school board presidents, however, ranked the “candidate pool too small” as the number one problem. This was followed by “not well qualified applicants “ and applicants “not possessing the desired experience” as the major concerns (NAESP & NASSP, 2000).

Approximately one-fourth (27%) of the respondents in the Black Corporation’s survey reported having an aspiring principals’ program. Just under half, 46%, reported the existence of a formal induction or mentoring program for new principals; specifically, 54% of the urban districts, 48% of the suburban districts, and 45% of the rural districts indicated the existence of such a program for new principals. According to Riley (1999), Secretary of the United States Department of Education (DOE), “The principalship is a position that is absolutely critical to educational change and improvement” (NAESP & NASSP, 2000 p. 1). Continuing that thought, Riley stated that a good principal fosters excellence by creating the right climate for teaching and learning while an ineffective principal can thwart the progress. “It has been said that fishing for effective head

teachers/principals involves fishing for CARP (critical, analytic, and reflective principals)” (Kirkham, 1995, p. 82).

Mentoring, a practice that is increasingly popular among teachers, occurs when experienced educators work closely with new teachers, guiding them through their first year in the classroom. According to Klausmeier (1994), the need for mentoring is clear as new teachers arrive at their first teaching assignments, believing they are armed with all the information and skills necessary for dealing with discipline, with curriculum, and with student issues. Exposed to the realities of teaching, many of these new teachers become frustrated and stressed, and, consequently, choose to leave the profession. A successful and experienced teacher, acting as a mentor, can help the novice teacher avert this frustration.

Mentoring has been used to familiarize new teachers with their chosen profession. Mentors, usually master teachers, are assigned or volunteer to share their expertise with new teachers. Mentor teachers help to guide new teachers' cognitive understanding of the routines, of the school's expectations, and of their role in the classroom, thus facilitating their adjustment to and mastery of their job. Mentorship represents an expanded role for veteran teachers. Master teachers assigned as mentors function as caregivers who nurture and befriend beginning teachers, who help to improve the teaching performance of new teachers, who increase the retention rate of new teachers, and who positively affect their professional development (Klausmeier, 1994).



Today, mentoring is being adapted to the preparation and training of young professionals in many fields; more specifically, it is being practiced with school administrators. The value of first-year principals' learning the art and science of leadership by working with experienced principals has led to the incorporation of mentoring programs into school districts' ongoing support for new principals. Mentoring programs have become an important strategy to enhance the personal and professional development of beginning principals. Mentoring is one way that newcomers to the profession are prepared for their responsibilities (Daresh & Playko, 1991).

#### Guidance and Instruction

The literature provides many definitions for mentor because of the multiple contexts in which mentors are used. "Although a familiar concept, its application varies greatly and the definition as to what is meant by mentoring is equally varied. There is a sense in which mentoring is whatever the two people regard as appropriate" (Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1995, p. 5). Daresh and Playko (1992b) viewed mentoring as a process of bringing together experienced competent school administrators with beginning colleagues as a way to help them with the transition to the world of educational administration. Southworth (1995) suggested that "it's important to recognize at the outset that mentoring is not a neat, precise and self-contained activity; it can be all things to all people and therein lies both its strength and potential weakness" (p. 19).

Daresh (1995, 1997) promoted the concept of a mentoring relationship that is established for the purpose of professional guidance and instruction. Similarly, headteachers in England see a mentor as “a sympathetic, trusted colleague, or friend available to respond in confidence to the new heads by listening, observing, and offering support in a non-judgmental way” (Southworth, 1995, p.19). Mentoring also has been defined as a process of peer support with the intent of getting beyond anecdote and sympathy into development, with its main purposes being: (a) to provide support in managing the transition of new administrators into the principalship by reflecting on the transition and by providing an objective picture of the principal’s performance; (b) to provide insight into the complexities of the task of administration; and (c) to assist the new principal in evaluating the effect of the decisions he makes on the life of the school (Bolam et al., 1995).

Southworth (1995) believed mentoring requires interpersonal skills, describing it as “the art of listening without judging, enabling without guiding, exploring without directing. The art is the relationship” (Southworth, 1995, p. 20). Schein (1978) encapsulated the concept of mentor that is reflected in most of the literature. He described a mentor as “a master providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events which contribute knowledge and experience to the life of the protégé” (p. 3). For the purpose of this study, Schein’s definition of mentoring will be the accepted definition.

### Importance of Mentoring

Businesses, industry, corporations, institutions of higher learning, foundations, and schools now acknowledge the importance of mentoring as a component of personal and professional development, whether practiced formally or informally. Many companies have begun to formalize the process of mentoring, realizing its potential organizational value. These companies use the mentoring process as a means to assist in the induction phase of career and professional development of novices or new employees. Mentoring also is used in industry and is described as a method of helping people learn skills and procedures; it may originate from the concept of apprenticeship, where experienced craftspersons passed on their knowledge and skills to novices (Bolam et al., 1995).

Much of the empirical research on the value of mentoring comes from the business world. O'Dell (1990) pointed out that most studies in business documented that having a mentor is important to the career advancement of both men and women. A study reported in Harvard Business Review (Roche, 1979) was responsible for much of the excitement about mentoring. In this study, approximately 4000 top business executives (3876 men and 28 women) listed in the "Who's News" of the *Wall Street Journal* were surveyed about their involvement in a mentoring relationship. Roche reported that almost two-thirds (1250) of the business executives had a mentor. Additional findings of the study, which generated even more excitement, indicated that these same executives

earned more money at a younger age, were better educated, were more likely to follow a “career plan,” sponsored more mentees, reported being happier, and derived greater pleasure from their work and career. Collins and Scott (1978) conducted an interview on the mentor relationship with three successive chief executives of the Jewel Companies. When asked if he had noticed a difference among managers, those who were brought up with the sponsor approach and those who were not, Perkins, Chief Executive of the Jewel Companies, responded yes. He went on to say that he believed every manager must be a sponsor (mentor). The strength of Perkins’ belief that “everyone who makes it has a mentor” is illustrated in one of his responses:

I don’t know that anyone has ever succeeded in any business without having some unselfish sponsorship or mentorship, whatever it might have been called. Everyone who succeeds has had a mentor or mentors. We’ve all been helped. For some the help comes with more warmth than for others. (Collins & Scott, 1978, p. 100)

Other research showed that the mentor relationship was used widely in the work place and that it contributed to the success and satisfaction of employees (Gerstein, 1985). Mentoring brought numerous benefits to mentors, protégés, and businesses. Benefits to mentees included: increased self-esteem through involvement in developmental relationships that gave support to the protégé, increased knowledge, and clarity in career goals. Mentors benefited through the exchange of information that occurred with the protégé and through

the prestige of being involved in a mentor relationship. Formal mentoring benefited the organization in that junior executives were less likely to leave a position if they perceived a concern for their well being and for their career development. Acclimating individuals to the organization and company culture reduced frustration. Mentoring relationships increased communication networks within the organization, resulting in increased productivity and reduced turnover (Gaskill, 1993).

Formal and informal mentoring programs are credited with contributing to the success of both the employee and the business. Gaskill (1993), on one hand, stated that through the establishment of formal mentoring programs, career development and success can occur. On the other hand, Zey (1991) believed informal as well as formal mentor relationships were responsible for many corporate success stories. Gaskill suggested that despite success stories like those to which Zey (1991) referred, many companies and organizations turned to the formalized mentoring program because formal mentoring occurred more quickly. The time it took to establish the bond in informal mentoring (six months to a year) was reduced in the formalized mentoring process (Gaskill, 1993). Once the mentor and mentee were selected and matched, mentoring began immediately. A drawback to formalized mentoring has been the possibility that the mentor and mentee might not represent a good match. In this situation, participants were switched to other partners. Gaskill (1993) pointed out that

“these programs are not viewed as a replacement for informal, spontaneous mentoring relationships” (p. 158).

Most of the research in the areas of business and industry described mentoring, formal and informal, as a critical component of career development and success. Research also has indicated that formalized mentoring programs are on the rise in many businesses and industries

### Mandated Mentoring

Mentoring of headteachers in England began in a somewhat informal mentoring network that was called “sitting next to Nellie” (Caldwell & Carter, 1993). In this system the mentee was offered the opportunity to acquire general skills vicariously through chance observation and to acquire specific skills as demonstrated by the “Nellie.” Voicing concern that Nellie’s methods would be regarded as the only right way to do the job, the British Government dropped the “sitting next to Nellie” activity in 1992. In its place the British Government instituted a formal mentoring component.

Establishing a required formal mentoring component to support new heads was a developmental process that evolved over years. With the growing importance placed on mentoring in the United Kingdom, on September 1, 1995, the Headteacher’s Leadership and Management Programme (Headlamp) was conceived. Headlamp is a national program that seeks to improve the quality of school management. It is designed to support newly appointed headteachers in their first permanent headship (Bolam, et al., 1995). The purpose for moving to a

formal mentoring program was to train principals while they are performing their jobs (Caldwell & Carter, 1993). The mentors guide the learning of the new principals through discussions, observations, and reflection. Mentoring provides a personalized, hands-on approach and offers a structured framework in which the real issues facing school principals can be explored (Caldwell & Carter, 1993). Mentoring is not a prescriptive process, but instead offers a directed observation experience coupled with friendly support.

The direction taken by many American states parallels the path taken in England. Realizing what the English found to be true, some states have mandated a mentoring component for beginning administrators. Daresh and Playko (1992b) reported that California, Ohio, and North Carolina were among the first states to mandate a mentoring component for beginning educational administrators. Ohio and Colorado made strides in their administrator preparation programs by adopting a formal mentor component as a means of principal induction. Maine adopted legislation requiring mentoring or another formal support system as part of the ongoing recertification process for all school administrators. Recognizing the benefits of a formal mentoring process, the state of Oregon included a mentoring component in the third phase of its model for principal induction (Daresh & Playko, 1992b). Additional states are beginning to recognize the value of mentoring. More than 20 states, according to Daresh (1995), have mandated or planned to mandate mentoring components for all

beginning administrators engaged in induction programs; Daresh did not name all 20 states.

A commonality among all of the states with mandated mentoring programs is that experienced administrators who were successful in the educational field were identified to work with new administrators (Daresh & Playko, 1992b). How successful administrators were identified and selected, or what criteria were used to determine if they would make good mentors, was not explained.

Administrator mentoring programs are likely to become increasingly popular as they are viewed as a means to bring people on board as effective leaders (Daresh & Playko, 1993). Mentoring programs for school administrators offer many benefits that continue to provide help to mentees throughout their careers. Professional education is engaging in mentoring activities similar to those considered to be effective in management development for business and industry. The value ascribed to mentoring lies in the assumption that it helps new administrators learn their craft more completely.

#### Principal Preparedness

A prevalent theme in much of the literature seems to be that regardless of when in their career principals are appointed or of the programs responsible for certifying administrators, new principals are often lacking in the competencies judged critical to principal effectiveness (Daresh, 1995; Elsberry & Bishop, 1996). Lack of training and experience prior to accepting a position is one reason many new administrators struggle. As reported in a study by Anderson (1988), only 2%



of the elementary principals who graduated from university training programs stated they were adequately prepared for the position of principal. Many of the surveyed principals believed they received adequate theory training but did not feel sufficiently prepared in the areas of role clarification, organizational socialization, and the isolation of the position. According to Anderson, those areas, role clarification, organizational socialization, and overcoming isolation, are critical components in tracking the success or failure of the principal.

Daresh (1995) reported that research conducted on the needs, interests, and concerns of new administrators, regardless of the nation in which the research was conducted, yielded remarkably consistent findings. The findings suggested that beginning administrators express frustration over their lack of knowledge of basic technical and managerial skills. They experience difficulty becoming socialized to their new roles and responsibilities. Knowledge of personal values and ethical stance have been at the center of much of the research, leading to the conclusion that developing a vision and an appreciation of personal values and an ethical orientation are essential to new principals. Lending support to this premise were Davis and Wilson (1994) who believed that one of the most important aspects of principal preparedness was the development of self. Developing one's self encompasses a capacity to take risks, to listen to others, to be authentic in relationships, and to be aware of who one is as a person.

Other researchers discussed principal preparedness from the perspective of the role of principal as a manager and instructional leader. The principalship can be a tenuous, emotionally grueling position. Many times, novice principals try to be all things to all people and become frustrated and worn out from coping with the stress. Feelings of isolation and trying to appease everyone are common among first-year principals (Daresh, 1987). First-year principals struggle with management issues as they attempt to maintain the status quo. Balancing the role of leader and manager is difficult and tedious for newly appointed principals.

Endeavoring to provide more insight into the various stages experienced by six first-year principals, Ginty (1995) conducted a one-year qualitative study. The participants in the study consisted of two elementary principals, two middle school principals, and two high school principals. Ginty interviewed the principals on three separate occasions during the months of August, November, and June. He examined the kinds of changes first-time principals perceived themselves as facing, the strategies they employed in order to cope with the changes, and the ways in which they appraised their coping strategies.

Results of the study showed an overwhelming number of changes experienced by new principals. High levels of stress, anxiety, preoccupation with the job, and efforts to control the situation were depicted during the one-year transition period. New principals struggled to cope with these changes. They described modifications in their sense of self, health, economic status, work roles, routines, and professional and personal relationships. New principals felt

they needed to build a new support system with other administrators. Those with more experience as assistant principals experienced less difficulty in the transition period.

Hearne (1991) contended that the principalship was full of surprises. She said, "In retrospect, I learned that the principal who survives is the one who can ride the rapids of unexpected events" (p. 21). Hearne explained that as she looked back at the surprises she had overcome in her first year as principal, they were clustered in the areas of grappling with her role as principal, of understanding the school culture, and of the feelings of being alone. These three traits, role clarification, organizational socialization, and isolation emerged once again as critical in tracking the success or failure of a principal and in analyzing most pivotal points of the principalship.

### Role Clarification

A person is required to fill a number of roles and to possess a variety of skills when the multi-faceted and complex task of being a principal is assumed. Researchers discussed the issue of principal preparedness in terms of leadership skills or roles that the new principal must assume (Daresh, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1992a; Lyons, 1992; Rogus & Drury, 1988; Spradling, 1989). Although each viewed leadership and roles from a different perspective, underlying the differences was consensus on one fundamental premise: nothing will happen without leadership (Deal, 1990).

To understand better the complexity of the position a novice principal must be prepared to assume, Sergiovanni (1987) described six separate leadership roles that lay the framework for all major principalship tasks: statesperson; educational leader; supervisor; organizational leader; administrator; and team player, as explained in Table 1. These roles provide arenas within which the novice must develop the skills of growth and reflection.

### Organizational Socialization

Accompanying the frustration and anxiety they feel about their new position, brand new principals are faced also with learning the intricacies of their new surroundings. Hearne (1991) found that shaping a culture was one of the biggest stumbling blocks she faced. The new surroundings or culture provides many challenges for new principals. As the principal adjusts, gains greater responsibility, and learns the ropes, his or her adjustment to and interaction with the surroundings are made easier.

The importance of adjusting to a new culture is cited throughout the literature (Clark, 1995; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Deal, 1990). Culture can be responsible for shaping the interactions of people in a variety of ways: structure, belief systems, productivity levels, and values. New principals need specific organizational information that will allow them to be successful when they deal with adjusting to a new culture or shaping and changing a school culture.

Table 1

Six Major Leadership Roles of Principals

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Roles	Description
Statesperson	Shapes broad policies on behalf of the general welfare of the organization
Educational- Leader	Develops the instructional program
Supervisor	Works individually with groups of teachers to gain and establish commitment to school goals; may fill the role of facilitator in the areas of staff development and supervision
Organizational Leader	Seeks to ensure the school purposes, objectives, work requirements that determine the organizational structure patterns
Administrator	Provides the framework which allows teachers to devote needed time and energy to teaching and learning
Team Player	Establishes trust and support among teachers and between teachers and administrators to enable them to work in tandem to build an effective school

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Note. From The Principalship a Reflective Practice Perspective, by T. J.

Sergiovanni, 1987, pp. 16-17. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

### Isolation of the Position

A drawback of being a principal is the isolation one feels in the position (Anderson, 1988; Daresh, 1987; Rogus & Drury, 1988). Anderson and Daresh found that the isolation of the principal often could lead to mistakes with consequences that may not surface until weeks or even months later. Daresh and Playko (1992b) suggested that districts and universities address the feelings of isolation that principals experience. Among their suggestions, they recommended monthly principal meetings, survival training on the induction of the principal, job coaching, and assigning a mentor.

Many administrators participate in a variety of programs (e.g., principal preparation programs, induction programs, and district in-service programs) to help equip them with training, with skills, and with knowledge in preparation for their first principal position. “The principalship is in a precarious position” (Lauder; 2000, p. 23). It is becoming increasingly difficult for school districts to persuade teacher-leaders to consider or prepare for the principalship. Anderson (1988) argued that principal preparation programs provide adequate training in the skills necessary to understand the leadership theories. He suggested that in some sense it was the responsibility of the administrator to acquire the remaining managerial skills on the job. An opposing view is that the academic training for the principalship is well grounded in theory but lacking in practice (Daresh, 1997; Elsberry & Bishop, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1987). Hearne (1991) described her academic preparation as giving her the ability to intellectualize about events.

Public demand for increased expertise, coupled with disappointments in traditional and theory-based programs, is producing new and redesigned principal preparation programs (Borja, 2001; Lauder, 2000). NAESP and NASSP (2000) summarized interviews with current and past principals. In commenting about the strengths and weaknesses in their own preparation for the principalship, “good on-the-job-training under a fine mentoring principal” was identified as a strong plus. Identified as a minus was academic training that was “too theoretical,” and that did not help principals easily make connections between theory and what they would be expected to do on the job. Principals who had opportunities for real-world application of theory while still being supported by university faculty or by practicing administrators felt they were provided with the experience needed to make connections between theory and practice.

### Mentoring Principals

The Management Profile Program is one program through which new principals are assigned mentors. The Texas A & M University Principal’s Center developed this integrated professional development model, which is loosely based on a mentoring program used in the College of Business Administration, also at Texas A & M (Wilmore, 1995). The program begins with an open-ended extensive videotaped interview of the new principal. The interview results are compiled into a confidential report that diagnoses the new principal’s strengths as well as areas that need to be further developed. Once the new principal is given

this report, he or she may work with the assessors to create a professional development plan for the next three years. After the plan is developed, the new principal is encouraged to select a mentor who will work with him on the plan. The new principal is encouraged to select a principal who has participated in management profiling. Principals selected as mentors have the option of declining the request to serve as a mentor. Mentors and mentees work together without intervention from the central office. They communicate through periodic phone calls and regular meetings, with the mentor giving advice, acting as cheerleader or coach, and serving as a confidant. This model is a structured, time-consuming program that strives to encourage new principals to meet their goals (Wilmore, 1995).

A collaborative program developed for new principals (those with one to three years on the job) by the Elementary and Middle School Principals Association of Connecticut and the Connecticut Association of Schools uses an on-line mentoring program. Prospective mentors are provided with a short course on mentoring and then each individual is paired with a new principal. The primary means of communication is expected to be e-mail, but phone calls and face-to-face meetings are also expected and encouraged. Although this appears to be an innovative program, no mention is made of the criteria used for selecting mentors and no information is given regarding the effectiveness or results of the program (National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP) & National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP), 2000).



Mentoring is not a neat, precise, self-contained activity. It has many purposes and it may be used in a variety of settings. A mentoring relationship established for the purpose of professional guidance and instruction may enhance the adjustment and transition of first-year principals during their initial year on the job. As formalized mentoring programs are established in school districts, research is needed to assess program effectiveness.

#### Intent and Focus of This Study

Relatively little research has focused on mentoring programs for administrators. Understandably, then, we know little of the program characteristics that impact positively on entry-year principals' behavior. The intent of this inquiry is to add to that knowledge base through a descriptive case study. A fundamental question framed the focus of the study: How do school administrators who have participated in a formal mentoring program describe their experiences? A conceptual framework drawn from the research literature examines how these experiences have increased novice principals' role clarification and organizational socialization, and decreased their feelings of isolation.

#### Significance of the Study

This study was designed to increase the knowledge base on entry-year mentoring programs for new principals. The resulting descriptive data provide insights that might inform mentoring programs beneficial to first-year administrators participating in similar district-based programs. As Daresh and

Playko (1992a) suggested, an effective entry-year program for administrators can and should be built on a solid research base.

Research on first-year principal induction reveals that their specific needs and problems many times receive short shrift in pre-service training and in on-the-job orientation (Spradling, 1989). Studies conducted on the needs of new principals identified several issues that concerned them during their transition to the principalship. Personal issues with which novice principals struggled were their sense of self, their health, and their economic status. Some work related-issues with which novice principals struggled were understanding their new work role, shifts in their workplace relationships, learning the system, and feelings of aloneness. Beginning principals found they had to build a new support system. Emerging from this information was the premise that new principals need support and a greater opportunity to develop collegial relationships (Daresh, 1997; Ginty, 1995).

Mentoring programs have been widely used by business and industry and are now being used by educational institutions. The business world has for decades experienced great success in using these programs to develop and enhance the performance and careers of their employees, both mentors and mentees. Over the last 10 years, school districts, likewise, have successfully used mentor programs as another mechanism to improve the teaching performance of beginning teachers. Drawing on the experience of private industry and beginning teacher programs with mentoring, it seems reasonable to

conclude that novice principals also could benefit from such an approach (Daresh & Playko, 1991, 1992b). As current principals near retirement age and are replaced with younger, less experienced administrators who are new to the principalship, a viable method such as a formal mentoring program for transferring knowledge and supporting the novice principal may prove to be an effective induction tool for school districts (Jacobson, 1996).

### Limitations

The findings and conclusions developed in this qualitative case study were based on the in-depth interviews of 17 novice and veteran principals in one large suburban school district in Virginia. Consistent with case study methodology, rich descriptions were used to assist the readers in determining the extent to which the study contained similar elements that matched their own particular situations and circumstances (Merriam, 1998). Ultimately, however, it will be up to the reader to determine the transferability of the study's findings and conclusions.

### Overview of the Dissertation

In a political environment of accountability for public school administrators and in an era in, which there is an increasing number of principals eligible to retire, school divisions are seeking effective ways to attract qualified individuals to and retain them in principalships. Formal mentoring programs are being touted in the literature as one method to assist novice principals through the sometimes-difficult transition to administration. In view of the role formal mentoring programs might play in retaining qualified novice principals, it seemed apparent that

exploring the participant experiences in such a program would provide meaningful information to public school divisions that support such programs and to those divisions that are considering implementing such programs.

With this in mind, I constructed a qualitative case study that sought to capture the experiences of novice and veteran principals who participated in a formal administrative mentoring program. It examined whether the formal mentoring experiences of these individuals comported with a conceptual model, derived from the current research literature on mentoring and that suggested such a program would assist novice principals with role clarification, with organizational socialization, and with diminished feelings of isolation. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis, and were categorized by what the experiences revealed when disaggregated independently by me and another individual familiar with educational administration and mentoring.

The nature and the results of the study are described in the five chapters of this report. The first chapter acquaints the reader with the problem under study, the context in which the problem exists, and the significance of the study to the field of educational leadership. Chapter 2 reviews the research literature pertinent to mentoring and to formal mentoring programs. It is from this body of work that I developed a conceptual model that illustrate the domains of a formal mentoring program and how they combine to contribute to positive mentoring experiences for both novice and veteran principals in the three areas that the research literature describe as problematic to school administrators. This model,

as well as the research design and methodology, are described in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 provides details about the setting, the selection of the participants for the study, and the interview procedures and protocols. The chapter also discusses my data analysis by way of categories that emerged through sorting and resorting representative pieces of interviews and documents and addresses the credibility of my approach and the validity of data categories by the use of a peer to categorize the data independently. Lastly, the chapter makes clear how I intend to write the qualitative narrative.

Chapter 4 is preceded by a prologue that provides the reader with a brief description of the participants and their schools, and a description of the formal administrative mentoring program. Chapter 4 provides a description of the formal mentoring program under study, the results of my data analysis, including any discrepancies between my data categories and those of my peer and how we resolved those discrepancies. The chapter also includes a revised conceptual model that emerged as a result of the data analysis.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents my conclusions from the study, with implications for formal mentoring program practices. This is followed by recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The intent of this chapter is to review the literature that has been written over the past 15 years on the concept of mentoring and its relevance to new school administrators. First is a discussion of the research that explored induction of new principals into school administration. This is followed by what the research has uncovered about the developmental elements that are necessary to good mentoring relationships, the characteristics of effective mentors, and the roles of mentors and mentees within those relationships. The third component of the literature under review in this chapter is the examination of a variety of formal mentoring program models that are touted by their advocates as integrating the identified characteristics of good mentoring programs and of effective mentoring relationships. This section also includes a discussion of the benefits of formal mentoring programs to both novice and veteran principals.

The review of literature was accomplished by obtaining a variety of articles in trade and research journals, dissertations, and conference papers through accessing the Virginia Tech library on-line databases. These include the Virginia Tech electronic theses and dissertation (ETD) database, Education Full Text, and ERIC. Other sources of research literature and commentary include scholarly books on the subjects of mentoring, of educational leadership, of the principalship, and of stages of human development.

The most productive key terms I used for searching the databases and the library's electronic catalogue were *mentoring*, *mentors*, *mentoring programs*, and *principal preparation programs*.

The literature I selected to include in Chapter 2 is a comprehensive list of resources that was particularly helpful in evaluating the thoroughness of my search. This body of literature provided me with the necessary foundation, and the pertinent information needed to develop my case study and to complete this inquiry.

#### Focus on the Principal

Daresh (1986) suggested that principals are a vital component of productive schools and that principals' day-to-day management behavior can greatly inhibit or enhance the principals' ability to effect change in the organization. "There is a significant amount of evidence that suggests that the role of the principal is such an important one in terms of its impact on school effectiveness that it merits careful and continuous analysis" (Daresh, 1987, p. 2).

The shortage of quality candidates combines with the recognition of the importance of effective leadership to bring focus on the first-year principal (Anderson, 1991; Daresh, 1986, 1987; Holcomb, 1990). In the past, new elementary school principals were hired with very little prior experience and were given even less guidance after being appointed (Holcomb, 1990). In order to retain novice administrators, school districts need to understand the difficulties

that new principals face and the support they need to increase their effectiveness and to find career satisfaction.

The abundant research on the role of the effective principal has motivated some districts and states to provide a form of assistance and support to beginning principals during their period of induction. Induction is defined by Rogus and Drury (1988) as a process for developing among new members of an occupation the knowledge skills, attitudes, and values essential to carrying out their roles effectively. A major aim of induction programs is to help new members internalize their role, thus providing them with a greater understanding of their role and responsibilities. As Duke (1988) suggested, the first weeks and months of the principalship are critical to the process of shaping these school leaders. Administrator induction programs are being developed by many school districts as the mechanisms for assisting and supporting beginning principals.

There are no prescribed standards for designing administrator induction programs, but researchers have recommended goals and purposes for such programs. Daresh and Playko (1992a) identified three possible goals to guide the development of an administrator induction program: (a) the socialization of newcomers, which enables them to learn about the norms and cultures of the new school setting; (b) the orientation of newcomers with information concerning local policies, practices, procedures, and expectations; and (c) the remediation of earlier training that was provided to an organization's newcomers. Of the three goals, organizational socialization may be the most critical. Organizational



socialization is defined as the process by which new administrators learn to function in a particular organizational (school and district) context (Duke, 1988). A good induction program for administrators must also take into account varying individual needs, as well as organizational priorities (Daresh & Playko, 1992a). Rogus and Drury (1988) recognized this concept when they stated that beginning administrator induction programs differ in their purpose for the participants and for the school district. They suggested that the program goals for school districts include:

Improving beginning school administrators' performance, increasing the retention rate of beginning administrators, and developing an *esprit de corps* among administrative staff. For participants, induction programs should offer the potential for strengthening administrative performance (p. 12).

A specific outcome for the induction program is the ability of beginning administrators to demonstrate an understanding of the system's expectations, procedures, and resources. New administrators should demonstrate increased competence and comfort in addressing building or unit outcomes or concerns. An induction program should enhance new administrators' personal and professional growth, and should assist them in developing a support system. Induction programs should provide new administrators with personalized assistance in coping with building problems and provide formative feedback and assistance toward strengthening their administrative performance (Daresh &

Playko, 1992a). Daresh & Playko indicate that to implement an effective induction program, it is necessary to understand and incorporate a focus on these elements. Although implementation should involve several strategies, they note that mentoring must be one of those strategies.

According to research on beginning administrators, there is a consistent set of themes that have implications for the ways in which individuals might be better prepared to take on leadership roles in schools (Daresh & Playko, 1992a). Researchers have identified specific features that must be imbedded in induction programs if they are to be effective. An effective induction program is based on and oriented toward clearly stated, well-articulated, and generally understood expectations and norms. Comprehensive activities should be designed to orient new administrators to the characteristics of their particular school system. Techniques upon which induction programs should rely include: demonstration, coaching, reflective activities, intensive supervision, and frequent, specific accurate feedback provided to the new administrator. Mentor systems designed specifically for the needs of beginning school administrators are critical components of successful induction programs (Anderson, 1988; Daresh & Playko, 1992b; Schlechty, 1985).

#### Induction Practices

The Alabama Leadership in Education Administration (LEAD) Academy (1992) indicated that: (a) first-year principals frequently experienced pressure and feelings of uncertainty that affected their performance and success; (b) new

principals needed training in essential leadership and management skills; and (c) new principals required support through collegial relationships with experienced, successful administrators to facilitate their transition into their new role. LEAD'S position was the catalyst for a study conducted by Elsberry and Bishop (1993).

Elsberry and Bishop (1993) launched a quantitative study to examine first-year principal induction practices in elementary schools across three states: Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina. These researchers specifically examined first-year principals' perceptions regarding administrative responsibilities they deemed necessary to be included in induction programs, as well as their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of various induction practices.

Elsberry and Bishop (1993) used information from the Department of Education and LEAD academies in three states to identify the population of first-year elementary principals: 71 in Alabama, 80 in Mississippi, and 31 in South Carolina for a total of 182. They mailed surveys to 145 these first-year principals and received 127 responses, yielding a response rate of 88%. Elsberry and Bishop did not explain why they mailed only 145 surveys when the population numbered 182. Of the 127 returned responses only 112 were usable, 41 (37%) from Alabama, 48 (43%) from Mississippi, and 23 (20%) from South Carolina.

A majority of the new principals were between the ages of 41 and 50 and most had more than 16 years experience in education, with none having fewer than 6 years of experience. Elsberry and Bishop (1993) surmised that the

assistant principalship was a training ground for the principalship, basing this conclusion on reported data that 69% of the participants had served in this capacity. They noted, however, that 31% of the principals had not served in the capacity of an assistant principal and, thus, had not been afforded the same training experience. The years spent as an assistant principal provide a new principal with some foundation for understanding the role of principal. Having a base of administrative experience equips the new principal with knowledge, experiences, and tools upon which he or she may draw. New principals who have no prior administrative experience may have greater transitioning difficulty than their practiced counterparts. Elsberry and Bishop inferred, therefore, that there is a need for the active support of a new principal in the first year.

Of particular interest were the induction practices first-year elementary principals believed most effectively met their needs as new administrators. The practice considered most effective was that of pairing or mentoring new principals with veteran principals in their school district. This affirmed conclusions drawn by Anderson (1991) who found that new principals believed a component needed in the induction or transition phase during the first year was the pairing with an experienced administrator who could assist them with “learning the ropes” (p. 5).

Elsberry and Bishop (1993) noted, however, that induction for beginning principals was often poorly planned or non-existent and that there was a paucity of research on the induction needs of first-year administrators. Daresh (1995)

supported this premise by stating that studies of beginning administrators were rare.

The Illinois State Board of Education conducted a study through the Illinois Principals Academy (Ashby, 1991), in which the primary objective was determining whether or not mentors affected principals' behavior. Some of the initial reports listed changes in five identifiable leadership roles: (1) defining a mission, (2) managing curriculum, (3) supervising teachers, (4) monitoring student progress, and (5) promoting instructional leaders. The role of "defining a mission" was a common category listed in participants' evaluations. Time spent defining a mission and setting goals decreased with those who had mentors versus those whom did not. Some mentees credited their ability to learn and ultimately shape their school culture to the mentors who acted as sounding boards during the change process.

Further research provided the State of Illinois with information that resulted in improvements to its program. Improvements that reflected findings from the research included changing how mentors were paired, increasing the frequency of contacts between mentor and mentee, and including a counseling component. The results of improvements made to the program manifested themselves in several ways. First, reform efforts were strengthened through collaboration. Second, mentors reported experiencing a feeling of career renewal. Finally, participants believed they gained a great deal of knowledge from the experience (Ashby, 1991).

The literature supports the premise that new principals experience a myriad of changes both professionally and personally as they assume their first principalship. School systems can no longer rely upon traditional theory-based methods that may be divorced from the practicalities of the job in preparing beginning principals to become effective school leaders. Duke (1992) has suggested that while knowledge derived from research and theory may be of value to the experienced principal, it does not meet the needs of the new principal. Good on-the-job training under a mentoring principal or being paired with a mentoring principal appears to be one method that eases the frustrations that new principals experience and helps to facilitate the first-year transition period. Specific, ongoing programs must be in place for those aspiring and beginning school principals to reach their potential and be effective leaders in their schools (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

#### Developmental Models of Mentoring

The mentor relationship is critical for the emotional and professional development of young adults (Levinson, 1978). Characteristics found in the parent-child relationship and in peer support exist in the mentor relationship. Mentoring is an intense commitment lasting anywhere from 2 to 10 years. Levinson suggested that the mentor relationship is one of the most complex and developmentally important relationships a person can have in early adulthood. He noted several functions performed by the mentor that define the significance of the relationship: (a) acting as a teacher to enhance the mentee's skills and

intellectual development; (b) serving as a sponsor to influence and facilitate the mentee's entry and advancement; (c) serving as a host and guide, to welcome the initiate into a new occupational and social world to acquaint him with its values, customs, resources, and cast of characters; (d) serving as an example through his own virtues, achievements, and way of life so that the mentee might emulate the mentor; and (e) providing counsel and moral support in times of stress. Levinson concluded that developmentally the mentor's most crucial function is to support and to facilitate the realization of the mentee's dream.

Several researchers have identified developmental models of mentor-mentee relationships that characterize the mentoring process. Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) suggested that mentoring relationships are rare, complex, and characterized by stages. Several of the models suggest that mentoring is a series of phases or stages (Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978). The timing of the relationship and the stages must parallel the career stages of the mentor and mentee.

Kram (1983) believed the mentoring process passes through four phases. She described the four phases as initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. The initiation stage lasts for a period of six months to one year and is the time in which the relationship begins and becomes meaningful, with the mentor providing coaching, challenging work, and visibility. The cultivation stage has a span of two to five years, during which time the relationship expands and may reach its peak. During this stage, mutual benefit to the mentor and mentee

may be experienced through growth and satisfaction. A bond is developed while the mentee learns the ropes of organizational life. Kram described the separation stage as a significant change in the structural role of the relationship or an emotional experience in the relationship. Both individuals reassess the value of their relationship. In this stage, the mentor and mentee end the relationship because it is no longer needed. Redefinition, the final stage of the mentor-mentee relationship, occurs after a period of separation in the relationship. After the separation, the relationship is reestablished with significant changes and becomes one of friendship and collegiality.

Four major functions inherent in the mentor relationship are referred to as the four-tier hierarchy of mentoring (Zey, 1988). The mentor teaches the mentee by providing instruction in organizational skills, in management (tricks of the trade), and in key lessons in organizational survival. As a counselor, the mentor provides support to the mentee through “pep talks”, listening, and reflecting, thus building confidence and enhancing a sense of self. The mentor as an intervener intercedes and intervenes on behalf of the mentee when needed. As a sponsor, the mentor promotes the mentee or influences key players to promote the mentee. Zey suggested that the mentor may provide some or all of the functions during the relationship.

Traditionally, the relationship between mentor and mentee has been an informal process. It is often a chance relationship that evolves from the sharing of common goals and interests. The mentor enters a person’s life at a stage when



an impending change is about to occur, helps the person through the change and then departs, or cultivates a lasting friendship (Fleming, 1991).

Both Levinson (1978) and Kram (1983) noted that lasting friendships have been reported as a result of a full four-stage mentor relationship. No matter how the phases of mentoring are described, “healthy mentor/mentee relationships involve a progression from relative mentee dependence at the beginning of the relationship to autonomy and self-reliance as the mentee grows into a colleague and a peer” (Kram 1983, p. 12). Research suggests that certain stages characterize each mentoring relationship and that comprehensiveness and mutuality characterize effective relationships.

Researchers have identified a variety of mentoring functions and roles (Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978; Zey, 1988). Kram (1985) suggested two broad categories of functions for the mentor: psychosocial and career development. She described as psychosocial those aspects of the relationship that enhance a sense of competence and effectiveness in a professional role. Career functions are those aspects of the relationship that enhance learning the ropes and preparing for career advancement in the organization. Examples of some of these functions are: (a) nominating the mentee for lateral moves and promotions (sponsorship); (b) introducing the mentee to corporate culture, its politics and key players, providing exposure and visibility for the mentee, sharing ideas, and providing feedback; (c) coaching by suggesting work management strategies

and; (d) acting on behalf of the mentee to reduce risk that might threaten the mentee's reputation.

Kram (1985) suggested that the more functions the mentor provides the more benefits that will accrue to the mentee. Her research concluded that mentors enhance the career of their mentees by the functions they perform on behalf of the mentee.

### Strengths of the Mentoring Relationship

Research has focused not only on product effects of mentoring but also on the benefits of the mentor-mentee relationship. The mentor relationship is believed to be beneficial to the mentor and the organization as well as the mentee.

A positive mentor mentee relationship benefits the organization by developing a pool of young, talented professionals. Five benefits that the organization derives from the mentoring experience are: (a) integrating the individual into the organization, (b) reducing turnover, (c) improving communication, (d) accelerating management development, and (e) developing an ability to mobilize people and resources (Zey, 1988).

A positive mentor relationship can enhance the career development of the mentor as well as the mentee (Kram, 1985; Zey, 1988). Zey cited four benefits to the mentor as a result of the mentoring experience: (a) potential enhancement of the mentor's upward movement within the organization; (b) the possibility of an opportunity for open communication regarding organizational politics and policy;

(c) the mentee's testing of the corporate waters on key issues that could benefit the mentor; and (d) the possibility of new career opportunities for both members. Levinson (1978) found that serving as a mentor provided a creative and rejuvenating life challenge to adults. The experience allowed the knowledge and experiences gained through the mentor's professional career to be transmitted to the mentee. The career of the mentor was also energized by the enthusiasm generated from working with the mentee.

Some of the benefits mentors derive from the relationship are increased job satisfaction, peer recognition, career rejuvenation, and career enhancement. Clutterbuck (1991) referenced some of those benefits, which are similar to those revealed by other researchers. He suggested that mentors' experiences improved job satisfaction, increased peer recognition, and facilitated potential career advancement.

Daresh and Playko (1993) used in-depth interviews with a group of practicing administrators who worked directly with aspiring administrators in one cycle of the Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals. Data were gathered through interviews with nine practicing administrators identified by Danforth mentees as the most frequently consulted mentors during the year. Each selected administrator had been recognized by at least 5 of 17 candidates who participated in the program. The mentor administrator was contacted on a minimum of three separate occasions by mentees. There was no maximum or minimum number of contacts established

between mentors and mentees; therefore, a mentor consulted on a number of occasions by a variety of candidates could be classified as a mentor who was perceived as helpful or effective. According to Daresh and Playko, five themes emerged from their study. First, administrative mentors reported considerable personal satisfaction from their participation in the program. Second, one of the most satisfying aspects of working as a mentor was the opportunity to assume the role of teacher. Third, contact with candidates exposed mentors to ideas from other systems. Fourth, mentors learned about recent research from the mentees. Lastly, administrators designated as mentors viewed their mentor assignment as an affirmation of their professional competence. One can conclude that mentoring is a two-way street with benefits accruing not only to the mentee, but also to the mentor.

#### Weaknesses of the Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring may also be detrimental to both the mentee and the mentor (Kram, 1985). The mentee may experience a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, frustration, and a sense of betrayal. The mentee may also experience frustration if professional recognition or career advancement is blocked because of a poor mentoring relationship. Poor relationships can cost the mentors valuable career time and result in negative feedback from the organization (Kram, 1985). There may also be risks to the mentor if the mentee's potential is misjudged or if the mentee becomes too dependent and is unable to perform without guidance from the mentor (Zey, 1988).

Southworth (1995) reported some apparent disadvantages to mentoring: (a) problems in pairing the mentor and mentee; (b) difficulty in knowing the needs of new building administrators; (c) too many traditional role expectations being passed on; (d) too little rethinking of the approaches needed for dealing with current and changing circumstances in educational settings; and (e) the process of mentoring new administrators sustaining, by implication, a belief in the centrality of school leaders and inhibiting or reducing the importance of the work of other leaders in the school.

Bush and Coleman (1995) supported some of the early assertions made by Zey (1988) and Kram (1985) when they reported other limits to mentoring: “(a) insufficient time to develop the relationship properly; (b) the risk of the new administrator becoming too dependent on the mentor; and (c) the possibility of a ‘mismatch’ between the mentor and the mentee, leading to failure of the relationship” (p. 67). Finding sufficient time for developing and sustaining the mentor relationship was a source of difficulty (Bolam et al., 1995). Another obstacle was securing the funding for an effectively administered mentoring program (Kirkham, 1995). When the question of affordability arises, the response, according to Kirkham, should be, “Can we afford not to support our new principals if we desire the best possible education for our children to be led by the ablest and most enabled professionals?” (p. 78).

## Characteristics of Mentoring

The mentor-mentee relationship has attracted the interest of many researchers because the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship is most important to the success of the mentoring process. Successful mentors share some common characteristics. They usually hold a higher position in the organization and possess more experience and knowledge of the profession than do their mentees (Collins, 1983). Other attributes ascribed to mentors are self-confidence, a participative leadership style, coaching behavior, and interest in the development of their subordinates (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Roche, 1979; Zey, 1988).

The optimal age difference between mentor and mentee has received considerable attention. The literature suggested a minimum of 3 to 5 years is appropriate for the selection of mentors. Levinson (1978) and Zey (1988) both maintained that the ideal age difference between the mentor and mentee is 8 to 15 years. Ryan (1988) asserted that a mentor should be an experienced older professional who is willing to act as a guide and confidant through the mentee's first years. If the age difference is too great, the relationship may be characterized as that of parent-child. If the age difference is too close, the relationship may be characterized as a peer relationship. Kram (1985) and Zey (1988) were less specific about the age difference; others suggested that mentors could be any age so long as they are in a position to fulfill the mentoring roles (Phillips-Jones, 1982).

Effective mentors possess unique qualities that enable them to be caring individuals committed to the personal and professional growth of others (Rowley, 1999). Alleman (1982) found that good mentors are people-oriented, tolerate ambiguity, prefer abstract concepts, value their company and work, and respect and like their subordinates. According to Alleman, successful mentors are confident, secure, flexible, altruistic, warm and caring, sensitive to mentees' needs, and trusting of their mentees. A specific definition for the phenomenon of mentorship admittedly remains elusive because it is not clearly conceptualized, thus leading to confusion regarding the ingredients for success (Merriam, 1983). Many mentees have identified the mentor's belief in and support for them as the most crucial aspect of the mentoring experience (Moore, 1982).

Eight attributes have been associated with effective mentors in the corporate world. Effective mentors have been described as: (a) good at what they do in the company; (b) supported by the organization; (c) respected by the organization; (d) good teachers; (e) good motivators; (f) sensitive to the individual needs and stated goals of mentees; (g) powerful; and (h) secure in their positions in the corporation (Phillip-Jones, 1982). Daresh and Playko (1990) noted that the attributes possessed by effective mentors in the corporate world are very similar to the characteristics desired of effective mentors in school administration. Effective mentors must be caring and giving individuals who are truly committed to the enhancement of the personal and professional lives of beginning administrators. They are experienced, accomplished within the district, possess

good leadership qualities, and understand human dynamics, district politics and practices.

### Role of Mentors

One key to the success of the formalized mentoring program is the willingness on behalf of the mentor to take on the additional responsibilities of nurturing, supporting, and providing feedback to a person new to the profession. Mentors play a significant role in the personal and professional lives of their mentees by utilizing a variety of skills, behaviors, and experiences that enable the mentor and protégé to reach common goals. A number of research studies on relationships between junior and senior managers identified a range of mentoring functions or mentoring roles that enhanced development in unique ways (Kram, 1983; Levinson, 1978; Misserian, 1982; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Schien, 1978).

Research on mentor roles conducted by Phillips-Jones (1982) and Kram (1983) focused on mentoring in the corporate world, but their findings are generally transferable to academic institutions. Phillips-Jones (1982) stated that mentors are influential people who significantly help mentees reach major life goals. Based upon whom or what they know, mentors have the power to promote welfare, training, or career development of their mentees. She further stated that mentors might assume a variety of educational roles in their mentees' lives and careers: traditional mentors, supportive bosses, organizational sponsors, professional career mentors, patrons, and invisible godparents.



Studies of mentor roles conducted by Gray and Gray (1985) and Anderson and Shannon (1988) focused on the behaviors of mentors. Gray and Gray's "Mentor/Protégé Helping Relationship Model" explored mentor behaviors that enabled mentees to gain competencies, confidence, realistic values, and experience needed to function autonomously. They developed eight roles assumed by mentors in helping mentees become competent to handle the problems they commonly encounter, that could be adapted to an administrative mentoring program: situational leadership, role modeling, instructor/promoter of thinking skills, demonstrator/teacher, motivator/promoter of realistic values, supervisor, counselor, and promoter of indirect mentoring.

Anderson and Shannon (1988) argued that effective mentoring programs must be grounded in a clear and strong conceptual foundation. They identified five essential roles of mentors: teaching, sponsoring, counseling, encouraging, and befriending. These roles are described in Table 2. The roles played by mentors in the personal lives and in the career development of protégés are numerous.

### Mentoring Programs

According to Daresh (1995), there have been relatively few published descriptions of research related to the structure, implementation, evaluation, or outcomes of mentoring programs designed to enhance the professional development of educational leaders. It is evident, however, that if mentorships for school administrators are to achieve their full potential, school districts must be

Table 2

Conceptual Foundation for Mentoring Programs

Mentor Roles	Role Description
Teacher	Modeling, informing, confirming, disconfirming, prescribing, and questioning
Sponsor	Protecting, supporting, and promoting
Counselor	Listening, probing, clarifying, and advising
Encourager	Affirming, inspiring, and challenging
Befriender	Accepting and relating

Note. Adapted from “Induction Programs for Beginning Principals,” by E. M. Anderson and A. L. Shannon, 1988, Paper of the Oregon School Study Council. Copyright 1988 by the University of Oregon, College of Education.

fully committed to the mentoring process. Kram (1985) suggested that the risks of formalizing a mentoring program could be reduced by educating the members of the organization about the values of the mentoring function and by introducing structural changes within the organization to encourage and reward mentoring behavior.

There is limited research on the effectiveness of mentoring in educational administration. Most research on mentoring conducted over the last 10 to 15 years has focused on application of the process in the corporate and teacher worlds. In addition, substantial research has focused on adult growth and development. The majority of this research supports the idea that the effectiveness of the mentor is key to the success of the mentoring experience in educational administration, just as it is in the other fields. Daresh and Playko (1991) found that there are several important characteristics ascribed to effective administrative mentors. Effective mentors have experience as practicing school administrators. Effective mentors demonstrate generally accepted positive leadership qualities, such as intelligence, good oral and written communication skills, and well-developed interpersonal skills and sensitivities. Effective mentors ask the right questions of beginning administrators. This is accomplished because the mentor has a knowledge base about accepted practice and the mentor seeks to stimulate independence in the mentee. Effective mentors want to see people go beyond their present levels of performance. Mentors model the

principles of continuous learning and reflection. Effective mentors exhibit an awareness of the political and social realities of life in at least one school system.

The literature does provide some examples of activities that mentors might build into their working relationship with mentees: (a) models of expert performance; (b) multiple opportunities for practicing administrative problem solving; (c) a sequence of increasingly complex task demands; and (d) feedback about adequacy of performance and the sophistication of (mentees) guiding schema or philosophy (Barnett, 1995; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1992).

A mentor program model can be adapted to address six major areas that focus on expert problem-solving processes: (a) problem interpretation, (b) goals for problem solving, (c) underlying principles and values, (d) constraints, (e) solution processes, and (f) effect. Leithwood and Steinbach (1992) suggested this model because they believe the problem-solving behaviors of novices differ from those of experts. Costa and Garmston (1994), Daresh and Playko (1991), and Leithwood and Steinbach (1992) stressed the importance of cognitive growth in the form of complex thinking, problem solving, and reflection as one of the most critical ingredients of a mentor relationship or mentor program.

Headlamp, the British mentoring program, is designed specifically to support new headteachers in their first appointment. Bolam et al. (1995), in reviewing the British Headlamp project, judged the important elements of a mentoring program to include building a relationship based on mutual respect and trust, drawing up a loose “contract” or agreement at the outset, working to a

jointly-agreed agenda for each meeting with the newer headteacher, taking the lead, and establishing a warm, open and enthusiastic interpersonal style. In support of mentoring programs, Barnett (1995) expressed the view that mentors are catalysts for cognitive development. Daresh and Playko (1993) and Evertson and Smithey (2000) also shared this view in that they believed mentors assist mentees in developing and mastering processing skills that include problem solving, problem finding, and reflecting. The underlying premise is that the mentee needs to begin to solve problems in ways similar to those of the experts (experienced principals). The most effective mentors move the mentee from novice problem solver to autonomous expert problem solver.

The catalyst for developing the mentee's problem-solving expertise is reflection, and by adhering to the principles of cognitive coaching mentors can assist the mentee in becoming more reflective and expert-like in problem-solving abilities. Cognitive coaching encourages the development of autonomous higher-order thinking skills by using reflection to expand the mentees' knowledge base and improve their actions. "Reflective practice" has received a considerable amount of attention in recent years (Hart, 1993; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Evidence suggests that reflection is a powerful strategy in its own right but may also be a useful and flexible supplement to other strategies throughout the principal's career. Osterman and Kottkamp believed that the use of reflection stimulates a change process that, once begun, doesn't end. The new principal can develop skills in critically analyzing his own practice that should carry

through his entire professional life. The knowledge that comes from the critical analysis then becomes intertwined and integrated, resulting in cognitive schemata that more closely match the thinking patterns of experts.

Professional learning and the idea of life-long learning are actively supported and promoted by the process of mentoring; therefore, mentoring may play a role in developing schools as learning organizations (Rowley, 1999). National and state governments sponsor mentoring because of the perceived advantages for the educational system (Bush & Coleman, 1995). Daresh and Playko (1992b) identified the potential application of mentoring for use in professional development provided to school leaders. They pointed out two advantages for its use. The first is related to identifying individuals to serve as appropriate role models for other administrators. A second potential value of mentoring, as part of the program for the professional development of school administrators, is in its application as part of a process referred to as “professional formation” (p. 17).

There are three equal parts of professional development. The first two are academic preparation, where the theory of administration is presented, and field-based learning (the acquisition of technical skills while actually being in the “hot seat”). Mentoring, the third piece, is essential because mentees are able to clarify personal visions of what educational leadership means and to develop a commitment to personalized coaching feedback that is part of an effective

mentoring relationship and may serve as the focus for professional formation (Daresh & Playko, 1992b).

### Selection and Preparation of Mentors

One significant element of a formalized mentor program is the process used to select mentors. A mentoring program should have established selection criteria that: (a) present a local definition of administrator expertise; (b) indicate the mentor's commitment to the role and a willingness to serve and become prepared in the role; (c) reveal the mentor's self-confidence and ability to model integrity and empathy in relationships with others; and (d) demonstrate the mentor's expertise in the role (Zimpher & Rieger, 1988; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Suggested prerequisites that may be considered by the school district are well documented (Daresh & Playko, 1991; Monsur, 1998).

Mentors should demonstrate:

1. an understanding of learning theories, child growth and development, and principles of learning (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1992; Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986);
2. a concern for beginning administrators and a willingness to expend time and energy in supporting their entry into the profession (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995; Monsour, 1998);
3. a personal and professional respect for those they are assisting (Little, Galagaran, & O'Neal, 1984);

4. a willingness to share informally consistent information; (Alleman, 1982; Daresh & Playko, 1991);
5. a genuine interest in the mentee evidenced through helpfulness, willingness to contribute time, and other positive traits such as dedication, professionalism, friendliness, outgoing nature, patience, and influence (Gehrke & Kay, 1984; Rowley, 1999);
6. the ability to evaluate situations from many points of view and examine multiple options for dealing with the problems (Bova & Phillips, 1984; Kaye & Jacobson 1995); and
7. a high level of professional achievement and diversified interests and activities (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Playko & Daresh, 1993).

Other researchers also have focused their attention on the selection and preparation process for mentors. First and foremost is the perspective that they are viewed as experts by their peers (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). A second essential attribute is the ability to be reflective and analytical about one's own administrative style (Borko, 1986; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Bey & Holmes (1990) cited five fields of study of which mentors need to have a command if they are to become effective mentors: (a) the mentoring process; (b) clinical supervision; (c) coaching and modeling; (d) adult development; and (e) interpersonal skills.

Once a mentor is identified, the focus shifts to preparation for the important and critical task of mentoring. One design that was developed includes



preparation in five knowledge domains: (a) assessing the needs of the mentee; (b) developing the interpersonal capacities of mentors by increasing their knowledge of theories of adult development; (c) understanding administrative processes and school effectiveness; (d) utilizing observation and feedback; and (e) fostering a disposition toward inquiry and reflectivity (Zimpher & Reiger, 1988).

The selection of mentors is critical to the effectiveness of the mentoring process (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992). To enhance their effectiveness, school districts must set the criteria to direct the selection and training of mentors in a formalized program. The ability and willingness of the mentor to teach, coach, and provide constructive feedback to the new principal should be foremost among the criteria. Cohn and Sweeney (1992) cited several essential skills necessary for mentors to be considered effective: (a) exceptional performance as a principal; (b) understanding of human dynamics; (c) good communication; (d) enthusiasm; and (d) knowledge of curriculum, community, and district politics and practices.

In a number of studies, researchers have found that a key element in the selection process is the degree to which the mentor identifies with the mentee and perceives the mentee as a younger version of himself (Blackburn, Chapman, & Cameron, 1981; Bowers & Eberhart, 1988). Alleman (1982) and Gillespie (1982) both found that mentors who have been trained have a higher level of mentoring activity and that their mentees rate their relationship significantly

higher with regard to career benefits and professional development than do their peers who have worked with untrained mentors.

Training activities specifically designed for the preparation of mentors enhance their ability to carry out their responsibilities effectively (Rowley, 1999). Daresh and Playko (1989) advocated a training model that contains six domains reflecting the realities of administrative life while preparing individuals to become effective mentors for beginning administrators. The domains, described in Table 3, include: a validated knowledge base, instructional skills, mentoring skills, human relations skills, school district needs, and personal formation.

Research indicates that the matching of the mentor to the mentee is a key element of the mentor-mentee selection process. Key issues to be considered in the process are cross-gender mentoring, and differences in ages, ethnicity, race, and cultural background. Of the key issues, cross-gender mentoring has received the most attention in the literature. Cross-gender mentoring may require more assignment of mentors, because women may be less likely to be chosen as a mentee by male mentors or may have difficulty locating willing male mentors (Blackwell, 1983; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000).

The absence of cross-gender relationships is most evident in situations where there is a token woman in an all male department (Kanter, 1977). As more women are selected for managerial roles, the greater the possibility will be of more women becoming mentors. Kram (1983) stated that cross-gender relationships offer men and women the opportunity to learn new ways of relating

Table 3

Domains for Mentor Training

Domains	Training Activities
Instructional skills	A review of the specific skills associated with instructional leadership must be included.
Mentoring skills	A reinforcement of the mentoring relationship with a focus on the assistance, support, and guidance to the beginning principal
Human relations skills	The mentor’s knowledge of the psychological and humanistic aspects of relationships in order to create successful communication and listening skills, and to cultivate other abilities such as honesty and trust.
School district needs	The review of issues and concerns that are unique to the individual school district (i.e., important policies and procedures).
Personal formation	The mentor’s helping the mentee understand personal values while assuming a new professional role.

Note. Adapted from “Teacher Mentors and Administrator Mentors: Same Track, Different Training,” by J. C. Daresh and M. A. Playko, 1989, Planning and Change, 20(2), 91.

to the world from their opposite-gender colleagues. Research has established that male and female mentees benefit from the mentoring experience when the mentor-mentee match is made carefully and becomes productive and successful. Formal mentoring programs match men and women in open, productive and platonic relationships, and informal mentoring arrangements between the sexes are flourishing (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Lean, 1983).

All administrators new to the profession need some type of guidance, support, and feedback when they begin a new position. Of all administrative groups, beginning principals have been the focus of formalized mentoring programs for administrators, and with good reason; the principal is a pivotal figure in determining successful, effective schools (Edmonds, 1982).

#### A Focus on the Principalship

The premise of the Effective School Movement is that the building principal is the key to a successful, effective school (Edmonds, 1982; Brookover, 1982; Lezotte, 1980). Subsequently, the preparation of administrators new to the profession has become an important issue in school districts and universities throughout the country. Mentoring, which corporations have used so successfully for years, has become one of the strategies that school districts and universities use to improve the leadership skills of beginning principals. The mentoring process is but one of several steps taken; without question, however, mentoring may be the single most powerful process used. Muse, Thomas, and Wasden (1992) suggested that mentoring of aspiring school principals by experienced,

caring and competent principals has the potential to be one of the most effective ways of preparing future administrative leaders.

Today's principals are being challenged by problems never envisioned earlier by school districts and practitioners in education. There are concerns expressed by newcomers that must be addressed if they are going to be successful. Daresh (1987) found that beginning principals' concerns are focused in three distinct areas; problems with role clarification, organizational socialization, and feelings of isolation. Duke (1988) conducted a similar study and found that administrators experienced frustration over the fact that they did not fully understand the nature of their leadership responsibilities. They sent a clear message to those who supervised them; principals need both autonomy and support.

#### Formalized Mentor Programs

Formalized mentor programs are designed to focus on specific needs of the newcomer in a particular school environment. Research supports the effectiveness of the formal mentoring process and its influence on the effectiveness of the beginning principal (Ashby, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1992a).

There is a variety and breadth of information contained in the literature about the characteristics of effective formal mentoring relationships. Several researchers have suggested models or frameworks for what they believe is needed to establish an effective formal mentoring program. Each of the proposed models has similarities, but there are differences as well.

Phillips-Jones (1983) cited nine critical recommendations that can easily be adapted to education by school districts seeking to develop and implement effective formalized mentor programs for beginning administrators. They include the following: (a) Ensure that top management supports the mentoring program. The top leader of the organization must not only know about the activity but must support the program verbally and materially. (b) Make the mentoring program part of a larger career development or management training effort. Mentees will need opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills beyond what they will get directly from their mentors. (c) Insist that participation in the mentoring program is on a voluntary basis only, and no penalties should be imposed on those who choose not to participate or drop out. (d) Keep each phase or cycle of the program short. Six months is a good length for the first mentor-mentee interaction cycle. (e) Select mentors and pair mentors and mentees carefully. Be certain that the mentors have the expertise, power, commitment and time to help the mentees. (f) Provide an orientation for mentors and mentees. Orientation builds enthusiasm in the mentors and helps them recognize what they can contribute to the relationship. (g) Allow mentors “structured flexibility”. Mentors should be encouraged to do their mentoring in the style most comfortable for them. (h) Be prepared for potential challenges. Roles, expectations, and responsibilities must be outlined and mechanisms must be in place to handle egos and personalities. (i) Build in a monitoring system. Monitoring the program

provides the necessary data to convince decision-makers to keep, expand, or drop the mentoring program.

A simpler model was proposed by Gray (1988). According to this model, the essential components of a planned mentoring program prior to implementation include the identification of the purpose and goals, as well as the effective linking of the program to the organization's career planning and organizational development efforts. Once this phase has been completed, the program is ready to be implemented. The critical components identified in Gray's training model during the implementation phase are: (a) identifying and matching mentors with mentees; (b) training mentors and mentees; (c) monitoring the process and retrain if necessary; and (d) evaluating results and getting recommendations for improving the first three components.

Murray and Owen (1991) presented a 13-step model for a formal mentoring program. This model is more comprehensive than Gray's two-step model; it is more reflective of the components proposed by Philips-Jones. The thirteen steps are: (a) identify mentees; (b) complete developmental diagnosis; (c) recruit mentors; (d) screen mentors; (e) select mentors; (f) provide orientation for mentors; (g) provide orientation for mentees; (h) determine the structure of the relationship; (i) execute a development plan; (j) engage in periodic meetings; (k) report back to the program coordinator; and (l) conclude relationship.

Kram (1985) did not offer a model but cited several important characteristics that must be present in order for formal mentoring programs to be

successful. The characteristics were voluntary participation; training for participants; role clarification for participants; and an orientation to establish the goals and purpose of the program. Along similar lines, Zey (1991) suggested 11 guidelines that should be incorporated when implementing an effective formal mentoring program. The guidelines he proposed were: (a) establish clear program goals; (b) communicate program goals to participants; (c) determine the organization's ability to absorb program graduates; (d) gain organizational cooperation; (e) make the selection process autonomous; (f) ensure participant commitment; (g) provide flexibility for the development of the relationship; (h) allow voluntary participation with no penalty for withdrawing; (i) include an evaluation component in the program; (j) implement pilot program for a test period; (k) plan for and anticipate potential problems.

Based upon review of the literature, Carden (1990) cited the following necessary components of an effective formal mentoring program: top management support, extensive orientation, built-in incentives, voluntary participation, and a comprehensive, ongoing evaluation. Offering yet another point of view, Gaskill (1993) stated that effective formal mentoring programs exhibit several important features. The features she cited as being necessary for an effective formalized mentoring program are top management support, adequate resources, and careful selection and matching procedures.

Although there are numerous characteristics or components of successful mentoring programs cited throughout the literature, they seem to cluster around



five domains. The five domains are organizational support, program clarity, participant involvement, selection and matching procedures, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Each of the five domains consists of variables or characteristics that support or define it; they are presented in Table 4. In summary, there is a fair amount of literature that has focused on describing the content of formal mentoring programs. Despite some variations, several researchers have developed models that outline the mentoring process within a structured program. It is, therefore, possible to implement a formalized mentoring program. School districts should consider developing a strong mentoring program as part of their overall professional development strategy if they are fully committed to developing, supporting, and retaining the leadership abilities of new principals.

#### Benefits of Formalized Mentor Programs

Several benefits to be gained by mentors, mentees, and school districts in programs designed for beginning administrators are documented in the literature. Three major sets of benefits derived by those who serve as mentors are: (a) improved job satisfaction – mentoring a promising new administrator is a challenging and stimulating personal experience; (b) increased peer recognition – praise and recognition are given to mentors for their contribution; and (c) potential career advancement – serving in the role of mentor is satisfying and

Table 4

Five Domains and Supporting Variables of an Effective Mentoring Program

Domains & Variables	Cited in the Literature
<u>Domain 1 Organizational Support</u>	
Adequate resources	Bolam et al., 1995; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983
Top management involvement and Support	Ashby, 1991; Bolam et al., 1995; Carden, 1990; Gaskill, 1993; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991
Integral component of a larger professional career development program	Bolam et al., 1995; Gray, 1988, Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983
<u>Domain 2 Program Clarity</u>	
Training sessions for participants	Ashby, 1991; Gaskill, 1993; Hagevik; 1998; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1991
Clear goals, roles and expectations outlined	Gray, 1988; Hagevik, 1998; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1991
Orientation session outlining program goals and outcomes	Bolam et al., 1995; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1991

table continues

Table 4 (continued)

Domains & Variables	Cited in the Literature
<u>Domain 3 Participant Involvement</u>	
Voluntary participation	Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Kram, 1985; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991
Structured flexibility in defining the relationship between mentor and the mentee	Bolam et al., 1995; Hagevik, 1998; Monsur, 1998; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991
Participant input in program design, implementation, and evaluation	Ashby, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1992b; Gaskill, 1993; Gray & Gray, 1990; Hagevik, 1998; Zey, 1991
<u>Domain 4 Selection and Matching</u>	
Procedures	Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983
Mentors and Mentees are selected based on program objectives	Bolam et al., 1995; Gaskill, 1993, Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991
Selection of mentors based on criteria (i.e., motivation, interest, competence, position, skills)	Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991

table continues

Table 4 (continued)

Domains & Variables	Cited in the Literature
Established procedures for matching mentor and mentee	Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991
<u>Domain 5 Regular Feedback and</u>	
<u>Monitoring</u>	
Continuous Monitoring of processes and outcomes	Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990; Hagevik, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991 Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990;
Evaluation based on program objectives and goals	Hagevik, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991 Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990;
Modifications to the program based on monitoring and	Hagevik, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991
Evaluation	

often gives the mentor an opportunity for personal career advancement (Clutterbuck, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1993). Daresh and Playko (1991) suggested that mentors' responsibilities enable them to make contact and to network with other local school leaders. Networking helps reduce the isolation from peers, which is one of the most significant problems faced by administrators (Ashby, 1991; Monsur, 1998). Daresh and Playko (1992b, 1993) also noted several benefits gained by the mentee and the school district as a result of the formalized program. The mentees benefit by: (a) feeling more confident about their professional competence; (b) observing theory translated into practice; (c) improving their communication skills as a result of a "climate of collegial support" across the school district fostered through mentoring relationships; (d) learning "tricks of the trade" through the mentoring process; and (e) gaining a feeling that others care about their personal and professional well-being. The organization benefits, as well, e.g.: (a) the district develops a more capable staff; (b) the general visibility and professional status of the district may increase; and (c) motivation levels and self-esteem may be higher resulting in an increase in job performance by participants.

### Summary

The literature on administrator mentoring is limited but growing. From that literature several ideas with implications for administrative mentoring programs can be gleaned. School districts can benefit from formalized mentoring programs for beginning administrators; therefore, mentoring should be an integral

component of staff development programs for administrators. Beginning administrators need to be acclimated early in their preparation program to the mentoring process and be convinced that mentoring can help them grow personally and professionally. Although mentoring programs are geared to the varied needs of the newcomers to the profession, specific attention may need to be focused on the unique needs of special groups.

The issue of the needs and struggles of novice principals was presented from the context of the principalship as a multifaceted and complex position. The literature suggests that mentoring is important for emotional and professional development. Mentoring in many professions is seen as an essential tool to assist the newcomer with understanding the culture of the organization. A discussion of the characteristics and functions of the mentor-mentee relationship, the nature of the relationship, and the risks and benefits of the relationship to the participants, as well as the benefits and the variables of an effective formal mentoring program were presented in this chapter.

Because the purpose of this study is to understand how novice and veteran principals perceived their experiences with a formal administrative mentoring program, the review of literature focused on the perceptions of the principalship, the needs of new principals, and the characteristics of mentoring and mentoring programs. Principals suffer from the same career trauma experienced by other professions as identified in studies of life and career patterns (Levison, 1978, Schein, 1978). This career trauma for principals is

further compounded by the lack of connection between the pre-service education they receive as graduate students and their subsequent positions (Daresh, 1995).

Three types of career mentoring have been identified through research: life mentoring, informal career mentoring, and project mentoring (Alleman, 1982; Gray, 1988; Levinson, 1978). Contrary to a common research hypothesis, skill in interpersonal relations, rather than position or power, has been identified as one of the most important attributes of an effective mentor (Kram, 1983). Successful workplace mentor-mentee relationships have been linked to the career success of the mentees. Many studies, however, have identified psychosocial benefits to both the mentee and mentor as more immediate and important (Kram, 1985).

The largest body of literature discussing mentoring in education focuses on mentoring of teachers during induction as a means of retaining teachers, and as a strategy employed by local districts as a component of professional development programs (Little, 1990). Several recommendations have been identified regarding the establishment of a mentoring program: (a) select mentors who are regarded as administrative role models; (b) provide mentors with training to determine what they should accomplish; (c) provide mentors with personal communication training; and (d) ensure that the organization supports the program (Daresh, 1995; Monsur, 1998).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview of the Methods

Chapters 1 and 2 presented an overview of the study and a review of related literature. This chapter contains a description of the methodology that was used to complete a case study designed to investigate formal administrative mentoring experiences provided to novice and veteran principals by one school district. The school district is located in a large urban setting in a mid-Atlantic state. Beginning with a description of the problem, the purpose, the research question, the conceptual framework, and the significance of the study, this chapter provides a rationale for the study's design, a description of the data collection and analysis procedures, and a plan for writing the qualitative case study narrative.

#### Statement of the Problem

There is increasing recognition of an impending shortage of educational leaders to fill vacant administrative positions (NAESP & NASSP, 1998). A heightened awareness of the increasing demands facing beginning school principals has resulted in fewer individuals pursuing administrative careers (Daresh, 1997). Consequently, interest in finding ways that will support, guide, and retain novice principals has emerged (Borja, 2001). A responsive administrative mentoring program is one approach that is believed to aid new



principals in overcoming their insecurities and finding job satisfaction (Daresh, 1995).

Those individuals who choose to become principals often confront challenges unique to novice administrators, such as feelings of isolation, confusion about their role, and unfamiliarity with the way in which the school system works (Ginty, 1995). It is, therefore, imperative to discover how mentoring programs can be developed or improved in order to meet the varied needs of the novice principal.

#### Purpose of the Study

Mentoring is a popular and effective means of transferring knowledge from an experienced principal to a newly appointed one (Anderson, 1988; Daresh & Playko, 1991; Ginty 1995). Little attention, however, has been given to the process of formal administrative mentorships and how they can be shaped to meet the varied needs of new school principals. The purpose of this study was to examine novice and veteran principals' experiences with a formal administrative mentoring program provided by their school district. This study focused on the perceptions of principals who had participated in a formal administrative mentoring program as a mentor, mentee, or both. This approach was based on the assumption that mentors are important in assisting novice principals as they transition to their new role. The study investigated how mentoring assisted novice principals with role clarification, organizational socialization, and feelings of isolation.

### Research Question

One fundamental question framed the focus of the study: How do principals who have participated in a formal administrative mentoring program describe their experiences?

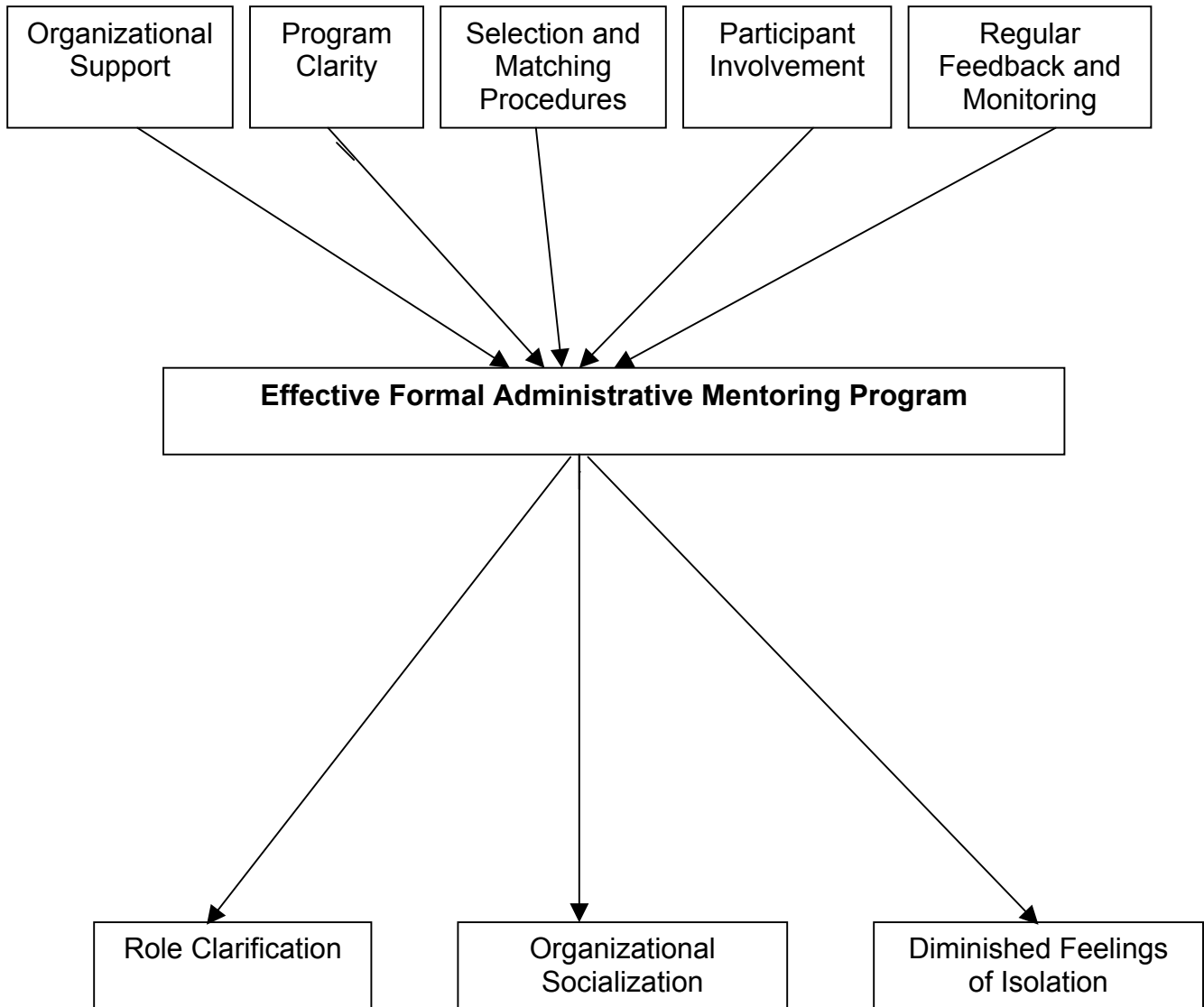
### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework reflects the specific components of an effective formal administrative mentoring program as they are identified in the research (see Figure 1). Although there are a multitude of characteristics or components of successful mentoring programs cited in the literature, they appeared to cluster around five domains. This conceptual framework, therefore, was founded on five domains, each consisting of multiple variables that together comprise what is considered to be an effective formal administrative mentoring program.

According to the literature, if these components are in place, novices should indicate that they have a better understanding of their role, they feel a part of the organization, and they feel less isolated (Ashby, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1992a).

This conceptual framework was the focal lens for examining the data for elements that either comported with or did not comport with the desired and expected outcomes and the five recommended input domains.

## Recommended Inputs



## Desired and Expected Outcomes

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Examining Formal Mentoring Programs

Note. Adapted from Ashby, 1991; Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1995; Carden, 1990; Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990; Kram, 1985; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips & Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991.

### Recommended Inputs--Five Domains

The five domains that emerged from the literature were (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) participant involvement; (d) selection and matching procedures; and (e) regular feedback and monitoring (Ashby, 1991; Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1995; Carden, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1992a; Gaskill, 1993, Gray, 1988, Gray & Gray, 1990; Kram, 1985, Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; and Zey, 1991).

Organizational support. An important determinant of a program's success is organizational support. It is defined as encouragement and support of the program as a whole. Some of the variables that indicate organizational support are: (a) adequate resources, such as money and personnel (Bolam et al., 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1992a; Gaskill, 1993); (b) support and involvement by top management and recognition of contributions of mentors (Ashby, 1991; Bolam et al., 1995; Carden, 1990; Gaskill, 1993; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991); and (c) the program's being an integral component of a larger professional development program (Bolam et al., 1995; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983).

Program clarity. The caliber of any program depends on a clear set of goals and objectives. The extent to which the program goals are expressly defined and communicated to the participants provide clarity to the program. Some of the variables that indicate program clarity in a mentoring program are: (a) the provision of training sessions for participants (Ashby, 1991; Gaskill, 1993;

Hagevik, 1998; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991, Phillips-Jones, 1983); (b) clear goals and anticipation of potential problems that may arise within the relationship (Gray, 1988; Hagevik, 1998; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen; 1991; Zey, 1991); and (c) an orientation session outlining program goals and expected outcomes (Bolam et al., 1995; Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983).

Participant involvement. The quality of a program depends, in part, on the degree to which participants perceive they have a sense of choice. Participant involvement is defined by the characteristics that contribute to this domain. Some of the variables that contribute to this domain are: (a) voluntary participation with no negative consequences for withdrawing from the program (Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Kram, 1993; Philips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991); (b) structured flexibility or a degree of freedom in defining the relationship between the mentee and the mentor (Bolam et al., 1995; Hagevik, 1998; Monsur, 1998; Philips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991); and (c) participants' having input into the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The program will be more effective if participants feel ownership (Ashby, 1991; Gaskill, 1993; Gray & Gray, 1990; Hagevik, 1998; Zey, 1991).

Selection and matching procedures. According to previous research, effective programs have a predetermined process as well as criteria for the selection of mentors and matching of mentors and mentees. This process should

be based on program objectives and pre-determined criteria (Gaskill, 1993; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983).

Regular feedback and monitoring. Quality programs have been based also on continuous monitoring, feedback, and input from participants. An established process for monitoring program processes, assessing their quality, and making improvements is critical to the program. Some variables that make up this domain are evaluation of the program using multiple criteria, program modifications, improvement of the program based on feedback and participant input, and evaluation assessing both the process and the outcome (Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990; Hagevik, 1998; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1991).

#### Significance

This study was significant because it provided a degree of insight regarding formal mentoring programs for novice principals. Principals today are faced with a myriad of challenges that test their leadership ability. It has been suggested that the principal is the single most important person in a school (NAESP & NASSP, 2000). If this is true, then school districts need to develop programs that will assist new principals in meeting the challenges they are faced with on a day-to-day basis.

#### Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Much of the prior research has been generated through the use of qualitative research techniques. Specifically, prior research identifying the

characteristics of effective formal mentoring programs has utilized qualitative research methods such as interviews, a combination of survey and interviews, and analysis of documents. I approached my study through the use of qualitative research methods of inquiry such as interviews with key people, in-depth interviews with participants in the mentoring program, and an examination of pertinent documents. This allowed me to explore the personal reactions to and the underpinnings of the formal administrative mentoring program in the identified school district. The qualitative research methods used in the study fostered an opportunity for me to develop “rich descriptions” that vividly communicated the participants’ experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

#### Type of Design

Among the various forms of qualitative research, the case study design is of specific use when studying educational innovations (Merriam, 1998). A case study approach is also advantageous when “how” and “why” questions are being asked and is recommended when the investigator believes the contextual conditions are highly relevant to the phenomenon under study (Yin, 1994). Accordingly, I elected to use the case study approach for this research. This approach offered the opportunity to monitor the use of a formalized mentoring process for novice principals, and to describe the context in which the program functioned. The case study approach proved to be valuable in that it allowed me to examine the single aspect of novice as well as veteran principals’ experiences as they participated in a formal administrative mentoring program.

The formal administrative mentoring experiences of novice and veteran principals became the unit of analysis for this case study. The formal mentoring program served as the boundary of the study in that it was a component of a larger professional development program. The style of the research question and the need for multiple sources of data influenced the choice of the case study design as the best qualitative research method for this inquiry (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

### The Researcher's Perspective

The validity and reliability of the data are primarily a function of the skills of the researcher in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman, the investigator must possess certain skills; including the following: (a) familiarity with the setting and the phenomenon; (b) a strong interest; (c) a multidisciplinary approach; (d) and good investigation skills. Accordingly, my literature review and my participation in the formal administrative mentoring program provided me with a solid foundation of experience combined with a continued interest in learning more about the topic of mentoring.

My first personal experience with the mentor program was as a mentee. In my initial administrative position as an assistant principal, I was assigned a mentor. I contacted my mentor when I needed suggestions, guidance, or answers to specific questions. My subsequent experience with the mentoring process was as a mentor to other new assistant principals and interns. Following



my experience as a school-based administrator, I moved into a directorship in central office and was again assigned a mentor.

My interest in mentoring was piqued when I served in the role of mentor to an intern who was new to administration and new to my school system. My mentee was part of a cohort group pursuing graduate degrees in educational administration from a local university. As time passed, our relationship flourished. In the year following my assignment as his mentor, I was assigned another mentee, an intern. This intern had years of employment in my school district but was new to the field of administration. Each of these situations afforded me the opportunity to guide a novice, but each gave me occasions to observe, reflect upon, and learn different aspects of my profession. During the course of this study I assumed a new position and was assigned a mentor. It was also during this time that the mentoring program was restructured and became more formal with planned and structured activities. Through my experiences as both a mentee and a mentor I became interested in learning how others viewed this process and in studying its evolution.

Although I participated in the mentoring program and support the concept of mentoring, I do not feel my association with the program was a barrier in conducting this study. Rather, my experience as both a mentee and mentor fueled a strong interest in the topic of mentoring and provided me with a certain expertise that was necessary to understanding the underlying concepts and issues involved. In addition, there have been a number of changes made to the

components and infrastructure of the formal mentoring program currently in place that had the effect of aiding me in resisting any temptation to impose or compare my experiences to those of the participants in this case study. I also used peer debriefers to provide perspective and to prevent me from assuming an evaluative stance. Talking with peers sharpened my focus on the research and limited the infusion of my own biases. Ultimately, it was an opportunity for me to further my understanding of the complexities of the mentoring process and to continue to evaluate its role in the induction of novice school administrators. “Every qualitative researcher I know who is active in a professional field has come to new insights about professional practices as a result of the research process” (Ely, 2000, p. 199).

## Procedures

### Setting

Providing the reader of a qualitative study a description of the setting of the study is important. This description will allow the reader to become more familiar with the school division under study thereby helping to establish a foundation, identity, and context.

The study was conducted within a large school district located in a highly developed area in a mid-Atlantic state consisting of urban, suburban, and agricultural communities, as well as undeveloped forestland. The school division in which the participants were employed had a student population of 42,486 for the 2001-2002 school year. Projections for the 2002-2003 school year indicated

an expected student population of 43,309. Students were served by 63 schools during the 2001-2002 school year. Two new schools -- a second alternative middle school in the county's east end and a new high school will open in the far west end of the county -- were scheduled to begin operations in 2002-2003, making a total of 65 schools.

At the time of the study, there were 42 elementary schools with 19,949 students kindergarten through grade five, including one alternative elementary school serving students in grades three through five. In addition, 10,158 students in grades six through eight were served by 10 middle schools, including one alternative middle school. There were eight high schools, seven comprehensive and one alternative, that grade served 11,682 students in grades nine through twelve. Two technical centers and one exceptional education center serving 703 pupils complete the complement of schools in the division under study.

Leadership for the smaller elementary schools was provided by the principal and a resource teacher, who also carried out administrative responsibilities. Elementary schools with a student population of more than 600 had either an assistant principal or an additional resource teacher. The principal and two assistant principals provided leadership at each middle school. One middle school whose principal was included in this study had only one assistant principal. The decision to have only one assistant principal in this school was based on the size of the student population. The alternative middle school leadership team was comprised of the principal and an administrative aide. The

administrative aide for all intents and purposes functioned and performed duties in much the same manner as an assistant principal. The principal and four assistant principals provided the leadership for each high school. The technical centers each had one assistant principal and an administrative aide. Both principals of the alternative middle schools and the principal of the exceptional education center were supported by an administrative aide.

### Gaining Access and Entry

As an employee of the school district, I gained access to participants by requesting permission from the Director of Research and Planning. The Director asked for Chapters 1 through 3 prior to giving consent to access. Gaining permission and access to conduct the study was not an obstacle.

Once permission was granted, a list of possible participants was requested from the Director of Leadership Development. From these names a list of administrators who had served in the role of principal for seven or fewer years was generated.

### Participant Selection

Those principals who were involved in the district's formal administrative mentoring process as mentors, mentees, or both were contacted by phone and asked to participate in the study. The group of principals asked to participate was expanded to include those with one year to seven years of experience. The group of novice principals consisted of individuals with one year to three years of experience as a principal. The group of veteran principals consisted of individuals

with three years to seven years of experience as a principal. Because these principals had participated in the formal administrative mentoring program fairly recently, I believed they would be able to recall accurately their mentoring experiences. Seventeen new and experienced principals participated in the study. The use of a small select sample resulted in more sensitive and descriptive data than would have been collected in a large-scale study (Merriam, 1998).

Initial contact was made with each potential participant through a telephone conversation at which time I described the study. Each individual who was willing to participate in the study was given an informed consent form and asked to sign it prior to the interview. A copy of that form has been included in Appendix C. The informed consent form includes an explanation of the steps taken to ensure anonymity and the right of the participant to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### Data Collection Procedures

There are no particular methods for data collection or analysis unique to the case study design (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam, case study usually relies on the three strategies of interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents. Usually one or two strategies are used more than the others. In this study, the primary strategy employed was interviewing. Observations and document analysis were used as supporting methods for collecting data.

### Means of Collecting Data: Instrument Selection

The conceptual framework of the study (see Figure 1), the problem, the purpose of the study, and the participants guided the selection of the data collection methods. Data were gathered from participant interviews, the researcher's field notes, observations of program events, and documents that described the mentoring program. Interviews with the Director of Leadership Development and a former Director of Staff Development and Human Resources provided additional information. Inspecting available documents provided a historical perspective of the mentoring program, and revealed program goals, expected outcomes, and the evaluation process used in monitoring the program.

Because of the potential to foster a relationship between the researcher and each participant, in-depth interviews were conducted with key personnel as well as a variety of program participants, thereby eliciting diverse perspectives. Collection of data from the mentors and mentees unfolded in the fashion of portraits, with condensed fieldwork that relied heavily on tape-recorded interviews being corroborated through notes taken during the interviews. As a method of inquiry, interviewing provided the participants with an opportunity to make meaning through language (Seidman, 1998). Collecting data from both mentors and mentees allowed for comparisons of data, not only individual to individual, but also group to group. These comparisons enabled me to maximize or minimize simultaneously the differences and similarities of the data from the perspectives of both groups. The process led to a rich, robust description of the

mentoring process. Interviewing proved to be a powerful way to gain meaningful insight.

### Interview Procedures and Protocols

I selected interviewing as the main method of collecting data from the school district's central office directors, the novice principals, and veteran principals because the activity allowed me to understand the mentoring process from each participant's individual perspective (Seidman, 1998). Interview findings were used to produce descriptions of the mentoring experience, as well as the underlying and precipitating factors attributed to it.

The in-depth interview method was chosen because of its potential to encourage a peer relationship between the researcher and each participant. Establishing rapport with the participants helped them to feel comfortable about reflecting on the mentoring process, and about sharing both positive and negative aspects of their experience (Seidman, 1998). Conducting the interviews in each participant's work location and at a time designated by the individual provided the opportunity for creating an understanding of the context of his or her work environment while making the interviewees feel comfortable with the interview process (Seidman, 1998).

Although the interviews were guided by the protocols, each participant was allowed to respond in the form of free association to the interview questions. The purpose of free association was to allow unanticipated aspects of the mentoring process to unfold. Prior to and during the interview, field notes were

made that established context and meaning for the setting. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis.

A semi-structured interview technique that was used to explore and ask in-depth questions relating to the participant's experience with the mentoring process. The interviews were structured to address the guiding research question. This approach is appropriate when the interviewer is aware of what he or she does not know; the interviewer can, therefore, craft appropriate questions to gather the needed information (Seidman, 1998).

Two separate interview protocols (Appendices A, B) were used to collect data for this study. The interview protocols were designed after consulting Seidman (1998) and examining protocols used by Keller (1994), and by Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000). The protocols provided topics or subject areas that allowed for exploration, probing, clarification, or asking additional questions surrounding a particular topic. The protocols were carefully crafted and included a set of questions arranged for the purpose of guiding the participants through the same questions with essentially the same words. They were designed in this format to ensure consistency and to minimize variation in the questions posed to the participants. Questions were open-ended and had no right or wrong answer; this encouraged the participants to respond in their own manner, taking as much time as needed to formulate responses. Two sets of interview protocols were developed one for use with mentors and one for mentees.



The mentee and mentor interview protocols began with questions designed to gather biographical information about the participant's career, current work situation, and past experience. Both sets of protocols focused on the research question guiding the study. The answer to the question, "How do novice and veteran principals describe their experience with the mentoring process?" was uncovered when the participant responded to a variety of questions on the protocol. The probes for mentor and mentees were similar, with some adjustments to the questions depending on whether they were asked of the mentor or mentee.

### Pilot Study

The mentee and mentor protocols were tested prior to being used in this research study. I practiced using the mentee and mentor protocols with principals or assistant principals who had participated in the formal administrative mentoring program but who were not involved in this study. Three practice interviews using each protocol were completed prior to beginning the study.

Participants were interviewed in their work locations. Each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and was audio-tape recorded. The audio-tape recording was supplemented by notes taken during the interview. The interviews were focused on answering the research question while discovering unanticipated outcomes and issues associated with the participants' formal mentoring experiences. Prior to conducting the interviews, I had inspected relevant

documents, such as the handbook, “Coaching New Leaders to Reach New Heights” that was used for the mentoring program.

#### Document Data Collection or Recording

The interview protocol functioned as a descriptive analytical framework for the data. Interview tapes and interview notes were transcribed so that each bit of data was analyzed and categorized. Participants were provided copies of the interview transcripts, and asked to correct or clarify any part of the transcripts that did not accurately reflect their experiences. Managing the data in a systematic fashion enhanced my ability to base conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations on the data obtained from each participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Each interview was transcribed verbatim, with no editing; this transcription was the beginning of the interpretive process. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed with regard to themes or patterns. They were read to determine the emerging themes and patterns, and then were sorted accordingly. Supporting documentation for emerging themes and patterns was illustrated through quotes from participants. Interview data were stored in two forms, on hard copy and on the computer. Researcher field notes and other documents were reviewed, categorized, and ordered to add context to the participants' responses.

## Data Analysis Procedures

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data analysis is a continuous process. The process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation resulting in the drawing of conclusions, is both interactive and cyclical in nature.

### Credibility

Credibility, at its heart, is about the value of truth. When seeking credibility, the researcher endeavors to convince the reader that what is being said has something of truth and value in it--that there is worth in the work. For my purposes, I found it appropriate to address credibility through a comparative method of data analysis.

Transcript data were viewed through the focal lens of the conceptual framework (see Figure 1). Two different strands of data analysis developed as a result of this perspective (Merriam, 1998). The first and primary strand of data analysis was to determine if and what themes emerged from the data that would comport with the three identified categories of the desired and expected outcomes: (a) role clarification; (b) organizational socialization; and (c) feelings of isolation. The second strand of analysis revealed what the formal administrative mentoring program provided that did and did not comport with the five input domains identified in the conceptual framework.

The first step began with sorting the data into outcomes or inputs of the formal administrative mentoring process using the conceptual framework to guide

the process. After sorting the data into these two strands the data were reread, sorted again and placed into the relevant categories. Data that had been initially labeled as outcomes of the formal administrative mentoring process were placed into one of the three sub-categories of role clarification, of organizational socialization, or of feelings of isolation. Data that had been placed in the second strand as inputs of the formal administrative mentoring program were similarly placed in one of the five input domains: (a) organizational socialization; (b) program clarity; (c) selection and matching procedures; (d) participant involvement; and (e) regular feedback and monitoring. Data that emerged from the study that could not be placed in either of the two strands were set aside and saved. A third strand described as other salient themes was created, sub-categories were identified, and the data were placed accordingly.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that qualitative researchers should utilize display matrices for data management and analysis. A display matrix consists of rows and columns whose headings and contents evolve as the researcher sorts and resorts the data obtained from the interviews and documents. I began with general categories in the form of representative words or phrases and included substantiating data in the form of direct quotes, summaries, or explanations under each category heading. If dictated by the accumulation of diverse data pieces, I broke down the categories in smaller units that were more reflective of and specific to the supporting evidence. I revisited

my categorization scheme until I was satisfied that it was representative of the themes present in the data.

To ensure the credibility of my display matrix and its resulting categories, I recruited a peer who has experience with educational leadership and mentoring programs. I asked her to follow this pattern of analysis independently and to arrive at categories that she believed to be supported by the data. When discrepancies between my themes and hers appeared, we discussed our reasoning in each instance and arrived at a consensus as to the most appropriate theme. These themes were then compared to the proposed conceptual model in order to understand if the data would support, refute, or modify the model. The data were analyzed by determining if the desired and expected outcomes of role clarification, diminished feelings of isolation, and organizational socialization occurred as a result of participating in a formal administrative mentoring experience. Data that revealed information about the recommended inputs were analyzed and discussed in the same manner as well.

### Transferability

There is no mechanism by which one can ensure transferability. The hypotheses that are generated are only appropriate given the context and time of the study. Transferability, whether or not the work has value for others given their specific context and time, can be enhanced by presenting the collected data as rich description. The robust description of the collected data must contain as much relevant information as is gathered so that others may, given their context

and time, make a determination about its usefulness to their purposes.

Presented in case study form, the description of the data collected in this study included information relevant to the stated problem. The results of the study yielded findings that similar school districts might apply to their particular formal administrative mentoring programs or use to implement for the first time such a program (Yin, 1994).

### The Qualitative Narrative

The reporting phase of the case study is the most difficult and does not follow any stereotypical form (Yin, 1994; p. 127). Furthermore, Yin stated that a successful investigator should view the narrative report as his or her opportunity to make a contribution to knowledge or practice. It is important when writing the narrative to determine the illustrative structure, the style, and the audience for whom the report is written.

### Presenting the Results

The primary audience for this study was composed of other educators, in particular those involved with the development, implementation, and monitoring of a formal administrative mentoring program, and those participating in one (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). The selection of the audience paralleled the focus of the study; this allowed me to communicate the results of the research. The study included discussion of the nature of the problem investigated, the way in which the investigation was conducted, and the results of the investigation (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

The presentation of the results utilized the methods described earlier in this chapter. Narrative description, direct quotes, figures, and tables were used to illustrate the categories of data that emerged. The findings were reported in an organized fashion according to the categories, themes, and patterns that developed during the data analysis. The format that was used in reporting the results of this study included an overview of the findings presented, followed by a presentation of each separate finding, supported by quotes from the interviews or references to the documentary evidence (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). I used “particular description,” including quotes and what was said and done during the interview in the presentation of the data. “General description” was used in describing how participant experience fit into the context of the data as a whole. An interpretive discussion provided a context for understanding the particular and general descriptions as they were discussed in relationship to the findings. I also incorporated references to the literature, noting similarities and differences as they related to my study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

### Summary

This chapter described the methodology that was used to complete the investigation of the formal administrative mentoring experiences of novice and veteran principals. Information was provided regarding the selection of the population, the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

The sample selected comprised novice principals serving in the role from one to three years and veteran principals serving in the role of principal for seven

or fewer years. A wider perspective was gained through additional interviews conducted with central office administrators, as well as an examination of relevant existing documents



## PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER 4

### Portraits of the Participants

Providing the reader of a qualitative study a brief descriptive background is important. This foreword will allow the reader to become more familiar with the 12 novice and the 5 veteran principals who participated in this study and the formal administrative mentoring program in which they participated, thereby helping to establish an identity and context from which to view the participants comments.

#### Portraits of the Novice Principals

AA was a second-year principal of an elementary school with a student population of 418. The school was built in 1957 and was located in the far east end of the district. After her first year as principal of the school she was named Instructional Leader of the year. The principal had two years of prior administrative experience as an assistant principal in another district, but had had no building level experience in this district prior to assuming the position of principal. During the course of this study, AA resigned and accepted a position that represented a promotion with another school district. She also completed her doctoral studies and earned a doctorate degree.

BB was a first-year principal of a centrally located elementary school that was built in 1922 and served a total student population of 529. She served as an elementary assistant principal for two years prior to being appointed to a principalship.

CC was a first-year principal of an east-end elementary school that was built in 1966 serving 676 students. Because the student population was greater than 600 students, CC was assisted by one assistant principal. The assistant principal was also in her first year in that position. Prior to assuming her position as principal, CC was an assistant principal for two years in a west-end middle school in the district. During the study, CC applied and was accepted into a doctoral program.

II was a first-year principal of an elementary school located in the far west end of the district. The school served 618 students and opened in 1988. A first-year assistant principal assisted II. Prior to accepting his position as principal, II served for one year as an assistant principal of the same school.

JJ was a first-year principal of a west-end elementary school that opened in 1961 and served 542 students. JJ's predecessor as principal of the school resigned after serving in the position for two years. JJ served as an assistant principal of a centrally located elementary school for one year before assuming a principalship.

KK was a principal of an elementary school located in the district's far west end. KK's elementary school served a student population of 483 and opened in 2000. KK served as the planning principal during the construction of the school. Before assuming the principalship of the elementary school, KK served for two years in the role of physical education specialist in the district's central office. KK was also a graduate student working towards a doctorate.

EE was an elementary principal of a school serving 637 students located in the east end of the district. The school was built in 1908. Because of the size of the student population, EE received administrative support from a first-year assistant principal. Before accepting the principalship, EE served as an assistant principal in one of the district's west-end middle schools for one year. In August 2002, EE was named as the Elementary Instructional Leader of the district.

GG was a first-year principal of a middle school located in the district's west end. The school was built in 1971 and served 1099 students. GG received administrative support from two assistant principals, one of whom was in the first year of her appointment. Prior to assuming the principalship, GG served as an assistant principal for 11 years in one of the district's west-end high schools. GG is the third principal of this middle school in the last three years. While serving as an assistant principal, GG was enrolled in a doctoral program; she completed the course work but did not complete the process of writing and defending a dissertation and it. Her education level was noted as ABD, indicating that she had completed all requirements for a doctorate except the dissertation (see Appendix D).

FF was a second-year principal of an exceptional education center centrally located in the district and serving 103 students. An administrative aide who performed various administrative responsibilities assisted her. FF had no building level administrative experience prior to assuming the principalship. She had served as an exceptional education specialist in the school district's central

office. In May 2002, FF resigned from her position. I had the opportunity to talk to FF and learned that, since resigning, she had acquired the position of Director of Exceptional Education in another school division. An acting principal was assigned to complete the school year at the center.

DD was a first-year principal of an alternative middle school located in the west end of the school district. It opened in 1995 and served a student population of 145. DD was the fourth principal of the school. Prior to his appointment, DD had served as a high school assistant principal for one year and a middle school assistant principal for two years. DD applied and was accepted into graduate school in a doctoral program during this study.

LL was a first-year principal of a high school located in the far east end of the district. The school opened in 1928 and currently served 1,615 students. LL had experience as an assistant principal of this high school for one year before being appointed as principal. He was supported administratively by four assistant principals. During the study, LL was accepted into a graduate program to pursue a doctoral degree. In August 2002, LL was named as the High School Instructional Leader and the Instructional Leader of the year.

The last novice principal who participated in the study was actually in the unique position of being the planning-principal for a new high school, located in the district's far west end, which was scheduled to open in the fall of 2002. Prior to being appointed to the position of principal, he had served as an assistant principal for two years in a high school located in the district's north side. HH was

a relatively new employee of the district; before being hired as an assistant principal, he had worked in the district for only one year as an administrative intern. The internship experience was part of the course work for his doctoral studies

### Portraits of the Veteran Principals

ZZ was a third-year principal of a centrally located elementary school with a student population of 416. The school was opened in 1961. ZZ's most recent experience, before assuming the principalship, was as an educational specialist. She received building level experience as a high school assistant principal while working in another school district. ZZ resigned from her position at the end of the 2000 – 2001 school year and reported that she no longer planned to work in the field of education.

VV was a second-year principal of an elementary school located in the west end of the district. The school was opened in 1966 and served a population of 586 students. VV served as the assistant principal of this elementary school before becoming its principal. In August 2002, he was named a Fulbright Scholar.

YY was the only veteran middle school principal who participated in this study. His middle school was located in the far west end of the district. It served a population of 785 students. YY served as the planning principal of this school and opened it in the fall of 2000. He had the support of one assistant principal who was newly appointed to the position when the school opened. During his

planning year as principal, YY earned his specialist's certificate and decided not to continue the graduate course of study to earn a doctorate.

XX was a principal of a high school located in the east end of the county. The school was opened in 1908 and serves 1,405 students. Four assistant principals supported him. He was in his third year as a high school principal prior to this position he served as a middle school principal. During the time span of this study, XX earned a doctorate. In June 2002, he received a promotion and began working as a director in the district's central office.

WW was the principal of a high school located in the district's north side. The school served a population of 1,274 and was built in 1963. Four assistant principals provided administrative support to WW. Three of the assistant principals were first-year administrators with no prior high school experience, their background was middle school. The 2000 – 2001 school year was WW's first year as a high school principal. For the six years prior to his high school appointment, he served as a principal of a middle school located in the district's west end. In August 2002, WW was reassigned to work in the human resources department as a specialist.

#### Portrait of the Director of Leadership Development

The Director of Leadership Development contributed significant information for this study. Prior to assuming this newly created position this person served as an elementary principal in one of the district's west-end elementary schools. She was named the district's Instructional Leader of the

Year in 2000. The director was a graduate student pursuing a doctoral degree. During this study, in July 2002, the director was reassigned to assist the human resources department while retaining her position as director for the 2002 – 2003 school year. In August 2002, the director reported that she had resigned from her position and accepted a position that represented a promotion in another school district.

### Description of the Formal Mentoring Program

The formal administrative mentoring program began as a service provided through the department of staff development and was later moved to the department of leadership development. According to the information elicited from the Director of Staff Development who had original responsibility for it, the first formal mentoring program was established to help beginning teachers who were new to the program. No formal documentation could be found to determine an exact date of when the mentoring program began. Informal documents, such as memos, indicated that the program had been functioning for the past 15 years. This information was confirmed by a past Director of Staff Development who stated that she believed the program began approximately 20 years ago, around 1982, although the oldest documentation to support this statement was a memo dated 1986. The teacher-mentoring program had remained a function of the Staff Development program. The mentoring program was later expanded to include individuals who were newly appointed to administrative positions. The administrative mentoring program began as a service provided through Staff

Development. Once again, the only documentation available to corroborate the approximate beginning of the program was a handwritten memo dated July 1994.

The initial program was a formal mentoring program in which newly appointed administrators were each assigned a veteran administrative mentor on the same level. For example, a newly appointed assistant principal was assigned a seasoned assistant principal as a mentor. The prospective mentor was contacted and asked to serve in this capacity. Once the assignment was made, both mentor and mentee were notified in writing of the assignment. The mentor was provided a written list of suggestions of activities or assistance that might be of benefit to the mentee. This list represented the only guidelines or structure for the administrative mentoring program. The mentoring activities and the development of a relationship, if any, between the mentor and mentee were left up to the individual pairs. The program was loosely organized with no planned meetings or activities.

Impending shortages of educational leaders coupled with the cost of recruiting and hiring principals had influenced the district's actions in recent years. The district began to identify, select, and groom individuals for administrative positions that became vacant. The superintendent, assistant superintendents, and other central office administrators, however, had come to realize that attracting and hiring high quality administrators were only the first steps. Equally as critical to the district was the need to retain high quality administrators. For these reasons the school district valued a program that might

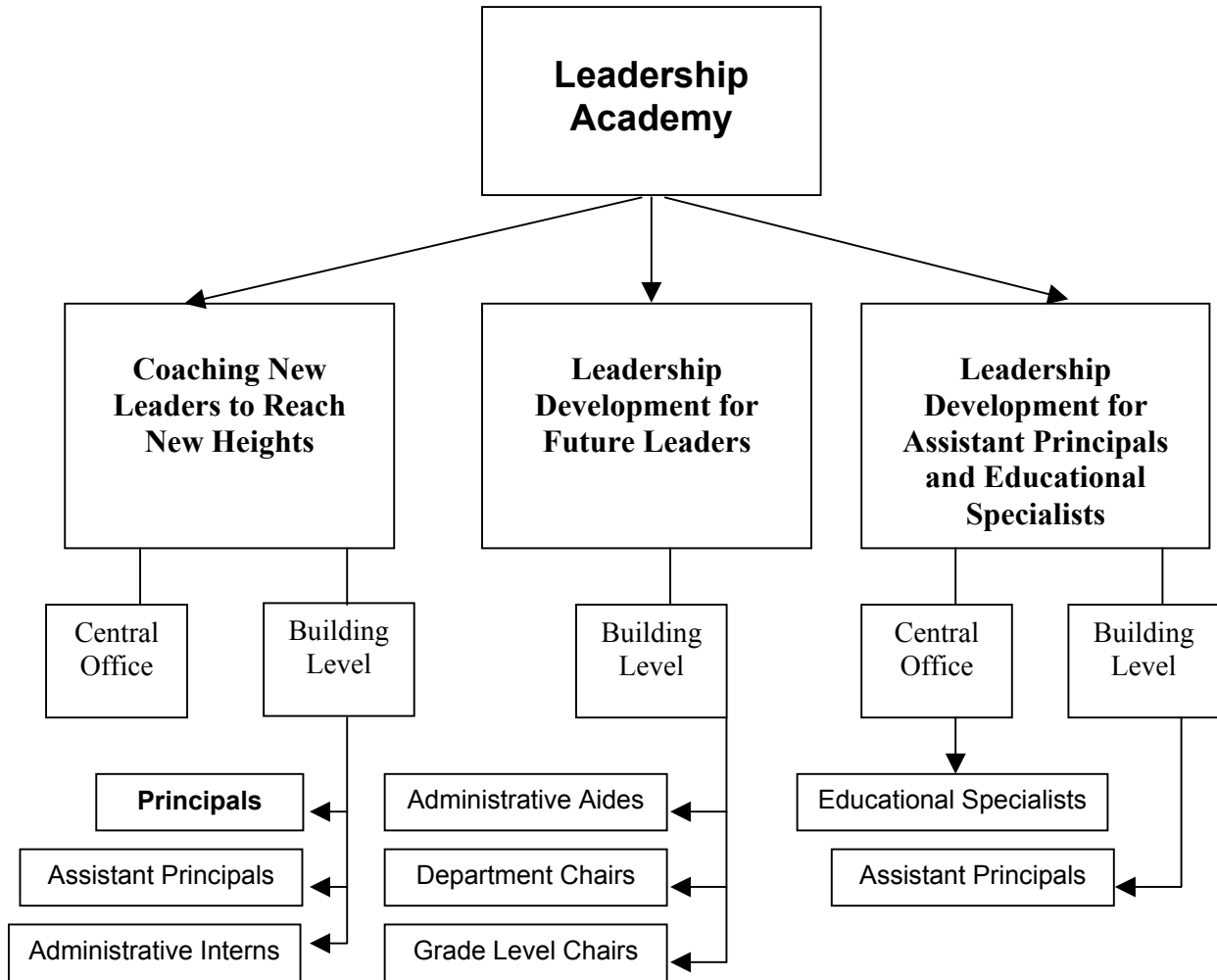


increase the possibility of a novice principal's success and subsequent retention. Providing novice principals with the support they needed on the job helped ensure the district's ability to retain them. The formal administrative mentoring program was the primary method of providing novice principals with the assistance they needed.

In response to this concern and the need for attracting, recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality administrators, the district created a Department for Leadership Development. The district also created the position of Director of Leadership Development; the individual holding this position was responsible for creating and overseeing programs for leadership development. The Department of Leadership Development and the Director's position were newly created and began functioning in July 2000. The formal administrative mentoring program became the responsibility of the Department of Leadership Development in July 2000. This program had been used from 2000 to 2002 as one mechanism employed by the district to provide novice principals with instruction and guidance to assist them in developing their instructional leadership skills. The Director of Leadership Development stated that she believed that the recent increased demands placed on principals forced the administrative mentoring program to be improved and strengthened. This perception was further illustrated when the Director of Leadership Development shared her perception that there was a gap between the academic preparation for the job of principal and the realities of the job day-to-day. The director's perception is substantiated in the

research literature. There is a prevalent theme that regardless of the programs responsible for certifying them, novice principals lack the competencies judged critical for principal effectiveness (Daresh, 1995; Elsberry & Bishop, 1996).

From this director's perspective, the administrative mentoring program was aligned with the school district's goals and objectives, which focused on student achievement and instruction. She remarked that the formal mentoring program changed when the central office administrators realized that there was a gap in student achievement and that new principals did not have the requisite skills necessary to lead their staff instructionally. The formal administrative mentoring program was viewed by the district as one avenue to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to sustain novice principals as they assumed their new roles. The formal administrative mentoring program was a component of the district's larger leadership development program for new leaders, "Leaders are Learners -- Coaching New Leaders to Reach New Heights," which, in turn, was part of the district's overall leadership development program, the Leadership Academy (see Figure 2). The Leadership Academy program offered courses and programs to enhance and develop skills of novice principals, assistant principals, central office personnel, and individuals who were considered to have the potential for future leadership positions.



**Figure 2.** District Leadership Development Program

**Note.** Adapted from Heathfield County Public Schools, 2001.

This prologue was written to provide the reader with some details about the participants and their schools. It serves the purpose of setting the stage and providing a background for readers as they read this study, thereby allowing them to consider its transferability to their own particular situations.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The first year is critical to the success or failure of a new principal (NASSP, 2000). A novice principal experiences a myriad of changes both professionally and personally, as he or she assumes this new role. In commenting about the strengths and weaknesses of their own preparation, principals stated that good on-the-job training under a fine mentoring principal helped them to make the connections between theory and practice (NAESP & NASSP, 2000). Because mentoring provides a bridge between theory and practice, educational institutions are embracing the practice as a useful means of providing support and assistance to the novice principal.

The purpose of this study was to learn about the formal administrative mentoring experience provided to novice principals in one local district. In conducting the research, I attempted to determine how formal mentoring assisted novice principals in the areas of role clarification, organizational socialization, and feelings of isolation. This research has the potential for providing information that could be used by the district to improve the formal administrative mentoring program in which the principals participated. In addition, the rich descriptions portrayed in the narrative provide significant detail allowing readers of the report to make judgments concerning the transferability of the findings to their specific contexts.

This chapter includes reiteration of the purpose of the study, its justification, and the research question; explanation of modifications in the methodology that arose during the research; and presentation and discussion of the findings. To enhance the discussion of the results, I have used general description, particular description, interpretive commentary, and tables illustrating the categories of data developed from the data analysis.

The findings from the study are divided into several sections in this chapter. Following the introduction, there is description of the methods used to implement and carry out the case study, as well as information about the novice and veteran principals who participated. The next section offers the reader a wide-angle lens with which to view the findings of the study, through description and discussion of the results from a broad perspective.

After providing the reader with a broad picture of the findings, the remaining sections serve to focus and narrow the reader's view with discussion of the findings of the case study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study, as well as a discussion regarding the experiences of the participants.

#### Review and Changes in the Research Methods

In-depth interviews were the primary source of the data utilized in this case study. A total of 17 principals--10 first-year and 2 second-year novice principals, and 5 veteran principals--were interviewed. Two interview protocols were developed and used to guide the interview process (see Appendices A & B). Each interview was conducted at the principal's school, thereby allowing me

to observe the principal in his or her school. As I completed each interview, I read and analyzed my notes. Interview tapes and interview notes were transcribed so that each bit of data could be analyzed and categorized. Two documents that described the formal mentoring program goals and sessions were inspected and used to provide context and details about the activities in which the participants engaged.

I used a simple process to analyze the data that were collected regarding the experiences of novice and veteran principals with formal mentoring. I began the process by reading each transcript and assigning a double alphabet letter to represent each participant. Using the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) as my focal lens through which to analyze the data, two primary strands of data emerged. Data emerging from the analysis that were not reflective of the desired and expected outcomes or the five input domains was reserved and labeled as the third strand of data, i.e., other salient themes.

The first step in the data analysis determined themes that comported with one or more of the three identified categories of desired and expected outcomes: (a) role clarification; (b) organizational socialization; or (c) diminished feelings of isolation. Once a theme was determined to be representative of one of the three outcome categories, it was placed in that category with sub-categories being identified as they emerged.

The next step in the data analysis established the second strand of data and determined which themes did or did not comport with one of the five

recommended input domains of an effective formal administrative mentoring program. Once information was determined to be reflective of the second strand, it was placed in one of the five input domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) selection and matching procedures; (d) participant involvement; or (e) regular monitoring and feedback.

After the two primary strands of data were analyzed, emerging data representing themes that did not comport with either of the primary strands were placed in a third strand. Two distinctive themes--informal mentoring and career advancement and development--emerged from the data analysis and were placed in the "other salient themes" strand.

Once the data were placed in one of the strands, tables (see Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) and matrices (see Appendices E, F, G, H) were constructed to represent the way in which the collected data aligned with the categories. The tables were created and included in the body of the narrative to provide the reader with a numerical representation of data related to participants' phrases that were indicative of the desired and expected outcomes, the other salient themes, or the five input domains.

The matrices included in the appendix contain single short phrases from the participants that align with the categories of data and represent the desired and expected outcomes. For example, the last matrix (see Appendix G) presents phrases that were indicative of the theme of diminished feelings of isolation. On the vertical axis of the matrix, participants were categorized as novice or veteran



principals and further grouped by school level--elementary, middle, alternative, or high school. The horizontal axis of the matrix includes a representative phrase aligned with a specific theme for each principal.

### Participants in the Study

Certain specifications are required when conducting a qualitative research case study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). First an ideal setting must be established; such a setting facilitates access to a variety of potential participants and the possibility of establishing a strong relationship with each participant. Due to the positive nature of the study, there were 17 novice and veteran principals who were willing to participate. There was considerable diversity among the principals who participated. First, they were principals of schools representing each area of the local district--east, north, and west. Second, principals from elementary, middle, and secondary schools participated in the study. Third, the participant pool comprised male, female, black, and white principals with varying years of experience and levels of education. A demographic representation of the participants is included in Appendix D.

#### The Novice Principals

For the purpose of this study, a novice principal was defined as an individual who had served in the role of principal for one to three years. There were 17 novice principals that met the requirements of the study. The names of these potential participants came from a list provided by the Director of Leadership Development. After I telephoned the possible participants and

described the study, 12 novice principals agreed to participate. These 10 first-year and 2 second-year principals were interviewed about their experiences in the school division's formal administrative mentoring program.

The sample consisted of 7 female and 5 male principals, ranging in age from 29 years to 48 years. Their experience as educators ranged from 5 years to 27 years. Two of the twelve principals had no prior administrative experience at the building level; however, both had central office experience as subject area specialists. Four principals had one year of experience and four had two years of experience as assistant principals at the building level. Of the remaining two participants in the sample, one had three years and the other had eleven years of experience as an assistant principal.

Seven of the twelve participants were elementary school principals, one was a middle school principal, and two were high school principals. One of the remaining two participants was the principal of an alternative middle school and the other was principal of an exceptional education center. Each of the 12 participants held a master's degree and was fully endorsed by the state as a school administrator. Five were pursuing doctorate degrees and, during the study, three others were accepted into doctoral programs.

### The Veteran Principals

A veteran principal, for the purpose of this study, was originally defined as an individual who had served in the capacity of principal for five or fewer years; the definition was expanded to include principals who had served in their current

role up to seven years. Although there were other veteran principal mentors who had been in their positions for 15 years or more, for this study I used a maximum of seven years in the current principalship position as a criterion because I felt that someone who had been in the position for fewer than 10 years would have a greater recall of his or her needs as a novice principal. By increasing the maximum number of years served as principal from five to seven, I was able to identify eight potential participants who met the requirements of my study. These principals were selected after the Director of Leadership Development provided a list of possible participants. After I telephoned the potential participants, five veteran principals who had served as mentors in the past two years agreed to participate. The five veteran principals who participated in the study had each served in the capacity of mentor and/or mentee and had worked in the role of principal for not more than seven years. Three also had been mentees as novice principals.

The veteran principals ranged in age from 42 to 55; their experience as educators ranged from 15 years to 28 years. With regard to educational level, one of them held an Ed.D. with a superintendency endorsement, and one was pursuing a doctorate. The other three had master's degrees and two held Educational Specialist advanced graduate certificates in educational leadership. Two of the five veteran principals were elementary school principals, one was a middle school principal, and two were high school principals.

## Overview of the Findings

This inquiry was designed to learn about the formal administrative mentoring experience that was provided to novice and veteran principals. One question framed the focus of the study: “How do principals who have participated in a formal administrative mentoring program describe their experience?” The conceptual framework guided the analysis of the collected data. Those elements that were compatible with the desired and expected outcomes or the five input domains were identified. Elements in the data that did not comport with these two strands of data were identified, as well. The overview of the study’s findings is presented in three sections. The first section presents the findings of the first strand of data and how the participants’ experiences did or did not align with the desired and expected outcomes. The second section includes discussion of other salient themes that emerged from the data analysis. The third section presents a review of the participants’ experiences and whether or not they aligned with the five input domains. As areas, general comments, or salient points are discussed in the findings, they are identified by the letters representing the participants with whom they can be matched.

### Participants’ Experiences Related to the Desired Outcomes

Perceptions held by most of the participants indicated that the formal administrative mentoring program provided them with a clearer understanding of their role. During the data analysis, role clarification emerged as the most prominent theme among the desired outcomes. Novices explained how their

mentors assisted them with identifying the three roles of the contemporary principal: (a) instructional leader; (b) school visionary; and (c) team builder.

Veteran principals reported that their mentoring experience resulted in a heightened awareness of their own role as well as a keener understanding of the overall role of contemporary principals. Veterans indicated that mentoring: (a) sharpened their focus as instructional leaders; (b) encouraged them to engage in reflective practice; and (c) encouraged them to act as role models for their mentees.

Both novices and veterans discussed their perceptions of the political intricacies of the organization, as viewed from within the organization as well as experienced through interaction with the community. Some of the novice principals' responses reflected ambivalence about their mentoring experiences and the help it afforded with their ability to negotiate the school division. Novices who reported the feelings of ambivalence explained that their prior administrative experience had already provided them opportunities to learn how to navigate the school division. Veterans viewed their mentoring role as one of helping their mentees with negotiating the school division and with learning how to interact with their communities. Through working together to navigate the school division's culture, its hierarchy, and its political waters, members of both groups reported benefiting from the mentoring experience.

Both groups viewed the mentoring process as a means of establishing or expanding networks. Novices and veterans alike discussed learning how to relate

to each other and, in many instances, reported establishing strong bonds based on mutual trust and respect. Both novice and veteran principals reported that mentoring helped reduce their feelings of isolation. In addition, mentoring assisted both groups in developing camaraderie with a network of colleagues, resulting in their feeling a part of the organization.

The perception reported by most of the participants revealed that their formal administrative mentoring experience provided them with a clearer understanding of their role, developed their understanding of the school division, thus facilitating their socialization into it, and helped with diminishing their feelings of isolation. Although most participants reported positive mentoring experiences, two novice principals reported that their mentoring experiences were completely unsatisfactory, indicating that the experiences did not meet their expectations for assistance. Overall, the reported experience of the participants indicated that mentoring served a useful purpose in providing novices assistance in transitioning into the role of principal and in providing veterans with a sense of rejuvenation.

### Other Salient Themes

Two other salient themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) informal mentoring experiences of novice principals and (b) career advancement and development. Novices who experienced satisfaction as well as those who experienced dissatisfaction with their formal mentoring experiences reported using informal mentors to supplement the formal administrative mentoring

process. Benefits to career advancement and development emerged as a primary theme through the data collected from the novice principals; it was also prevalent in the data from the veteran principals. Novices reported that mentoring, whether formal or informal, contributed to their career development and, in some instances, to their career advancement.

### The Five Recommended Input Domains

Evidence of each of the five domains developed from the literature review was found to be present in varying degrees in this study. The five input domains identified were: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) selection and matching procedures; (d) participant involvement; and (e) regular feedback and monitoring. The formal administrative mentoring program at the center of this study did receive support from the organization and was a component of the district's larger leadership program. Consequently, as interviews with participants revealed, some overlap existed with the other leadership programs in which the principals were involved. There was an established process for selecting veteran principals to act as mentors. Participation as a mentee was required of all newly appointed principal, whereas participation of mentor principals was voluntary. The design and structure of the program were already in place; therefore, the participants had provided no input into its design. The formal administrative mentoring program was divided into sessions, each of which was followed up with feedback by participants; however, no summative feedback was solicited regarding participants' overall satisfaction with their mentoring experiences.

## Detailed Findings

This section of the narrative presents the findings of this qualitative study. The initial findings relate to the first strand of data analysis, i.e., the participants' experiences that comport with any of the three themes of: (a) role clarification; (b) organizational socialization; or (c) diminished feelings of isolation. Next other salient themes emerging from the data analysis is reported. Subsequent findings are related to themes of the data analysis that did or did not comport with the five recommended input domains. In-depth discussion of the findings concludes this section of the narrative.

Data collection began with document review and interviews with directors who were knowledgeable about the formal administrative mentoring program. The Director of Leadership Development and a former Director of Staff Development and Human Resources were interviewed to provide a starting point from which to begin the inquiry.

### Mentoring Experiences of Novice and Veteran Principals

This study's major findings addressing the experiences of novice and veteran principals are viewed through the focal lens of my conceptual framework derived from the empirical literature on mentoring (see Figure 1, p. 75). According to the literature, role clarification, organizational socialization, and feelings of isolation are critical in the development and success of novice principals and are of interest to school districts attempting to provide novice principals with the support to help them be successful. Consequently, the



following narrative is organized according to these dimensions beginning with an examination of mentoring and role clarification.

### Mentoring and Role Clarification

Individuals are required to fill a number of roles and to possess a variety of skills when they assume the position of the principalship (Daresh, 1992; Playko, 1988; Rogus & Drury, 1988; Spradling, 1989). Novice principals must develop and extend their knowledge and skills in order to conceptualize their role as principal. Role clarification is defined as a process for developing among new members of an occupation the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential to carrying out their roles effectively (Rogus & Drury, 1988).

### Novice Principals and Changing Roles

The role of the contemporary principal has been described as multi-faceted and complex. Novice principals are called upon to fill multiple roles and to constantly change roles as they go about the day-to-day job of being principals. As I listened during the interviews and read the interview transcripts, it became apparent that these novice principals described wearing many hats and juggling many responsibilities as they assumed their new positions. They reported that their mentors helped them in understanding the expectations and responsibilities that accompanied their overall role by clarifying several important leadership responsibilities within the role that they were required to fill. Three of the roles that were described in the interviews with the novices were: (a) instructional leader; (b) school visionary; and (c) team builder.

Instructional leader. By assuming the role of instructional leader, the principal establishes the importance of the instructional climate and the time that must be allotted to it by allowing teachers to devote needed time and energy to teaching. In an era of accountability, principals must focus their attention and that of their teachers on instruction. EE described her perception of how the role of principal has evolved to that of instructional leader: “The old school principal sat in the office and was a paper-pusher principal. Today, with the emphasis placed on accountability--SOL scores--the focus is on the principal as an instructional leader” (lines 90-94).

Novices discussed their views about the changing face of educational leadership and the notion of leadership less as a managerial role and more as one of an instructional leader (AA, CC, EE, DD, HH, LL, KK). One novice explained this concept; he expressed his concern about the two specific areas of motivating teachers and freeing them to perform what he believed to be their greatest task, “to teach the children” (HH, line 237). This novice indicated that it was important to keep the focus of his teachers on instruction each and every day. He stated that he considered this to be an especially difficult task given the fact that there are so many other responsibilities competing for the attention of teachers as well as administrators. HH revealed that knowing how to streamline demands on his teachers and how to avoid taking precious time from their instructional responsibilities was an area in which he sought advice from his mentor. Similarly, CC described her perspective in this manner:

The role now is more instructional leader than manager--it's a hands-on role. I have been charged with raising SOL scores. [My mentor] helped me interpret test data, group differently, and modeled for me what I thought was right but wasn't sure. (lines 104-107)

Commenting on her role as principal AA noted that she considered her major role as a principal to be that of instructional leader. She said, "So you have to be very knowledgeable in instruction. Also, the fact that research in education has probably doubled or tripled; I need to understand the research--to know whether it has merit and how to apply it" (lines 154-156).

School visionary. Another role principals must fill is that of school leader and visionary. As the leader of the school, a novice principal must be able to communicate his or her goals and plans for the school. EE reported that her mentor helped her to understand how to bring the faculty along with her and to make the school her own rather than that of her predecessor. She described her mentor's help with this concept in this manner, "I had my first conversation with my mentor within 48 hours of getting the job. My mentor helped me get grounded to understand how to make the school mine and to get everybody on the same page" (lines 21-24). CC explained that the former principal's presence was well established and very strong in the school. She described her own concerns and commented on the guidance her mentor provided in working through the situation:

[Name of former principal] is a very strong dynamic principal. I felt coming into this position the need to move out of her shadow, to establish myself. I needed to communicate my goals, my vision for moving the school forward. I very much needed the teachers to identify with me so that we could go forward. My mentor shared what she had done when she became principal. (lines 15-19)

Novice principals must work with teachers to gain their support and commitment to school goals. They need to develop and possess skills that allow them to work individually with groups of teachers, to utilize resources (BB, CC, DD, EE, JJ), and to utilize resources to acquire and plan staff development activities (BB, DD, EE, FF, GG, JJ). DD commented on the development of the strategic vision in this fashion, “[Mentoring] helped with people skills, management, prioritizing issues, and the correct utilization of resources” (lines 68-69).

Team builder. As team builders, principals work to establish a trust relationship between teachers and administrators, thus enabling them to work in tandem to build an effective school (Sergiovanni, 1987). As a new principal of an exceptional education center, FF recognized the importance of this skill. She described how her mentor helped her to develop this skill:

[My mentor] really helped me when I came to the faculty to look them in the face. [She helped me learn] how to deal with kids and teachers effectively. She helped me learn, to always, if I say something, do it. And

how to build relationships, she helped me learn how to do it; how to build those relationships, and how to get the things done that I needed to do, and to still maintain the relationship with the faculty. (lines 43-47)

HH described how his ability to team build improved when he watched and observed how his mentor interacted and how people responded in turn to his mentor. He described his mentor's ability in this fashion, "His sincerity and openness draw people to him, he is a master negotiator" (line 190). HH reported that these observations helped him in forming many of his opinions about how, as a principal, he wanted to work with people and how he wanted to develop relationships. Many of the novice principals reported the benefit of watching and observing their mentors' interaction with people and the way people responded to them. Novices indicated that they learned from their mentors by listening to their stories, observing them, asking questions, and getting direct answers to their questions (BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, HH, II, JJ, LL). By engaging in these activities, novice principals received the assistance they needed to conceptualize their role as principal. LL summed it up this way, "Just working with a former principal, listening to his stories, a lot of it's about their stories about being principal and how that kind of helps me identify a sense of role" (lines 154-155). Another novice explained that in many ways his role was clarified for him by his mentor's stories:

Watching when I've asked questions, getting direct answers have really helped me identify and conceptualize the role of principal. You know you

come into an assistant principalship and you have a notion of principal as one thing, perhaps, and as you watch and listen you begin to learn and understand that the role of principal is much more than anybody who hasn't done it can imagine. Working closely with a mentor principal, you begin to conceptualize what that role is. (HH, lines 194-198)

Mentors offered their mentees knowledge and understanding of how to build relationships with the faculty and emphasized the importance of developing a balance between the demands of the job and the need to maintain a personal life. Drawing from their experiences and knowledge of the principalship, mentors shared their insights with mentees by providing examples and telling stories.

Role gaps. As novice principals assumed their new positions, they each had individual or personal needs and expectations with which they reported needing specific help. These needs were varied, and in some part, depended on their knowledge, skills, and past experience. Novices reported gaps in their understanding of their role, their skill level, and their ability level. The individual voices of the participants reflected their varied needs. Examples of the individual needs that novices reported needing help with were: submitting the electronic budget, creating a continuous improvement plan, planning staff development activities, interpreting data to improve the instructional program, and completing the myriad of tasks required of them. Their needs and the assistance they required in addressing these gaps were as varied as the gaps.

Many times novice principals try to be all things to all people. They struggle with knowing what tasks they should and must complete themselves and what tasks they can share with others, often assuming more responsibilities than are necessary. BB's comment illustrates her effort to assume this role. "I tried to do more than I should. I didn't delegate, as I should have. It's tough knowing what to give up. [My mentor] helped me to learn to facilitate and to delegate more" (lines 97-99). This same thought was expressed by EE in this manner: "She helped me to understand what I can delegate and what I must do myself. I think one of the hardest things to know, as a new principal is what I can give up and what I should keep" (lines 75-77).

Mentees reported that mentors assisted them with role clarification in other ways by helping them with completing day-to-day tasks such as: preparing the budget electronically, developing a master schedule, preparing opening week activities, and planning staff development activities (BB, CC, DD, GG, HH, JJ). Mentors also helped their mentees with more subtle and intricate tasks such as: understanding how much money they had in their budgets, how much money they needed, and how to get more money, as well as how to make requests, what to ask for, when to ask, and whom to ask (DD, EE, GG, HH, LL).

Each of the novice principals who were interviewed was excited and proud to have been appointed to a principal position. After the initial excitement wore off, a feeling of apprehension set in, along with a degree of uncertainty, about their role as principal. Novices realized, upon assuming the position and

believing they were ready for the challenge, that there was still much to learn. The novice principals described several of the roles that they filled as they went about the job of assuming the principalship. From the descriptions of their experiences, it was evident that novices filled the various roles of instructional leader, school visionary, and team player. In striving to implement these role-related skills the mentees looked to their mentors to fill the gap between their knowledge and skills and the demands of the position. Mentees saw their first year as a tremendous growth year, both professionally and personally, and attributed this to the success of their mentors in providing them with the support to make their first year positive (BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, HH, LL, JJ).

#### Role Clarification for Veteran Principals

Each of the veteran principals participating in the study each described the mentoring experience as a catalyst for encouraging introspection of his or her role. The principalship is filled with demands, constraints, and choices. How a principal chooses to respond to each of these is largely reflective of his or her understanding of the role as well as individual leadership style.

A major task for the principal is to make sense of situations. Each situation is unique; therefore, it is difficult to provide uniform answers that are always helpful. Uncertainty and complexity are normal aspects of the day-to-day happenings in the life of a principal. The job description of the building principal is not finite; by the very nature of the position it is open-ended. As veterans assumed their mentor role they reported: (a) engaging in reflective practice; (b)



focusing on their role as instructional leader; and (c) assuming the familiar role of teacher.

Reflective practice. As the veteran mentor principals discussed their efforts to assist mentees in understanding the role of principal, they described the process in which they engaged. Veterans reported that they began to reflect on what they did, how they did things, why they did things, and whether or not there were better ways of doing what they did. Veterans reported that the process of introspection and of reflective practice in which they engaged was critical to their being able to fulfill what they perceived their mentor responsibility to be.

The first step in the process for WW, a high school principal, was described in this way, “In order for me to help him understand his role, then I had to create the boundaries of the role for myself” (lines 206-207). Veteran principals realized that in the beginning their mentees were consumed with learning skills and tasks related to their new jobs. According to the mentors, the early mentoring relationship was driven by the mentee’s priorities with regard to performance requirements deemed necessary for survival in the job.

Other mentoring principals explained that, as they worked through situations with their mentees or helped them to complete specific tasks, the experience encouraged them to reflect on their own thoughts and on the way and the reason they did the things they did (WW, XX, YY). YY, a middle school principal, summed up this perception:

Being a mentor hasn't had an effect on how I carry out my duties. What it has had an effect on is how I think about things. I rethink them, look at them, for example the more commonplace things. It helps me take a more retrospective look at them and consider, would I do something different? Is this the "best practice" or is there a better way? (lines 120-125)

Veteran principals noted that being able to assist their mentees in understanding the aspects of the role required them to have the ability to conceptualize and explain the boundaries for themselves, as well. XX reported that serving as a mentor provided him the opportunity to reflect:

The job or role of principal is constantly changing so you can never stop learning. Serving as a mentor makes me take time to reflect and hone in on what I do and from that to improve on the things we, as a school, are doing well or to change the things that are not working. (lines 51-55)

The veteran principals believed that acting as a mentor enhanced their ability to conceptualize their role as principal. Serving as a mentor according to XX, was the catalyst for introspection and reflection:

I guess you could say mentoring has caused me to be more introspective. As I talked and worked with my mentee I looked at myself I wanted to make sure I was doing the best job I could. I wanted to be able to both model and to tell him this is best practice--this is how it is done. (lines 56-61)

Instructional leader. The necessary leadership skills on which mentors focused with their mentees were: (a) instruction; (b) team building; (c) establishing and maintaining relationships; and (d) motivating teachers. One area with which mentors reported assisting their mentees was the establishment of their role as the principal--instructional leader (VV, XX, YY, ZZ). Understanding the role of principal as instructional leader was one of the topics that was initially addressed for mentees through their Leadership Development Program Part III Mentoring (Heathfield, 2001). It was later addressed in the individual sessions mentees had with their mentors.

WW noted that the pressure on principals for their school to raise SOL scores and to achieve accreditation was significant. As a mentor, WW shared his perception in this fashion:

The benchmark and goals have been established for us. The focal point is on instruction so that we can achieve. The demands and expectations are great, so then I need to help my mentee to understand what those goals are for him as principal--his role with instruction and to help him deal with those demands. (lines 70-75)

Making a similar observation, ZZ presented her thoughts in this way:

Educational leadership has changed. When I came into education 20 years ago, the leadership was 100% management. Now it has shifted to an emphasis on the principal's primary responsibility as one of providing instructional leadership. (lines 43-46)

Teacher role model. Other mentors described the pleasure they received in returning to the familiar and comfortable role of teacher. Mentors imparted a desire to exemplify effective principal characteristics and behaviors, and to act as role models for their mentees (WW, XX, ZZ). Their thoughts are represented by ZZ's comments:

It helped; it's just like a teacher. I mean they tell you that you really know something when you teach it, and it's the same thing when you teach the process. When you teach something you know it. I also think that if I'm going to say, "You need to be in the classroom everyday," you know, that's a hidden rule basically. I don't think it's written anywhere. Then, I need to make sure that I'm in the classroom everyday, so that if that person comes, or if my mentee talks to one of my teachers they can say, "Yep, you're exactly right, she's there every single day." So, I think it builds you as far as your expectations for yourself, because you're sharing what the county's expectations are for them. I think that's the key, when you're teaching something that's when you really actually learn it. So, I think it made me think and do what I say, it probably did more good for me than it did for her, for me to be a mentor. (lines 186-197)

Mentors reported providing assistance to mentees with specific tasks while clarifying concepts about the role (VV, XX, YY, ZZ). As mentors worked with their mentees, they also benefited from the process. It provided them an opportunity to reflect on their understanding of how well they had been

completing a specific task and whether or not it could be improved. Mentors reported feeling they must be good role models for their mentees and by doing this they themselves were helped. Mentors reported that as they engaged in conversations with their mentees about tasks and responsibilities, the context of their role and the depth of their understanding of it expanded (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ).

Table 5 is a summary of the data sources and frequencies depicting themes that emerged from the data analysis as being compatible with the desired and expected outcome of role clarification. Contained in the table are the six sub-themes of: (a) instructional leader; (b) school visionary; (c) team builder; (d) role gaps; (e) reflective practice; and (f) teacher role model.

#### Mentoring and Organizational Socialization

Principals must learn the intricacies of their surroundings. Accompanying the frustration and anxiety that novice principals feel as they assume their new position is the challenge of adjusting to their new surroundings and the new culture. The importance of adjusting to the culture and of becoming socialized to the organization is cited throughout the literature (Clark, 1995; Deal, 1990; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Novice principals and veteran principals alike need specific organizational information that will allow them to be successful in adjusting to the culture of the organization and of the school. The socialization of novice

Table 5

Data Sources and Frequency for the Themes Related to the Desired and Expected Outcomes

Role Clarification

Output Categories	Interviews (17)		
	Novices (12)	Veterans (5)	Documents (2)
Role Clarification	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
Instructional leader	7	4	2
School visionary	6	0	2
Team builder	10	0	1
Role gaps	6	0	0
Reflective practice	2	3	1
Teacher role model	0	3	0

Note: Numbers in bold refer to the total number of participants who referred to the general output themes (e.g., role clarification, organizational socialization, and diminished feelings of isolation). The interviewees may have contributed comments to one or more of the sub-themes; therefore, the sum of those responses may be greater than the total for the general theme.

principals enables them to learn about the norms and cultures of the organization. Socializing the newcomer to his or her position may take the form of providing information concerning local policies, practices, procedures, and expectations. Organizational socialization is defined as the process by which new administrators learn to function in a particular organizational (school and district) context (Duke, 1988).

### Novice Principals Becoming Socialized to the Organization

Novice principals described situations in which their mentors assisted them in understanding the organization. According to novices, mentors helped them to learn how to interact with their communities and how to negotiate the school division. Mentors assisted mentees in more specific ways to understand their particular “niche” in the organization (AA, BB, GG). They provided assistance for novice principals by linking names of individuals with the services they provided. In addition, mentors provided experience and insight of a political nature, to which new principals had not been exposed in their previous positions (DD, GG, HH, LL). Each principal must learn to navigate the organization politically. This can be an especially challenging task for the novice principal. Because the mentors were experienced principals, they were able to offer guidance about the unwritten rules of the organization. Socialization into a particular group evolves by participating and identifying and assimilating into that group (AA, BB, CC, GG, II, JJ). For example, the elementary novice principal needs to feel comfortable and to assimilate into the group of elementary

principals. One of the novice elementary principals expressed her thoughts in this way: “I think it’s difficult to help people understand the organization. My mentor helped me understand how the principal fits into the organization” (AA, lines 135-137).

Interacting with the community. Acting as community liaisons, principals represent their schools and must endeavor to integrate successfully the needs and goals of the individual school with the needs and goals of the district. Principals must understand the dynamics of the politics of the school division and must know how to incorporate the thinking of other people as they represent their schools. They must be able to assimilate themselves into the culture of the school, the district, and the community, thereby assuming the responsibility of liaison to the community (AA, CC, EE, GG, HH, LL). Novice principals reported that it was expected that they would act as liaisons between their school and their communities. Novices noted that interacting with the community required them to be politically astute, therefore necessitating an understanding of the political underpinnings of the school division in relationship to the community. LL discussed his perception of instructional accountability and expanded the concept of community liaison when he described its effect on his school and his students:

Accountability is our community. Schools are asked to do a lot more than just educate. We need to teach students how to be good citizens in the community. My students don’t have as much support at home as some



students. To me, assuming a place in the community and teaching my students their responsibility to be good contributing citizens is vital to the community. Data analysis is also paramount. You look at it to see how you are doing and where you are going. You are constantly looking at the numbers and constantly crunching numbers. (lines 99-104)

A general perception of the importance of this skill was expressed by HH, another first-year high school principal:

I mean in any organization it's really critical that you understand the culture, the norms and the expectations of the organization in order to be an effective leader in that organization. And if you are with people who understand those norms and are effective leaders then you begin in very much the same way to conceptualize what the expectations are. I need to understand the norms and culture of the organization. If I understand, I begin to conceptualize the culture. Mentoring has assisted me as I embark on the journey of being principal. (lines 203-206)

LL offered a more in-depth view of just how deeply politics and community responsibilities are embedded in fulfilling the role of the principal. As a first-year high school principal, LL cited how crucial his mentor's knowledge and understanding of the unwritten rules of the school division and the interaction within the community were to him:

I sent out homecoming invitations to all the VIPs, but I didn't receive a response from my school board member. When I told my mentor that I

didn't know what to do since I hadn't heard from my board member, he explained that I should call and invite him personally. My mentor said you should always call and invite your board member personally. I just didn't know that was how it's done. I also couldn't figure out why I would attend Rotary meetings--my predecessor didn't, but that was because he'd probably done that earlier on and was established and didn't need to. My mentor made me understand my responsibility to the community and why I need to join the Rotary. (lines 31-39)

Negotiating the school division. The comments of the novice principals that were illustrative of this area of organizational socialization revealed comments that were more ambivalent with regard to the assistance that mentors provided to them. Responses of mentees who had served as assistant principals, educational specialists, or resource teachers in the county indicated a belief that they had an understanding of the school division (AA, EE, FF GG, MM). These novices reported that they knew specifics about the school division, such as how to order building repairs or to requisition furniture.

Although they had a general understanding of the concrete workings of the school division, their mentors helped them to understand and to navigate through the intricate political waters of the division (AA, BB, CC, EE, FF, GG, LL). GG described her thoughts in this manner, "My mentor gave me an immediate resource to call on without being considered a burden especially when it comes to the political piece" (lines 39-41).

The political skills required of a principal were a new skill set that novices needed to learn once they were appointed. One novice stated that, for a building principal, the “buck stops here” (DD, line 75). Novices shared a belief that they were ultimately responsible for everything in their schools, and that this level of responsibility was not the case in their former positions.

Vital to the success of a novice principal is the knowledge and understanding of the value of the members of the school division (Daresh & Playko, 1992b). It is also important to the novice principal to understand how individuals fit into the organizational hierarchy, as well as the relationships between and among individuals (AA, BB, DD, FF, HH, LL). Many of the more experienced novice principals expressed a concrete understanding of the school division. They knew whom to call or what department to contact when they had specific building needs; however, the mentoring process helped them to understand better the politics of the division as well as the unwritten rules (FF, GG, HH, LL). Mentors provided novice principals with a safe environment in which they could question and discuss politically sensitive issues.

#### Veteran Principals’ Views on Organizational Socialization

Veterans reported providing help to their mentees with interacting with the community and with negotiating the school division. Veteran principals indicated that, by participating as mentors, the mentoring process and the activities in which they engaged furthered their own understanding of the school division and the skills required to interact adeptly with the community (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ).

Mentors assisted their mentees in understanding the school division as a whole, as well as their specific part in the system. Utilizing their knowledge and experience, veteran principals were able to assist their mentees in understanding the culture and the politics of the school division. Recognizing the importance of interacting with the community, veterans offered their mentees the benefit of their knowledge and the skills that they had acquired from their years of experience.

Interacting with the community. As a veteran middle school principal who also had central office experience, YY shared his perspective on the need to understand the school division, its culture, and its expectations of the principal. He described his mentee as inquisitive and wanting to understand the implicit nature of interacting with the community with regards to the written and unwritten expectations of the school division. In sharing his perspective, YY explained that when a principal attempts to change the school culture he or she must interact with the members of the community so that the culture of the school is not at odds with that of the community. He also indicated that his mentee needed to establish credibility with her faculty, her community, and her supervisors. YY shared his view in this manner:

Some of the tasks, like dealing with culture, you can't do before you get there. You need to realize you can't change it immediately. If you think you can, you will get frustrated. It has to be done methodically, one piece at a time, and it has to fit in with the big picture (lines 126-130). . . . At the principal level, the things you deal with are different, i.e., variances, how

long will a meeting last? There are operational things, like going to school board meetings, how to handle the media; these are the pieces that she may not necessarily have dealt with before that need to be shared. The politics, being careful of what she says and who she says it to. There are some exacting guidelines that she needs to understand because there is no wiggle room. (lines 143-149)

YY's commentary offers a verbal description of a principal's becoming socialized to the organization and suggests the link between the school division and the community. His description evokes a picture in the reader's mind of a Venn diagram containing two spheres, the sphere of the community and the sphere of the school division. These two spheres overlap at the site of the school, thus demonstrating the intertwining of the school, the school division, and the community. YY's comments highlight how important it is for a novice principal to be able to incorporate the thinking of the district and of other people into addressing the needs of his or her school. His thoughts illustrate the importance of the principal's possessing the intricate skill and knowledge needed to navigate successfully within and outside the organization. Another veteran administrator, XX, described a situation in which he and his mentee attended a town meeting with other central office administrators. XX described the experience in this manner: "I came away from that meeting with a new appreciation of the political skills of our superintendent. I was glad that he was the one who had to answer questions; he took a lot of heat" (lines 70-72). According to XX, the town meeting

provided a valuable learning experience for him and his mentee, demonstrating to both of them the scope of the role of principal and the complexities of the politics involved as they related to the school division. Mentors reported guiding a their mentees and talking with them about politically sensitive issues (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ).

Negotiating the school division. Mentors assisted mentees by explaining how to access particular services needed for their schools. Mentors indicated that, if they were to assist their mentees in accessing a specific service, they needed to have first-hand knowledge themselves. They also reported that through this helping activity, they themselves gained knowledge about departments, individuals, and services of which they were previously unaware because they had not utilized the services before. This thought was expressed by WW: "It makes me think about things that I have to do. If I'm going to explain a process, I need to know it" (lines 136-137). ZZ stated that she helped her mentee understand the importance placed on communication within the school division. She explained that she talked with her mentee concerning the need to keep her immediate supervisor informed when there were unresolved conflicts with parents that could become sensitive issues:

My mentee was working through a particularly difficult situation with a parent. She felt the parent was not satisfied with the results of their meeting. I told her to call the director and give a heads up. I explained it was better to be the first one to call central office. (lines 173-175)

Mentors helped their mentees navigate the school division by explaining how to access services, where to find those services, and who to contact to provide those services. Veterans helped novices to understand the hierarchy of the school division and the ways in which individuals related to each other. They advised their mentees on the unwritten expectations of the school district, thus enabling mentees to smoothly negotiate the school division. (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ).

Table 6 is a summary of the data sources and frequencies depicting themes that emerged from the data analysis as being compatible with the desired and expected outcome of organizational socialization. Contained in the table are the sub-themes of: (a) interacting with the community and (b) negotiating the school division.

#### Mentoring and Feelings of Isolation

A major drawback to being a principal is the feeling of isolation that accompanies the position (Anderson, 1988; Daresh, 1987; Rogus & Drury, 1988). The isolation of the principal often can lead to mistakes whose consequences may not be evident until weeks or even months later (Anderson, 1988; Daresh, 1989). Novice principals experience an overwhelming number of changes as they assume the role of principal. High levels of stress, anxiety, and preoccupation with the job have been cited as some of the problems with which new principals struggle to cope (Ginty, 1995). According to Ginty, feelings of

Table 6

Data Sources and Frequency for the Themes Related to the Desired and Expected Outcomes

Organizational Socialization

Output Categories	Interviews (17)		
	Novices (12)	Veterans (5)	Documents (2)
Organizational Socialization	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Interacting with the community	6	5	0
Negotiating the school division	5	5	0

Note: Numbers in bold refer to the total number of participants who referred to the general output themes (e.g., role clarification, organizational socialization, and diminished feelings of isolation). The interviewees may have contributed comments to one or more of the sub-themes; therefore, the sum of those responses may be greater than the total for the general theme.



isolation are heightened because new principals recognize that they need to build a new support system with other administrators. Isolation, then, is defined as those feelings and attitudes experienced by principals that set them apart from others and result in feelings of loneliness.

### Diminishing Feelings of Isolation for Novice Principals

According to novices mentoring helped them to feel less isolated. Mentees reported that the mere assignment of a mentor established a channel to help them to dispel the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Mentors also helped their mentees establish networks with other principals, thereby helping to provide them with collegial support from other administrators. Novice principals indicated that their mentors assuaged their feelings of loneliness through the one-on-one interaction, through their availability, and through assistance in setting up networks (AA, CC, DD, EE, FF, HH, II, JJ, LL).

Relating to the mentor. For some novices, the feelings of isolation were related to the sense of responsibility associated with the role of principal. Tradition suggests that if principals get too close to those with whom they work they will not be able to make the tough decisions. On the other hand, leaders understand that what makes them most vulnerable and miserable is isolation. These two competing concepts, the isolation inherent in the position and the need to be a team builder, were best illustrated by HH:

It's very lonely opening a new school, beginning the year with no staff. I'm not sure but the isolation may come with the role as a separation of duties.

My mentor gave me someone to talk to when I felt isolated [talking to him].

If I didn't have people to talk to I couldn't stay in the job. (lines 220-223)

Through personal example, dedication, and responsiveness, mentors reached out to their mentees to be there in their times of need and uncertainty. The position of principal separates the individual from others in the school ; when the principal is the only one of his or her kind, this feeling of separateness is compounded. As the principal of an exceptional education center, FF explained that her feelings of loneliness were kept at bay because whenever she needed to talk she phoned her mentor, who returned her call. The closeness in FF's relationship with her mentor was illustrated when she recounted her thoughts. "[My mentor] was the only one who could grasp what I was experiencing in the role. I would start a sentence and it was as if she could almost finish what I was going to say" (lines 70-71). Mentors helped their mentees realize that leadership and the job of being a principal represent a learnable set of practices.

Networking with others. Recognizing the inherent loneliness and isolation of the principalship, mentors played a key role in helping their mentees to become part of the group of other principals and to develop a network of support. AA explained that her mentor made her understand that there was nothing she could do about the loneliness. She characterized her thoughts in this manner:

Luckily having friends in the county is a huge assistance to understanding that while everybody is lonely, there is a network that can assist you in understanding that loneliness. While everybody has a specific job or a

specific school, there is a camaraderie among the county administrators or among the friends that you share philosophical beliefs with. (lines 145-149)

Most of the elementary principals discussed how their mentors helped them feel accepted as a part of the administrative team of elementary principals, middle school principals, or high school principals. JJ, another novice explained that she felt that she had a big support group--a network that was very good. CC described several actions that her mentor took to help her become a part of a network of professionals, including accompanying her to principal meetings, inviting her to pre-meeting lunches or dinners with other principals, and seeking her out to sit together at meetings.

Acting as guides, mentors introduced their mentees to the existing network of principals and helped them to be accepted and to assimilate into that network. By assimilating into the network novices gained a wider system of support and were able to begin to develop relationships with other principals.

Among the elementary principals interviewed, loneliness appeared to be a more prominent concern (AA, CC, EE, II, JJ). Perhaps loneliness is a more prevalent feeling at the elementary level because rarely is there another administrator in the building with whom the principal can interact. Therefore, elementary principals may experience a greater degree of loneliness than that of their middle or high school counterparts.

As in any leadership position, the principalship brings with it a certain amount of isolation and loneliness. For some of the novice principals the feelings of loneliness and isolation were diminished as a result of the relationship formed between the mentor and the mentee. As the mentee became more comfortable with his or her mentor, the relationship moved to one that was more collegial. Ultimately, the mentor helped the mentee begin developing a network of support that extended beyond the mentor (AA, BB, CC, EE, HH, II, JJ, LL).

Novice principals identified knowledge and skills in initiating and overseeing changes in their schools as being the areas they most needed to be able to perform their jobs. They needed leadership skills to understand the culture and to create the necessary instructional climate, and they needed to be aware of best current educational practice. In addition, they needed to be aware of the written and unwritten policies of the district. The novice principals in this study reported satisfaction from working with their mentors. Novice principals had completed principal preparatory programs and many of them had served in the role of assistant principals, an experience that further helped to prepare them for the principalship (BB, CC, DD, FF, GG, HH, JJ, LL). Each, however, recognized that he or she needed help and his or her mentor provided that help.

#### Diminishing Feelings of Isolation for Veteran Principals

Veterans explained that isolation and loneliness are inherent in the position, but reported that, by acting as mentors, the mentoring process provided them with another outlet for companionship (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ). Acting as a

mentor required the mentor principal to develop a relationship with the mentee. Mentors also reported that in helping their mentee to become acquainted with other principals within their immediate principal group they strengthened their own networks. In some cases mentor principals reported that their own networks were actually expanded when they helped mentees to assimilate into the larger group of all principals, including those principals who were not necessarily on the same level as the mentee.

Relating to the mentee. A veteran high school principal, WW, expressed his view that even with other administrators in the building he could still feel isolated and alone. He developed his thoughts in this manner:

It can be a very isolated and lonely position because it is and, of itself, requires you to be self-reliant. When you assume the role, you can't be completely surprised. The isolation is required; as a principal you need to maintain a certain distance. Serving as a mentor, then, at least you have someone to talk to; it gives you some release. Being assigned a mentee to discuss things with is beneficial, even therapeutic. (lines 269-275)

Serving as a mentor required WW to seek out his mentee to spend time with him and to interact with him. The act of mentoring provided him with an interaction that decreased his own feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Networking with others. Another mentor, ZZ, echoed similar thoughts. "The principalship," she explained, "is by its very nature a lonely and isolated position" (line 270). From her perspective, ZZ thought that such feelings could be

combated and lessened by establishing relationships and forming networks. She described her thoughts in this manner:

Hopefully, I helped [with feelings of isolation] by just having her understand that it is an isolated position. Anytime you're a "oney," as I say, you're one person in a school. We are so very lucky in our county that there are so many principals that even while you're one in a school, it's not like being in a director's position. You know it's not like being the only person, where you really are in isolation and your job isn't like anybody else's and doesn't even come close. But I think because there are so many principals in the county, and with superintendent's meetings, elementary principal meetings--and at a lot of the superintendent's meetings we either have lunch there or the principals from our zone get together for lunch before the meeting -- that those feelings have kind of decreased. So those things that we've kind of done, as a zone, have really helped me and [my mentee] in our isolation. (lines 273-283)

Recognizing that the position could foster feelings of isolation and loneliness and that those feelings could be detrimental to a principal's career, YY, a middle school principal, offered a different perspective on the isolation that accompanies the principalship. He expressed this thought:

Isolation happens, if you allow it, as part of the job. You have to step outside of it. Isolation can be the downfall of a principal--the second--

guessing. Sometimes because of confidentiality there are issues you can't talk about; you may want to, but you can't. (lines 156-159)

By serving as mentors, veteran principals expanded their own network. As the mentor helped the mentee seek answers to questions and establish a network, the mentor's own network was expanded and strengthened (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ). Mentors helped their mentees form relationships within the established group of principals. Including mentees in dinners and other activities with other principals facilitated the establishment of such relationships. Veteran principals also reported making contact with other principals to gather information for their mentees, often resulting in strengthening their own bonds with other principals and, in some cases, expanding their own networks

Table 7 is a summary of the data sources and frequencies depicting themes that emerged from the data analysis as being compatible with the desired and expected outcome of diminished feelings of isolation. Contained in the table are the sub-themes of: (a) relating to the mentor; (b) relating to the mentee; and (c) networking with others.

#### Other Salient Themes

In this section of the report, are the themes that were related to but not explicitly addressed in the conceptual framework's desired and expected outcomes or the five input domains (see Figure 1, p. 75). The two themes that emerged were: (a) informal mentoring and (b) career advancement and

Table 7

Data Sources and Frequency for the Themes Related to the Desired and Expected Outcomes

Diminished Feelings of Isolation

Output Categories	Interviews (17)		
	Novices (12)	Veterans (5)	Documents (2)
Diminished Feelings of Isolation	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
Relating to the mentor	9	0	0
Relating to the mentee	0	5	0
Networking with others	8	5	0

Note: Numbers in bold refer to the total number of participants who referred to the general output themes (e.g., role clarification, organizational socialization, and diminished feelings of isolation). The interviewees may have contributed comments to one or more of the sub-themes; therefore, the sum of those responses may be greater than the total for the general theme.



development. References to these themes were sometimes represented in the data collected from both novices and veterans and sometimes were found in the data of only one of the groups.

### Informal Mentoring Experiences of Novices

Although each of the novices interviewed was participating in a formal administrative mentoring experience, many of them compared and discussed their experiences with both their formal and informal mentors (AA, BB, HH, KK, LL). Informal mentors and networks, especially for the three novices who reported unsatisfactory relationships with their formal mentors, proved to be a much-needed source of information and support.

Although HH's experience with his formal mentor was quite good, he described his experience with mentoring from an informal point of view. HH characterized what mentoring meant to him in this way:

Well, mentorships, in my experience, and this is really what it means to me, has been the informal relationships that I have with colleagues and supervisors on an on-going basis. These are the people that have provided a great deal of guidance, support, assistance and encouragement. They are the people I have always seen as my mentors. (lines 28-32).

Later HH touched upon another thought:

In my past mentor relationships, which were obviously formal at some point, the noticeable change was, as I think I've alluded to, I think they

became more informal. I really became friends with my mentors because of the closeness of our working relationship, and also because it was a person that I felt safe with and could talk to. (lines 290-293)

BB, a novice elementary principal, described a unique experience. She did not receive notification that she had been assigned a mentor. Because the other novice principals had received such notification, BB thought she was not going to be assigned a mentor. She compensated by seeking out a veteran principal and communicating with another novice principal to provide the support and information she needed. In addition, this novice reported that she and the other novice mentored each other.

LL, a novice high school principal, described his experience in this manner: "There haven't been other formal mentorships. There have been informal relationships with people who I went to for advice, who I consider mentors, who advocate for me" (lines 71-72).

Of the three mentors who reported an unsatisfactory experience with their assigned mentors, each established an informal network of mentors to provide support through their first year. KK reported that his mentor provided no assistance to him. "I did think about requesting to change my mentor, but I had surrounded myself with really good people and there was nothing we couldn't overcome by working together" (lines 31-32). In a similar fashion, II noted that the mentee must feel comfortable professionally and personally in order to relate to the mentor. There were two other principals that he saw and talked with on a

regular basis, and he established an informal mentoring relationship with them. II reported that his mentor could and would give him general information or advice, but he was more comfortable discussing certain topics with the informal network of mentors that he had established. AA reported that her relationship with her mentor was completely unsatisfactory, but that having relationships with other administrators allowed her to establish an informal network that provided the support and assistance she required.

Whether the novices experienced satisfactory or unsatisfactory relationships with their assigned formal mentors, many reported establishing networks and/or using informal mentors as well as formal mentors (AA, BB, EE, GG, HH, II, JJ, KK, LL). The informal mentoring relationship sometimes existed before the novice acquired a principalship and at other times began with the appointment to the position. Such informal mentoring relationships were used to either augment the formal mentoring that was occurring or to fill the void when the formal mentoring was not occurring or was not satisfactory.

#### Career Advancement and Development for Novices

Novice principals indicated that their formal and informal mentoring experiences contributed to their career advancement and development. In some instances they reported and attributed their upward mobility on the career ladder to the mentoring experiences in which they had been involved. They discussed their thoughts about career advancement as they continued to look down the road in terms of how their mentors might help them advance their careers

beyond the principalship. Some mentees, however, viewed mentoring as a way to develop their principalship careers. They reported that they had come to the principalship with the intent of staying in it (BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, II, JJ, LL).

Novice principals revealed that mentoring played an important role in assisting them in transitioning from one professional stage to another as they advanced on the career ladder. Two young novice principals with little prior administrative experience attributed their professional recognition and “fast-track” career advancement to the assistance of their mentors. One of the two, HH, shared his view of both the positive and negative effects that mentoring can have on the career of an aspiring administrator:

I had a friend and his mentor didn't understand what needed to be done to advance his career and it affected him negatively. On the other hand I worked with people who understood how to make it happen. I moved very quickly. I attribute that to my mentors. (lines 162-166)

LL attributed his career advancement to both the informal and formal mentoring he had experienced during his career. He had had two formal mentors assigned to him. LL's first formal mentor was assigned when he served as an assistant principal; she was an assistant principal in the same school and had remained there as an assistant principal after LL was appointed principal. LL noted that prior to being assigned his formal mentor, he had informal mentors who guided him and helped move him along on the career track. The assistance

that both formal and informal mentors contributed to LL's career is illustrated in his response:

There haven't been other formal mentors. There have been informal relationships with people who I went to for advice, who I consider mentors, who advocate for me, and who give me advice on how I can further my career. Those people have been very instrumental in getting me to this position and, I assume, where I will go next. (lines 71-76)

Another novice shared her perspective in this manner:

I think it is critical for career development. Those who have had mentors have had greater growth in their careers. There are people I see that I want to mentor because I see their potential. If I didn't have the mentors I wouldn't be where I am today. The least fulfilling job I had was when I was with the state department where I didn't have a mentor. Without [my mentors] I would have left the county. I wouldn't be here [principal of the school] if my mentor didn't kick me into it and advocate for me. (lines 51-57)

These mentees each recognized and attributed their career growth and advancement to the support they received from mentors, whether informal, formal or both (HH, LL, FF). They also expressed the opinion that those individuals who had mentors advanced their careers earlier and more quickly than those who did not have mentors or who had mentors later in their careers.

## Career Advancement and Development of Veterans

For the most part veterans viewed the mentoring process as an opportunity to learn and to refine their skills, thereby allowing them to continue to grow and develop in their positions. Two examples that mentors reported as being helpful in their career development were honing and fine tuning their instructional skills and engaging in introspection and reflection of their own practice. These examples were described and discussed in previous sections of this report. These veterans either did not view mentoring as an avenue that would allow them to advance their careers beyond the principalship or they may have come to the position with plans to stay in it and were, therefore, not interested in further advancing their careers.

A minority voice was heard from one mentor on the career development and advancement of some novices. YY discussed and expressed concern that novices with very little prior experience were being thrust into positions for which he believed they were not prepared. This mentor felt that the placement of these novices into the principalship could prove detrimental to their careers if they were unsuccessful in the position. YY articulated his thoughts in this manner:

The biggest mistake is putting someone in a position when they don't have the experience; I feel you're setting them up for failure. We need more mentoring programs in place to help newcomers understand what it takes rather than the old trial by fire. We deal a whole lot more with personnel issues, more minutiae, how to budget staff time and professional

development issues. There should be more programs addressing these rather than the facade of helping us be better instructional observers – we need more of the day-to-day experiences given the litigious nature of our world, for example with special education. We need to be better prepared to deal with the politics, to keep things from going downtown--how not to get there--but also what to do if they do get there. (lines 96-106)

This veteran shared his belief about the importance of on-the-job training. He reported that experience as a teacher, as well as prior administrative experience as an assistant principal, were vital to the success of those individuals who were newly appointed to the position of principal.

The emergence of these two additional themes, i.e., informal mentoring; and career advancement and development, suggest further ways in which mentoring can help principals. In some instances informal mentoring was used to augment the formal administrative mentoring process and in other instances to replace it. Mentees and mentors alike attributed the mentoring process with being beneficial to their career growth and development.

Table 8 is a summary of the data sources and frequencies depicting other salient themes that emerging from the data analysis that were not explicitly addressed in themes representative of the desired and expected outcomes or those of the five input domains. Contained in the table are the themes of: (a) informal mentoring; and (b) career advancement and development.

Table 8

Data Sources and Frequency for the Themes Related to Participants'

Experiences

Other Salient Themes

	Interviews (17)		
Other Salient Themes	Novices	Veterans	Documents
	(12)	(5)	(2)
Informal Mentors	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Career Advancement and Development	8	1	0

Note: Numbers refer to the total number of participants who referred to the two salient themes.



## The Five Input Domains

The participants' experiences were viewed through the focal lens of my conceptual framework (see Figure 1, p. 75). Much of the data collected from the participants was reflective of the five input domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) participant involvement; (d) selection and matching procedures; and (e) regular feedback and monitoring. Both novice and veteran principals' perceptions of their experiences with the formal administrative mentoring process as related to the five domains are described in the following sections.

### Organizational Support

A formal administrative mentoring program must receive support from the organization. Indicators of the presence of support are: (a) adequate resources; (b) involvement by top management; and (c) existence of the mentoring program as an integral component of a larger professional career development program.

Participants in this study projected a strong belief that the formal administrative mentoring program did receive support from the members of the school division. As evidence of this support, participants recalled the monetary resources made available to implement and administer the program and the involvement and physical support demonstrated by central office administrators. The comments of both novice and veteran principals indicated that the leadership program and the formal administrative mentoring component were verbally endorsed and financially supported by the district superintendent, assistant

superintendents, and other central office administrators (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, HH, II, JJ, LL; VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ).

As a specific example of the school division's initial support of the mentoring program the participants pointed to a three-day "Leaders are Learners" orientation program held for new administrators during the summer of 2001. Both the three-day orientation session and the formal mentoring sessions to be held subsequently were described in the program brochure distributed to new administrators (Heathfield, 2001). The superintendent opened the initial session with welcoming remarks and a motivational charge to the new administrators. During the three days, new principals became acquainted with each of the assistant superintendents and with the appropriate instructional directors. On the first day, each novice principal was provided with a very large notebook that contained information about each assistant superintendent's department, the name and position of each staff member, and the services provided by each department. The assistant superintendents and their directors each supplemented the information in the notebook with a personal presentation to the new administrators. The second and third days were devoted to other activities. Some of the novice principals explained that those initial days allowed them to get to know one another, to establish a network, and to develop bonds with each other that might not have otherwise formed.

The next scheduled meeting was planned for October 2, 2001, but was postponed due to concerns surrounding the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack

on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The meeting was rescheduled for October 16, 2001, and served as a formal get-together for the mentors and mentees. Once again, support for the mentoring program was demonstrated by the presence of the superintendent and the assistant superintendents. Books about mentoring were given to mentors and mentees, and a power point presentation outlined the district goals and the subsequent sessions in which the participants would be involved.

### Program Clarity

The clarity of a program is achieved through the establishment of specific goals and expectations and a clear definition of the role of the participants. Program clarity is further enhanced through orientation sessions designed to explain the program goals and expected outcomes and through specific training sessions for participants.

All new principals were required to participate in the mentoring program. The brochure provided to the novice principals described the program as a three-part initiative beginning in Summer 2001 and ending in Summer 2002. The format consisted of 12 days of training. Part I of this program, "Coaching New Leaders to Reach New Heights," was a three-day session that served to acquaint new administrators with the organization and with specific members of the central administration. Part I was described in greater detail in the discussion of the formal mentoring program in the prologue to chapter 4. Part II was a two-day

training session that allowed participants to practice skills and to reflect on the effectiveness of skill implementation.

Mentoring was the third component of the district's leadership program and involved nine days of training, divided into three main time frames: fall, winter, and spring. Specific topics were covered during each training session. These topics included: "Getting to Know Your Mentor"; "The Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Conference"; "Giving Feedback on What You Have Observed"; "Making the Connection"; "Data Analysis and Classroom Construction"; "Effective Faculty Meetings"; "Using Data to Monitor Instruction"; "Conducting Effective Team Meetings"; and "Celebrating the Successes" (Leadership Development for New Leaders, MCPS; 2001). The mentoring program has been an integral component of the larger leadership development program. The sessions have been designed to assist novice principals in developing skills that the district has identified as important to principals in meeting the district's expectations of them in their leadership roles.

Although the brochure presented the components of the leadership program separately from the formal administrative mentoring sessions, participants referenced the entire program and its various activities and goals interchangeably when discussing the mentoring process. This perception of the activities was evidenced through the participants' comments when they were asked about the support given to the mentoring program or the activities of the program. Participants discussed the three-day orientation session, other

leadership development sessions, the formal mentoring “kick-off” meeting, and the mentoring topic sessions interchangeably when they were asked to describe different aspects of the formal administrative mentoring program. The way the participants talked about the program as a single entity may well represent an accurate reflection of the program in that its activities sought to give principals the information, guidance, and support necessary for them to be successful in their new positions. Participants in the study believed that the district was providing many resources and opportunities for them to develop the necessary skills to be successful leaders (BB, CC, DD, EE, GG, HH, JJ; ZZ, VV, YY).

### Participant Involvement

Descriptors denoting the input domain of participant involvement include voluntary participation by the participants, as well as flexibility in defining the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. To ensure participant involvement, participants should have input into the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

All novice principals were required to participate in the formal administrative mentoring program (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE FF, GG, HH, II, JJ, KK, LL). Veteran principals were selected and asked to participate (VV, WW, XX, YY, ZZ). As described earlier, the activities were pre-planned for the group as a whole. Specific activities between mentor and mentee were designed and required regardless of the mentee’s skill level or strengths and weaknesses. The structure and format of the program were planned and implemented without input

from participants; mentor pairs were matched without input from either individual. The relationship between mentor and mentee was structured and defined by the program. Any flexibility in the relationships occurred when the mentoring pairs worked together outside the parameters of the established responsibilities that were assigned through the program.

#### Selection and Matching Procedures

The input domain of selection and matching is defined by the procedures and criteria used to select and match program participants. The effectiveness of the mentoring program is enhanced when mentors are selected based on established criteria and when mentors and mentees are chosen and matched based on program objectives.

The superintendent's executive team, consisting of the superintendent and three assistant superintendents, and the Director of Leadership Development, carried out the selection and pairing of mentors and mentees. One change that was reflected in the formal administrative mentoring program for the 2001-2002 school year was the assignment of a three-person mentor team to each novice principal. Each team consisted of a retired principal, a practicing principal, and the Director of Leadership Development. Some retired principals were assigned to more than one mentoring team. The change to a three-on-one mentoring team was perceived by the executive team as a better method to address the needs of the new principal without overburdening one individual. The concept of using a three-person mentoring team did not appear in the literature reviewed for this

study. According to the Director of Leadership Development, practicing principals were selected based, in part, upon their success, as viewed by the executive team. Several other factors were considered also, including staff morale, student achievement, community relations, and the demographic similarity of the mentor principal's school to that of the new principal. In addition, the practicing mentor principal was assigned by level. For example, a novice elementary principal was assigned a mentor who was an elementary principal.

A training session was provided for the mentor, and then an icebreaker was held to acquaint the mentors with their mentees. During this session, participant pairs were given an opportunity to schedule times to meet. Although novice principals' participation was mandatory, a new principal could request a change of partner if the principal felt that he or she was not well matched with the assigned mentor.

Mentor-mentee compatibility. Most novices reported being satisfied with the persons assigned as their mentors (BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, HH, JJ, LL). Mentees described their satisfaction with their assigned mentors in many ways. One mentee reported that her mentor provided her with a "trusted confidant," a sounding board, and someone with whom she could reflect. Another mentee's satisfaction resided in the fact that she already knew and respected her mentor as a colleague because they had served as assistant principals together. DD described his satisfaction with his mentor in the following manner: "She was a great choice. She always communicates back with me. People speak highly of

her. She is known for her dependability, reliability, and credibility” (lines 85-86). CC characterized her relationship with her mentor as a positive experience; she attributed her satisfaction with her mentor to the mentor’s personality, her pride in serving as a mentor, and her willingness and desire to help. Although EE did not know her mentor before they were matched, she described her contentment with the assignment in this fashion: “I didn’t know my mentor personally but it really didn’t matter, that first conversation made the difference with us being close--it made the difference” (lines 70-71). LL’s statement is characteristic of novice principals’ feelings of satisfaction with their assigned mentors:

He would be my mentor regardless of whether he was assigned; I’d have picked up the phone and asked. It is fortuitous that he was assigned because I would have used him anyway. We have the same community -- we’re neighbors. (lines 63-65)

Mentoring is not a neat, precise, foolproof method; it does not always meet the needs of every participant. Such was the case with three of the elementary principals in this study (AA, II, KK). One novice (II) reported a more ambivalent relationship with his mentor. He indicated that his relationship was not as solid as he expected. Although the relationship with his mentor was not as strong as the relationships of other mentees and mentors, he reported that his mentor did provide limited assistance. II explained his viewpoint in this manner:

My mentor principal is new to me. He called and made contact with me.

Our relationship is not as cemented, maybe, as it should be. My mentor is



diverse; there's a difference in personality. He's more quiet--introverted-- than I am. I don't hesitate to call and seek advice. That's not an issue.

From a comfort standpoint, I'm more comfortable picking the brain of one of the other principals I already have a relationship with. Maybe there should be activities that help to foster a relationship. (lines 25- 30)

Although II felt that his mentor was not a perfect "fit," he compensated by establishing a network of informal mentors. When he thought his mentor could not meet his needs, he called upon one of his informal mentors for help.

KK reported that his mentor did not assist him with the simplest tasks of his role and certainly provided no support or guidance in understanding the many facets of the job of principal. KK characterized his perception in this manner:

A mentor is a person that's there with a wealth of experience that you draw and learn from. Mentoring is a two-way street. The mentee is a sponge ready to absorb and is hungry for knowledge. The mentor should have a passion to help as much as the mentee's passion for need. The mentor needs to take charge. I had no building level experience. I was an exceptionally dry sponge, less knowledgeable than most. I was completely in the dark about being a building level administrator. It was extremely difficult for me to get my head out and ask for help. I felt like I was the new kid on the block and had to prove myself. I wouldn't describe my mentor as helpful. (lines 1-9)

Although KK expressed his disappointment in his mentoring experience, other comments he made reflect the shared responsibility that he felt for the failure of the relationship. These specific comments sum up his experience:

I should have been learning from my mentor; I can honestly say I learned very little from him. When I did reach out, I got different responses. I'm not sure; it could be personalities, not either person's fault. I may not have reached out as much as I should have and vice versa. I knew when my real mentor was assigned, I just didn't see the relationship clicking. But, you do the best you can with what you get. (lines 18-24)

An inability to relate because of different philosophical beliefs characterized a major stumbling block for one of the mentoring pairs. The novice principal of this pair characterized her experience in the following manner:

There was actually a situation with a discipline issue, and I wasn't sure at the elementary level, with a second grade child, exactly what would have been the appropriate thing to do. I had my commonsense answer, but at the same time to be consistent throughout the county, what would have been appropriate? I called my mentor and talked with her. That's when I realized philosophically, as far as children went, we were not on the same track as far as how you treat children, and what you do, and what suspension, and what the discipline issues were about and what I believed the discipline goals should be. In my opinion, they [discipline goals] are very much about changing behaviors at the elementary level, teaching

children appropriate behaviors, and what consequences are. So, that was probably the first time I realized that as far as those things went, I was not going to be able to rely on my mentor for those answers because we were so far apart philosophically and in so many areas. (AA, lines 56-67)

Although the relationship with her mentor was not forthcoming, AA stated that she did learn a valuable lesson through the relationship with the mentor. AA characterized her overall discontent with her mentor and their relationship in this way:

As a mentee I was very discouraged because I felt like my mentor almost used the times we worked together as a time to air gripes and complaints. And at that point I needed so much help, that I just really needed that time with her to know how to do things, how to take care of things. Hopefully, though, that made me a better mentor because I tried to make sure I didn't do any of that (lines 10-14). . . . I don't know that there was a relationship. If all else failed I called her, but actually other than the very first call she made to let me know she had been selected as my mentor, she never initiated any calls. (lines 32-34)

All three of these novice principals compensated for what was lacking in their mentoring relationships by forming a support system of informal mentors with other principals to whom they could reach out when they needed help or guidance. Although the three novices expressed dissatisfaction with their assigned mentors and with the quality of the relationships, none of them

requested to change mentors. One of them, KK, offered this explanation: “I didn’t request a change because I didn’t know how it would be perceived or what the political fall-out would be. I wasn’t willing to hurt anyone’s feelings” (lines 33-34). Reflecting on his past experience in a new position in the district with a formally assigned mentor, KK shared his thoughts about the experience: “My other mentoring experience was great, totally superior to this one” (line 102).

Timeliness in assigning mentors. Another area of concern that was expressed by several of the participants was related to the timeliness with which their mentors were assigned. According to the novice principals, having their mentors assigned to them within the first two weeks of receiving their appointments was essential. Participants explained that by receiving notification of a mentor assignment early, they could quickly make contact to get assistance. BB, a novice elementary principal, described a unique experience. She did not receive notification that she had been assigned a mentor. Because the other novice principals had received such notification, BB thought she was not going to be assigned one. She compensated by seeking out a veteran principal and by asking her to serve as a mentor. BB reflected on the importance of matching mentors with mentees and the timeliness of assigning the mentor:

There should be a science out of the matching. It should look at the personalities. The assignment of the mentor should be made as early as possible, definitely before the opening of school. There are so many pre-opening pieces that you need help with. (lines 151-154)

The need for the mentor to be assigned as soon as possible after the individual's appointment to the principalship was considered to be critical by all of the novice principals regardless of whether their experiences with mentors were viewed as positive or negative (AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, HH, II, JJ, KK, LL). As a group, their responses indicated their needs were greatest prior to the opening of school and in those first few crucial weeks.

The importance of matching mentors and mentees emerged as a strong theme. Participants expressed the viewpoint that the selection and matching of the mentor pairs was critical to the success of the relationship. Novice principals elaborated on this by stating that the district should give some thought to allowing the mentees to pick their own mentors or permitting some input in the selection and matching process.

#### Regular Feedback and Monitoring

In order for a formal mentoring process to be successful, monitoring of its activities should take place and feedback from its participants should be sought (Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990; Hagevik, 1998; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1991). The feedback should be requested on a regular basis and there should be continuous monitoring of the mentoring process and its outcomes. Evaluation of the quality or effectiveness of the mentoring process should be based on program objectives and goals; modifications to the program should be based on the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the process.

The formal administrative mentoring program in the district has grown, developed, and been restructured over time to become the program that exists today. The Director of Leadership Development indicated that after each meeting or session associated with the program, participants completed evaluation forms about that particular session. According to the Director of Leadership Development, suggestions from the evaluations were reviewed, but it appeared that participants' suggestions were not considered (BB, CC, EE, FF, GG, HH, II, LL, ZZ, VV). Although feedback was solicited and received from the participants after each session, the sessions described in the brochure and those actually provided have been the same for the past two years (2000-2001 and 2001-2002).

Table 9 is a summary of the data sources and frequencies depicting the themes and sub-themes emerging from the data analysis that were explicitly representative of one of the five input domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) participant involvement; (d) selection and matching procedures; and (e) regular monitoring and feedback. Contained in the table are the two sub-themes included in the input domain of selection and matching: (a) mentor-mentee compatibility; and (b) timeliness in assigning mentors.

#### Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how novice and veteran principals described their experiences with formal administrative mentoring.

Table 9

Data Sources and Frequency for the Domains Related to the RecommendedInputs

## Input Domains

Input Domains	Interviews (17)		
	Novices (12)	Veterans (5)	Documents (2)
Five Input Domains	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
Organizational Support	11	5	2
Program Clarity	7	3	2
Participant Involvement	11	5	0
Selection and Matching Procedures	12	2	0
Mentor-mentee compatibility	3	0	0
Timeliness in assigning mentors	12	0	0
Regular Feedback and Monitoring	8	2	1

Note: Numbers in bold refer to the total number of participants who referred to the input themes. The interviewees may have contributed comments to one or more of the sub-themes; therefore, the sum of those responses may be greater than the total for the general theme.

Because this was a qualitative study, data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews with principals who had participated in one local district's formal administrative mentoring program. Documents provided to program participants were also inspected to supplement the interview data that were collected. Twelve novice and five veteran principals, representing elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as one alternative middle school and one exceptional education center, were the participants in the study. Data analysis was an ongoing process that began with the first interview and continued through the study until completion of the final report. My written notes and the transcript from each interview were read and analyzed as I continued the process of conducting additional interviews. This practice allowed me to develop themes and patterns to use in analyzing the data that had been identified in the conceptual framework. Inter-rater reliability was achieved by using a peer to analyze data. An analysis of the data indicated that formal mentoring can help novice principals with clarifying their role, becoming socialized to the organization, and diminishing their feelings of isolation.

The literature is replete with concerns about potential administrator shortages based upon estimates that as many as one-half of all public school principals are at an age when they could retire (Muse & Thomas, 1991; NAESP & NASSP, 1998; Parkay & Currie, 1992; Olson, 1999). With the increasing number of principals reaching retirement age, districts are faced with the daunting responsibility of recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining principals.



Along with these estimates of administrator shortages, educators are under increased pressure to perform more competently and to show measurable results. Although such pressure in the past tended to focus on teachers and their performance, the clamor for educational reform and accountability has zeroed in on principals and their performance as a key to successful schools. Principals must continually grow if they are to be effective leaders. Their growth should represent development above and beyond competence and should model the behavior of lifelong learners.

During the beginning stages of the interview process and throughout the analysis of data, I was impressed by the sincerity, openness, and earnestness with which the principals responded to the interview questions, as well as their willingness and desire to help me complete my study. Their responses illustrated the dynamics of the mentoring relationship and their experiences with the mentoring process. Principals described what it felt like to be in their situation. In many instances they talked about their teachers, students, communities, and their mentors or mentees. They discussed the ways in which the mentoring experience affected them professionally and personally and the things they learned or did not learn as a result of the experience.

#### Participant Experiences

The majority of the participants in the study described their experiences in the formal mentoring program as being positive and beneficial to them. Both the desired and expected outcomes and the five recommended inputs were

evidenced in the data. The two unexpected themes of informal mentoring and career advancement and development emerged as other salient themes.

Perhaps one of the most powerful points that can be observed in this study is the unity of the voices of the participants that are represented throughout the discussion of the themes.

### Role Clarification

According to the data revealed, the principals involved in this study reported that the formal mentoring process helped them with role clarity. Novice and veteran principals each benefited from their experience as mentee or mentor; thus, mentoring provided a learning experience with benefits accruing to both groups. This perception parallels the research cited in the literature (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Daresh & Playko, 1993; Kram, 1985; Zey, 1988). Mentoring allowed novices to learn their craft first-hand from a knowledgeable, experienced practicing principal. This experience not only allowed novices to acquire many of the skills needed day-to-day but also allowed them to focus on areas important to their survival on the job.

Mentors and mentees focused on vital key areas such as: (a) building teams; (b) developing a quality instructional program; (c) developing techniques for improving instruction; and (d) mapping out strategies for achieving SOL goals. Working together allowed mentees to receive the help they needed. Mentors reflected on their own skills and practices, which resulted in their making changes and improvements as well.

Reflective practice. Engaging in the process of “reflective practice” benefited both mentees and mentors. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) argued that the use of reflection stimulates a change process that once begun does not end. Formal mentoring encouraged mentees to expand their knowledge base, to improve their skills, and to think about what they were doing and why they were doing it. Serving as mentors, veteran principals shared experiences through their stories to illustrate ways of handling situations. In the telling of stories, veteran principals could share both exemplary behaviors and potential pitfalls. Veteran principals believed they needed to model exemplary behaviors; this process stimulated reflection and allowed them to reaffirm their skills and commitment.

Creating an effective, successful school is linked to the leadership present in the school (Deal, 1990). The principal plays a pivotal role in establishing the climate for making a school successful. In addition, the role of the principal is complicated by societal factors as well as the need to balance leadership and management issues (Daresh, 1987). The tenuous position is often overwhelming for a novice principal and a continual source of stress for the veteran principal (Daresh & Playko, 1992a; Duke, 1988; Lauder, 2000; Rogus & Drury, 1988). If we believe the research that identifies principals as critical to effective successful schools, then it is important to identify ways in which to help novice principals to understand their roles and veteran principals to expand their understanding (Brookover, 1992; Clark, 1995; Deal, 1990; NAESP & NASSP, 2000).

### Organizational Socialization

The theme of organizational socialization reflected the unity of the participants' perception. The mentoring process helped both novices and veterans in becoming adept in negotiating the school division. Although some of the novices who had experiences as assistant principals shared a common belief that they knew the organization, they reported that their mentors helped them to understand the subtler, more intricate nature of the organization, such as "who's who," the "ins-and-outs," and the "politics." Novice principals, for the most part, reported that their mentors responded promptly to their requests for resources or put them in contact with someone the mentor had found to be a valuable source. Mentees appreciated the fact that mentors were available, provided support, acted as a sounding board, and offered suggestions and alternatives during crisis situations. Mentors reported a broadening of their knowledge of the workings of the organization as they helped their mentees.

On a more critical level, mentees consistently cited the mentors as invaluable sources of knowledge regarding how to handle politically sensitive issues and how to interact with the community. In addition, novice principals felt free to ask questions and receive feedback from their mentors regarding sensitive topics, thereby reflecting a deep sense of trust in their relationship. Mentors and mentees reported collaborating on how to fulfill their respective responsibilities as liaisons between the school division and their schools and between their schools and communities. The support and communication that

was provided through the mentoring process resulted in a positive experience for both groups.

One of the challenges facing novice principals is learning the intricacies of their new surroundings. This task has the potential of being one of the biggest stumbling blocks for a novice principal (Hearne, 1991). Novices reported that their mentors provided them with insightful thoughts, information, and recommendations as they became acclimated to their schools and the school division and learned how to interact with the community

#### Diminished Feelings of Isolation

Formal mentoring helped reduce novice and veteran principals' feelings of isolation. The majority of the novice principals reported that their feelings of isolation were diminished with the assignment of a mentor and, similarly, veterans reported that their feelings of isolation were diminished merely by their serving as mentors. The mentoring process encouraged and required personal contact between the mentor and mentee. Novice principals looked to their mentors to provide emotional support, to be honest and open, and to be active listeners and guides. Mentees expected to find a confidant, someone they could trust, a friend in the mentor. Some of the novice principals hoped and expected that as the relationship developed it would encompass a professional as well as a personal friendship. Novice principals described positive experiences with mentors that invoked sisterly or brotherly feelings. In addition, mentees and

mentors reported establishing collegial relationships that they hoped would be long lasting.

Networking with others. Beyond reducing isolation, mentoring encouraged an *esprit de corps* among the participants, expanding informal networks and lessening the feelings of isolation (Rogus & Drury, 1988). The responsibility of serving as a mentor encouraged and enabled veteran principals to make contact and to network with other local school leaders. Mentoring allowed both groups to develop or to expand their networks and helped reduce the isolation from peers, which can be one of the most significant problems faced by principals (Ashby, 1991; Monsur, 1998). The literature supported the idea that formal mentoring encourages a “climate of collegial support,” thereby lessening the feelings of isolation among participants (Daresh & Playko, 1992b, 1993; Rogus & Drury, 1988).

In this study the required interaction between mentor and mentee as they engaged in the mentoring process encouraged the relationship to develop and to grow, often resulting in a strong bond developing between mentor and mentee. The data collected from this study revealed the same phenomenon as that reported in the literature: mentoring encourages the development of networks, and, in many instances, the relationship between mentee and mentor develops into one of collegiality as the relationship matures.

Both novice and veteran principals perceived the principalship as a lonely position. According to both groups, they could not confide in teachers and

assistant principals and needed to be careful of what they shared with the central office administrators, who evaluated them. Principals reported feeling vulnerable if they exposed their weaknesses to their superiors. They also reported feeling a need to be cautious about what they said outside the building because they might be misunderstood. The mentoring relationship provided the mentor and the mentee with a confidant with whom they could share sensitive issues and feelings.

#### Other Salient Themes

From the data collected in this study, two unanticipated themes emerged that were not contained in the conceptual framework (see Figure 1). They were: (a) informal mentoring; and (b) career advancement and development.

The first salient theme, informal mentoring, is not contained in the conceptual framework because the framework reflects the recommended inputs and desired outcomes of an effective formal administrative mentoring program; therefore, informal mentoring would not be included in such a framework.

The second theme, career development, as it emerged from the analysis of the data, was viewed by the novices from the perspective of changing positions and/or advancing their careers.

#### Informal Mentoring Experiences of Novices

Each of the novice principals was included in the study because he or she had participated in a formal mentoring experience. However, the mentoring experiences described by the novices included both formal and informal

experiences. Novices not only described their formal mentoring experiences but also discussed, in detail, informal mentors and informal mentoring experiences. Novices viewed their informal mentoring experiences from two distinct perspectives. First, some novices already had an existing informal network of colleagues that they relied upon or an individual that they recognized as an informal mentor. These networks and relationships were initiated and seemed to develop from meetings and from interactions that occurred over time. Second, some novices indicated that they had been assigned formal mentors at other stages in their careers and that as these relationships matured, evolved, and continued over time they became less formal, evolving into more informal mentor or collegial relationships. Many of the novices stated that they hoped and expected that the experience from this formal mentoring relationship would continue and evolve into a more informal, collegial relationship.

Informal mentoring was used by some participants to augment and support the ongoing formal mentoring process. Informal mentoring was used by other participants to replace the formal mentoring when it was not working. The emergence of informal mentoring while participants are engaging in formal mentoring may suggest that formal and informal mentoring can co-exist and that informal mentoring can enhance the formal process.

### Career Advancement and Development

The perceptions reported by novices indicated that mentoring contributed to the development and in some cases to the advancement of their careers.



Those novices that reported mentoring as contributing to their career development attributed the benefit to both informal and formal mentoring experiences, which they believed helped them to acquire their present positions. As noted earlier, mentoring relationships may have begun formally but then evolved to informal relationships. Thus novices, in some instances, had multiple mentors located in strategic positions forming a network that supported career advancement. This situation was evidenced in the discussion of some novices who reported that these mentoring relationships were instrumental in their being recognized and eventually moving up the career ladder. Several of the novices reported having career goals that included advancing to other positions beyond the principalship. They hoped that as their mentoring relationships continued on an informal basis, their mentors would provide help if the opportunity for career advancement arose.

#### The Five Recommended Input Domains

There is a great deal of information contained in the literature about the characteristics and components of effective formal mentoring programs. For the purposes of my study, five domains were identified and supported by the literature as essential components of successful formal administrative mentoring programs. If these five domains are present, novice and veteran principals reportedly have a clearer understanding of their role, they feel a part of the organization, and they feel less isolated (Ashby, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1992). Findings from the study, as discussed in this section, are viewed through the lens

of the conceptual framework's five recommended input domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) selection and matching procedures; (d) participant involvement; and (e) regular monitoring and feedback.

### Organizational Support

The data revealed that the voices of the novices and veterans were united with regard to this one theme. The participants' perceptions indicated that the formal administrative mentoring program received financial, physical, and emotional support from the school division and the central office leadership staff. The importance of organizational support to a formal mentoring program is referenced in several models in the literature (Bolam et al., 1995; Gaskill, 1993; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991). The participants perceived that this program was adequately funded and that it was a component of a larger leadership development program. When formal mentoring relationships are viewed as one component in a larger professional development process, the component is effectively integrated into other development activities and training programs, and is seen as having a greater effect on both the individual and the organization (Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1982). The formal administrative mentoring program in which the participants were involved was an integral part of the district's larger leadership development program.

### Program Clarity of Goals

According to the literature, the effectiveness of a formal administrative mentoring program depends on the extent to which the goals of the program are defined and communicated to the participants and the stakeholders (Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1991). Roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees should be clarified and communicated in orientation sessions. Mentors and mentees should have clear expectations for the program and should have a clear understanding of the objectives of the program (Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983). Training needs to be provided to both the mentor and the mentee to clarify their responsibilities and broaden their understanding of their roles (Gaskill, 1993).

The data did not reveal the same unity of perception by the participants as was revealed in other input themes; participants did, however, reflect areas of commonalties. Both mentees and mentors discussed the relevance of the sessions in which they were required to participate, noting that in some ways the mentoring took on a “one size fits all” concept. The literature supported the premise that program participants should have clear, realistic expectations of intended and unintended program goals, objectives, and outcomes (Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1985). Based upon inspection of the program brochure and analysis of the data collected from the participants, it was clear that the participants understood what was expected of them. The organization of the Leadership Development for New Leaders program was explained and

communicated to the participants. Each of the planned formal mentoring sessions in which the mentees engaged with their mentors was described in the program brochure.

It was revealed in the literature that unmet expectations are a major potential contributor to program failure (Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1982). Both groups of participants voiced a common belief that sessions might have been more meaningful to them if the sessions had addressed what they believed to be a particular area of need or skill development. Participants indicated that choice was a missing ingredient that was important to their satisfaction.

#### Participant Involvement

The theme of participant involvement revealed considerable unity in the voices of the mentees and the importance they placed on it. Supported in the literature was the belief that the meaningfulness of a program depends on the degree to which the mentees and mentors have a sense of involvement in the decision making in the program. Participants in the mentoring program need to feel that they have some decision-making control over their participation in the program and its structure.

Voluntary vs. mandatory participation. According to the literature, participation should be voluntary for mentors and mentees. In addition, they should be allowed to withdraw from the program with no negative consequences (Gray, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1985). In the

school district under study, veteran principals were selected and asked to serve as mentors. Their participation was voluntary, and some declined to serve for various reasons. Novices were required to participate in the program, and none of them withdrew during the course of the study.

According to Gray & Gray (1990), mentoring programs are most effective when participants feel ownership in the program. It has also been suggested by Zey (1985) that the design and structure of the program should be at least partially based on input from the mentors and mentees. These themes were prevalent throughout the literature, with authors arguing that a mentoring program is strengthened by the involvement of the participants and their commitment to the program. The structure of the program under study was intact when the participants became involved. This fact begs several observations and questions. First, one must wonder whether all novice principals would have chosen to participate if it was not required? Second, the participants' level of commitment may have been different if their participation was voluntary. Third, would the structure, design, and implementation of the program have been different if the input of the participants had been solicited?

#### Selection and Matching Procedures

The voices of the participants revealed that the theme of selection and matching was one of great importance among them. A thoughtful and predetermined process for identifying, selecting, and matching mentors and mentees should be included in an effective formal administrative mentoring

program. Careful identification and selection have been emphasized within the literature (Gaskill, 1993; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983). Matches are more likely to be effective when the organization uses specific criteria in matching mentors and mentees. Factors to consider include: position, interests, personalities, accessibility, and geographic proximity (Gaskill, 1993). Once mentors and mentees are matched they should be monitored to determine the compatibility of the relationship (Gaskill, 1993). In this division's program, the executive team used a specific procedure to select mentees and mentors to participate. Although there were set criteria used in the process, the selection was subjective. It did, however, include some of the characteristics mentioned in the literature--position, geographic proximity, and similarity in school population. After mentors and mentees were matched, neither regular monitoring nor feedback occurred.

Mentor-mentee compatibility. In agreement with the literature, this study illustrated the importance of the compatibility of the mentee and mentor. For the most part, the mentees taking part in this study were satisfied with their assigned mentors and reported establishing good relationships with them; this positive outcome appeared to be the result of chance, however, rather than a careful matching procedure. The three mentees who reported dissatisfaction with their mentors might have had better experiences if specific criteria had been used to match the participants. Another vital component that appeared to be absent from this district's program was the option for a participant to withdraw from the

program without penalty. Mentees were not allowed to withdraw, and the three mentees who expressed dissatisfaction with their assigned mentors did not feel they could request a change of mentors.

Consistent with other research findings, this study revealed mentoring to be an interpersonal relationship based on mutual respect and trust. As the mentees and mentors described their relationships, both used the words “trust” and “respect.” Both groups discussed the characteristics they believed a mentor should possess and should bring to the mentoring relationship. Many of the same characteristics were found in the literature addressing effective mentors. Competency, good listener skills, compassion, trustworthiness, credibility, and accessibility were some of the characteristics described as valuable by both mentors and mentees. Both mentors and mentees also thought a mentor should be supportive, have a vested interest in the mentee, be non-judgmental, and lead by example (Alleman, 1982; Daresh & Playko, 1990; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Rowley, 1999). It was considered crucial that mentees respect and trust their mentors. When the mentees already knew their mentors, the respect and trust developed much more quickly. When the mentee had no prior experience or relationship with the mentor but knew the mentor’s reputation to be exemplary, respect was present but at a different level. In these cases the mentor had to prove worthiness as a trusted confidant. Once the relationship was cemented, mentees were able to share their emotions, problems, and opinions with their

mentors. In turn, mentors guided and reassured mentees through sensitive and even confidential situations.

Trust did not occur for two mentees (AA, KK). Neither of these mentees reported a positive mentoring experience, indicating a failed relationship with the mentor as the primary reason. They discussed the importance of matching mentees with mentors so that the relationship could develop. According to these novices, the trust that occurs in the mentoring relationship and that ties mentees to mentors will not take place if the mentee and mentor are not well matched and comfortable with one another. Reflecting on these participants' perceptions, it can be argued then that a "good fit" between pairs is necessary for the bond of trust to develop.

#### Regular Feedback and Monitoring

The strength of the voices of the participants was not as well represented in this theme of regular feedback and monitoring. A fact that is clearly recognized in the literature is the importance of soliciting regular feedback, monitoring, and making improvements to a program; these components are recognized as critical to the ultimate quality of the program (Gray & Gray, 1990; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991). Periodic assessments through interviews or surveys should be used to evaluate program effectiveness and to implement change. Mentees suggested that checkpoints should have been established, allowing for monitoring and feedback at the beginning, at a mid-point, and at the formal conclusion of the mentoring process. From their perspective, the absence



of this type of monitoring represented the loss of a valuable and important ingredient. These assessments help to build and maintain program credibility. Because of the nature of the mentoring process, the structure of the program will need to be modified over time in order to maintain its responsiveness to participant and district expectations and objectives.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding chapters described the investigation of this study in which the purpose was to depict the experiences of novice and veteran principals who participated in a formal administrative mentoring program. This chapter includes information regarding the conclusions of the study and recommendations for practice and further research, as well as personal reflections regarding the research.

Most of the research on mentoring has focused on novice teachers and has produced little evidence of effects (Daresh, 1989; Little, 1990). The limited body of literature on mentoring of administrators has focused on aspiring administrators and the transfer of knowledge from experienced principals to newly appointed ones through an informal mentoring process (Anderson, 1988; Daresh, 1988; Daresh & Playko, 1991; Ginty, 1995). Little attention has been given to the process of formal administrative mentorships; therefore, developing an understanding of how formal mentoring assists novice principals and how it can be shaped to meet their varied needs is important to future decisions concerning how it might be implemented.

#### Conclusions

In analyzing the data from the findings, I viewed the information through the focal lens of the conceptual framework. By using this strategy, I was able to draw conclusions based on three strands of data: (a) conclusions relating to the

three desired and expected outcomes; (b) conclusions relating to other salient themes; and (c) conclusions relating to the five input domains.

### Desired and Expected Outcomes

The literature purports that an effective formal administrative mentoring program will result in specific desired and expected outcomes. The three desired and expected outcome themes of role clarification, organizational socialization, and diminished feelings of isolation were found to be present in the findings of the study.

#### Role Clarification

It can be concluded from this study that formal mentoring helped participants in two distinct ways: (a) with aspects and tasks of the role and (b) with introspection and reflection. According to the studies presented in Chapter 2, the principalship is a multifaceted and complex position, requiring additional support beyond the traditional academic preparation if novice principals are to be successful (Daresh & Playko, 1990). Research further indicated that veteran principals, as well, need support that allows for self-renewal and rejuvenation of their careers (Ashby, 1991).

Both novice and veteran principals indicated that the formal mentoring experience provided them with a broader understanding of the roles they are called upon to fill as they go about the job of being principals. In addition, novices attributed their success with specific tasks and responsibilities to their mentoring experience.

Instructional leadership was one area that both novices and veterans reported as being critical to their success and survival in their role. Instruction loomed large as a topic that was always on the minds of both groups of participants. In the shadow of the need to achieve and maintain passing SOL scores, the urgency of the united voice of novices and veterans alike was heard in denoting that the instructional program was a key component in their schools' achieving success. The importance of possessing a solid understanding of and competency in the foundations of instruction reverberated throughout the interviews with the participants. The participants of the study equated possessing good instructional leadership skills with their schools' achieving passing SOL scores.

The concept of reflective practice was touted in the literature as one of the most worthwhile and effective processes in which principals can engage (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Veterans participating in this study reported engaging in reflective practice or introspection and identified the mentoring process as the catalyst responsible for their engaging in this activity. Mentors stated that they began to develop the skills of reflective practice with their mentees by using those skills when they discussed specific situations. Mentors described how self-reflection created a sense of growth and satisfaction.

#### Organizational Socialization

It can be concluded from this study that mentoring helped to enhance participants' understanding of the inner-workings of the school division and their

understanding of what was expected of them when they interacted with the community.

Both novice and veteran principals discussed the politics involved both within and outside the school division. Politics within the school division necessitated their being aware of relationships between individuals, working with school board members, and in some instances working with members of the board of supervisors. Principals described their political role outside the school division as one of acting as a liaison. Many of the novices reported that, although they had educational experience, they were not experienced in dealing with the intricate politics within the school division and within the community. They characterized these areas as uncharted waters and identified their mentors' maturity and experience in the position as instrumental in providing them with the help they needed in developing necessary skills and successfully navigating potentially disastrous situations.

The sub-theme of negotiating the school division reflected a greater difference in the voices of the participants. This difference was linked to the participants' past experiences in other administrative positions. It was also linked to the length of time the novice had been employed by the school division. Not surprisingly, those novices who had past administrative experience or a longer employment history in the county described themselves as having a greater understanding of the school division and a greater ability to negotiate it than did those with careers of lesser duration within the division.

According to the literature, becoming socialized to the organization can be one of the most important challenges that a novice principal faces (Cohn & Sweeny; 1992). The results of this study suggest that novice principals must become socialized on two levels in order for a formal mentoring process to effectively integrate them into the school division. On the one hand, mentors must provide novices with the level of help they need to understand the fundamentals of the division and its culture. On the other hand, mentors must acclimate and instruct mentees on the political nature of interacting as a liaison with the community, an activity that represents a completely new area for all novice principals regardless of past administrative experience. Given this challenge, a more tailor-made individual approach may need to be taken to provide experiences that participants will find to be both beneficial and rewarding but not repetitive.

#### Diminished Feelings of Isolation

It can be concluded from this study that mentoring was helpful with diminishing feelings of isolation. The evidence presented was very consistent with the literature. Both novice and veteran principals acknowledged that the job of a building principal is a lonely one. Most of the participants viewed the loneliness and isolation as inherent qualities of the position. The data collected from this study revealed that for the most part isolation and loneliness for these principals was not a serious problem. While they expressed instances in which they experience feelings of loneliness and isolation, they characterized these

feelings as momentary and short-lived. Novices and veterans alike reported that interacting with their mentors or mentees was a key factor in reducing their loneliness. Both groups attributed the networks and the collegial support that were developed through the mentoring experience with being key factors in reducing and combating their feelings of isolation and loneliness.

#### Other Salient Themes

In addition to the expected outcomes, additional data emerged from this study that suggested the importance of informal mentoring to novice principals as well as the possible contribution that mentoring can make to career advancement and development of both novices and veterans.

#### Informal Mentoring of Novices

It can be concluded from this study that informal mentoring and formal mentoring can co-exist successfully. The literature suggested that formal mentoring offers the opportunity for individuals who do not have informal mentors to be assigned a mentor. Another suggested advantage is that within a formal program the relationship between mentor and mentee tends to develop more quickly. Although most of the novices in this study described their formal mentoring experiences as positive, the data that emerged suggested that informal mentoring continued to take place while formal mentoring was occurring. The informal mentoring that took place did not appear to compete with or interfere with the formal mentoring process but rather to augment it.

### Career Advancement and Development

It can be concluded from this study that both formal and informal mentoring contribute to career advancement and development. Novices reported receiving both support and guidance from their mentors and, in some instances, attributed their career movement or advancement to that support. Those participants who reported that mentors were in part responsible for the advancement of their careers also voiced the expectation that their mentors would continue to contribute to their future advancement on the career ladder.

The participants in the formal administrative mentoring program had already advanced in their careers to the position of principal; therefore, they did not attribute the development of their career to this particular mentoring experience. Several of the novices, however, who had been assigned formal mentors while serving in the position as a first-year assistant principal did attribute the development of their career to mentoring. Thus the data collected from this study indicates that individuals aspiring to administrative positions as well as administrators hoping to continue the advancement of their careers should consider mentoring to be a positive contributor, one that is important to career future.

The theme of career advancement and development was not prevalent in the literature reviewed for this study. It was, therefore, not identified as one of the desired and expected outcomes in the conceptual framework (see Figure 1, p. 75). Although participants recognized mentoring as contributing to this area of



their careers, it was unclear as to what each participant's thoughts on this topic were. Therefore, although career advancement and development emerged as an unanticipated theme from the data analysis, it is not clearly defined in this study. Because the discussion and references by the participants were too vague and the intended message was unclear, conclusions about the theme of career advancement and development can not be drawn.

#### Key Points About Expected Outcomes

Mentoring contributed to novice principals' understanding of their role, their becoming acclimated to the organization, and the decreasing of their feelings of isolation. All but three of the novice principals projected this positive perception. Those three novices reported that the formal mentoring experience did not help them; however, they reported receiving support and assistance similar to what their counterparts received through an informal network of mentors with whom they surrounded themselves.

Mentoring, as perceived by the participants, assumed many shapes and forms and was provided in diverse ways. Mentors provided ongoing contact, communicated regularly, and shared stories with their mentees. Through the mentoring experience novices received assistance with performing daily tasks, establishing themselves as instructional leaders, and gaining the support and trust of the faculty. Mentees who had worked in the district in other leadership roles reported already having a specific understanding of the organization. In these instances mentors were able to assist the mentees in understanding their

“niche” and in knowing how to interact within the political confines of the school division and within the community. Novices also reported a feeling of comfort and security, as well as the support of a network, with the assignment of a mentor, thus lessening their feelings of isolation.

Veterans reported benefits from participating in the formal mentoring experience, as well. Mentors reported gaining a deeper understanding of their own role through working with their mentees. Especially pleasing to the mentors was assuming the role of teacher as they assisted their mentees. Mentoring helped veteran principals by extending their networks and requiring them to be able to articulate the politics and inner-workings of the district. Mentors also reported that they felt validated by being selected to serve in a mentoring capacity and that the experience had stimulated or rejuvenated them.

Only the actual participants can determine the quality of an experience and the satisfaction they receive from participating in a formal administrative mentoring program. It is clear from this study that the participants’ experiences ranged from very positive to very negative. Novices who considered their experiences to be positive most often described three qualities about the experience that made it work. First, novices described a feeling of trust and security with their mentors. Second, novices also described being able to communicate openly about their situations, their fears, and their needs strengthened the bonds with mentors. Third, mentees who had mentors that

were able to address and assist them in areas in which the mentees perceived they needed help reported positive experiences.

The three mentees who had negative mentoring experiences neither developed relationships based on trust and communication nor perceived that the formal mentors met any of their individual needs. When the formal mentoring relationships failed, each of these novices, recognizing his or her own need for mentoring, established an informal network of mentors. The informal mentoring helped them through the first year of the principalship. It was evident that mentoring, whether on a formal basis or an informal basis, was still occurring. The results confirmed the novices' perception of mentoring and the support that they believed it provided.

Formal administrative mentoring can be an effective tool to benefit novice principals as well as veteran principals, but, for the process to be effective, mentoring pairs must perceive a relationship that is based on mutual trust, mutual respect, and open communication.

#### The Five Input Domains

This study was not designed to evaluate the formal administrative mentoring program but to learn from its participants so that conclusions about the value of such formal arrangements might be made. Collected data comports with the five identified domains of an effective formal administrative mentoring program have been used to draw conclusions about the existence of the five domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) selection and

matching procedures; (d) participant involvement; and (e) regular feedback and monitoring. The literature purported that if certain domains were included in a formal administrative mentoring program, then the program would achieve a desired quality among its participants. If, as the literature [has] suggested, these domains were described as being essential to the quality of formal administrative mentoring programs, then designers of such programs should make certain that these domains are present and fully implemented. It was evident from the data that the five recommended input domains were present to some degree in the program in which the participants were involved. However, their descriptions suggest that three areas were problematic in this particular formal system: the arbitrary selection and matching process; the lack of participant involvement in the design and maintenance of the program; and the absence of a feedback and monitoring component.

#### Organizational Support

It can be concluded that participants recognized organizational support from top-level central office administrators as being demonstrated in several ways: verbally, monetarily, and physically through attendance at initial meetings. This domain contributed to the novice and veteran principals' perceptions of the importance the district placed on their participation in the program.

#### Program Clarity

It can be concluded that the participants knew and understood what was expected of them within the context of the program.

### The Selection and Matching Process

It can be concluded that in this study procedures used for selecting and matching mentors and mentees was both very important and also problematic. There was unity in the voices of the novice principals as they discussed the domain of selection and matching, indicating the importance they placed on it. Many of the novices reported the development of positive relationships with their assigned mentors. However, the responses of the two mentees who characterized their experiences as negative were a consequence of a mismatch with their mentors. Formal mentoring programs might appeal to school districts because these programs assure that a mentor is assigned to each individual identified by the district as being in need of a mentor. However, an arbitrary matching process that has no mechanism for deliberately pairing mentors and mentees is likely to compromise the mentoring process or cause it to fail completely. The two novices who reported failed relationships fell victim to this type of situation.

It can also be concluded that timeliness in assigning mentors is also important. One first-year principal suggested that a mentor should be assigned within the first two weeks of the position appointment. The need for a mentor to be assigned to the mentee to assist during the pre-planning week before the opening of school was a suggestion that was repeatedly made by novice principals.

### Participant Involvement

It can be concluded from this study that the domain of participant involvement was present but compromised. The research literature suggested that participation in mentoring programs should be voluntary. Therefore, although this domain was present, the nature of it was incongruent with current research findings because participation was mandatory for all novice principals. This scenario presents a question: Would participants have been as fully involved if they had been allowed the option of participating or not? Another question that arises is whether or not the commitment level of the novice principals regarding the mentoring process would have changed had their participation been by choice. Perhaps the most significant problem is that individual participants in this study had no opportunity to express their needs so that the mentoring program could flexibly respond to their differing circumstances.

### Regular Feedback and Monitoring

It can be concluded from this study that that no feedback was elicited from participants on how the relationship and the mentoring process were progressing. If one of the goals of the formal administrative mentoring program is to assist novice principals, then it must address the inadequacy of the selection and matching process and the lack of regular feedback and monitoring of the mentoring process.

## Key Points About Input Domains

Consistent comments from the novice principals related to the importance of the “fit” between the mentor and mentee and the timeliness in assigning the mentor. Among those novices who reported a positive mentoring experience the importance of this domain was also noted. This may be the most important of the five domains. It is especially important in formal mentoring relationships since the participants may not know each other prior to the experience. When the mentor and mentee are not well matched the mentoring experience can become strained or, as occurred in the case of two of the novices in this study, it may fail altogether. Given the results of this study, persons responsible for future implementation of mentoring programs should take this domain into account and give serious attention to including a process with specific criteria to be used in the matching of mentors and mentees.

Regular feedback and monitoring are critical to the overall quality of the mentoring experience as well as the quality of the specific activities that are provided. Regular feedback and monitoring allow the structure of the experience to be modified to reflect the changing needs of the participants over time. In the following section, recommendations made by the participating principals to strengthen the feedback loop as well as selection and matching

## A Revised Conceptual Framework

As the data from this investigation unfolded, I began to reflect and reconsider the original conceptual framework (see Figure 1, p. 75) that guided

this inquiry. These data provide evidence that developers of formal administrative mentoring programs can utilize when analyzing the structure of their existing or planned mentoring programs. Inclusion of the elements that emerged from this study but which were not assigned in the original conceptual framework may strengthen the value of such frameworks for future use.

I reviewed the original conceptual model, beginning with the five input domains. It was evident from the data that some of the domains commanded less attention from the participants than others. After considering this, I decided that for my purposes the five recommended input domains would remain the same, receiving equal placement in the revised framework. Next I considered the three desired and expected outcomes and decided they should remain the same as they were in the original conceptual framework. I gave some thought to adding career advancement and development as one of the desired and expected outcomes; after careful analysis, however, it did not appear that the theme emerged from this study as a desired outcome. Others who may develop a similar framework may want to consider including career development as a desired outcome.

Given the influences that emerged from the research, I decided that the original conceptual model should be revised to include elements that appeared to represent the individual and institutional objectives and expectations and the benefits accrued to the individual and the institution from a formal mentoring program. It is my opinion that, with these modifications, the revised conceptual

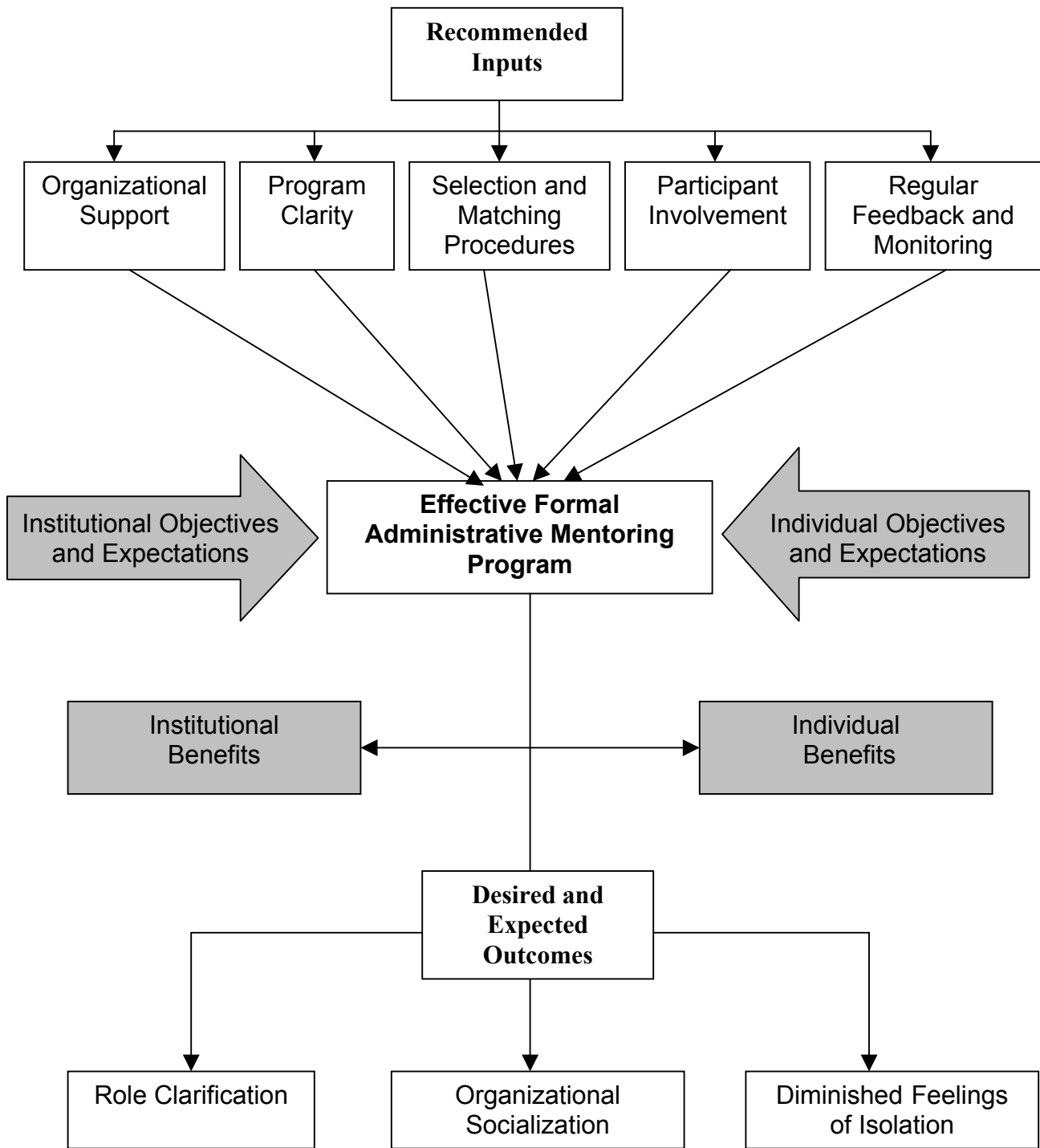


framework has the potential to be a model for future studies and programs (see Figure 3).

Evidence of the school division's objectives and expectations was found in documents describing the formal administrative mentoring program. It was apparent from this documentary evidence that the school district had expectations for specific objectives to be accomplished through the mentoring program. The school district expected to develop both the instructional skills and the leadership skills of the novice principals.

#### Implications for Practice

The participants in this study perceived mentoring to be of value and to be important to them and to their careers. The results of the study indicated that a formal administrative mentoring experience can be both rewarding and satisfying to the participants and, if well structured and implemented, can be an effective means of meeting the needs of school districts and principals. Therefore, the implications for future practice must focus on what educational designers of formal administrative mentoring programs can do to enhance such programs in order to provide more meaningful and stronger formal mentoring experiences for both novice and veteran principals.



**Figure 3.** Revised Conceptual Framework for Examining Formal Mentoring Programs

Note. Adapted from Ashby, 1991; Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington & Weindling, 1995; Carden, 1990; Gaskill, 1993; Gray, 1988; Gray & Gray, 1990; Kram, 1985; Monsur, 1998; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips & Jones, 1983; Zey, 1991.

### Selection and Matching Procedures

A thoughtful predetermined process for identifying, selecting, and matching mentors is essential to the quality of a mentoring program. Careful identification and selection have been emphasized within the literature. This emphasis argues that a successful match between mentoring pairs is more likely to occur when the organization uses specific criteria in the matching process. The importance of mentor-mentee compatibility received strong attention throughout the literature examined for this study. The results of this study demonstrated the importance of a good “fit” between the mentor and mentee. The study results further demonstrated that if this domain does not receive careful attention from the designers of formal mentoring programs, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee might fail. The results imply that the quality of the experience is linked to the “fit” between mentor and mentee. When the “fit” between mentors and mentees is good, the participants are able to bond more readily. This type of bonding is essential to success when individuals are involved in a formal mentoring program.

Designers of formal administrative mentoring programs should consider ways of selecting mentors and matching them with mentees. Results from this study suggest several factors to be considered when establishing mentoring pairs, including similar philosophical beliefs, personalities, and interests. A personality inventory given to participants and used as one component in the selection and matching process may provide valuable information to planners of

such programs and prove to be an effective tool in assisting them in successfully matching mentoring teams that are compatible.

### Program Responsiveness

The results of this study revealed that the quality of the mentoring experience was related to the structure and responsiveness of the formal administrative mentoring program in which the participants were involved. The data suggest that in order for formal mentoring to be meaningful to participants it can not subscribe to a “one size fits all” concept. Although a formal administrative mentoring program is generally designed to meet a school district’s objectives and expectations, a program will fall short of intended goals if the planners do not take into account the individual needs of the participants. Although the mentee participants in this study were novice principals, each came to the position with a different set of needs and a different set of skills. An activity considered meaningful to one participant was not always a meaningful activity for another participant. This finding suggests that designers of formal administrative mentoring programs should consider ways in which the program can satisfy the goals and expectations of the school district while offering a more individualistic, tailor-made program to meet the varied needs and skill levels of individual participants.

The results of this study also suggest that the responsiveness of the program under study was tied to the timeliness of both the mentor assignment and the initial contact between mentor and mentee. Participants in the study

viewed the timeliness of assigning the mentor to the mentee as critical to the overall quality of the formal mentoring experience. Furthermore, the length of time between mentor assignment and initial contact was considered to be extremely important to the later success of the experience. Thus, timelines appeared to be important on two different levels: the initial assignment of the mentor and the initial contact between mentor and mentee.

Timeliness also appeared to be linked to how quickly the bond between a mentor and mentee formed. Participants in this study suggested that the bond between mentor and mentee began with the first initial contact and developed as the relationship continued. This revelation by participants implies that designers of formal mentoring programs should consider assigning mentors to novice principals within a relatively short period of time after principalship appointments are made, and that mentors should make initial contacts soon after assignment. Participants in this study suggested that a mentor be assigned within two weeks of the novice principal's receiving an appointment and that the mentor make contact within 48 hours of the mentor's assignment.

#### Regular Feedback and Monitoring

The literature suggested, as did the findings of this study, that a mentoring program is strengthened by the involvement and feedback solicited from the participants of the program. This implies that a quality formal mentoring program should be based on continuous monitoring of the program, as well as feedback and input from the participants. The mentors and mentees under study engaged

in formal mentoring by participating in both pre-established, planned activities as well as individual sessions that occurred outside the formal sessions. Feedback from mentors and mentees was solicited after each of the formal activities in which they were required to participate. However, the participants in this program did not have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the progress of the mentoring relationship or the overall quality of the mentoring relationship. Study results imply that designers of formal administrative mentoring programs should solicit feedback from participants regarding all aspects of the program in order to facilitate a meaningful experience. The results further imply that feedback should be used to modify and restructure the planned activities to enhance and strengthen the program's responsiveness. Implications for program developers include the monitoring of mentoring relationships throughout the mentoring experience and assessment of the quality of the experience at the beginning, at a mid-point, and at the end of the program.

Additional implications for designers of such programs relate to participants' input into the design and implementation of the program. The literature suggested that program participation should be voluntary and that participants should be allowed to withdraw without penalty. The design and structure of the program in this study, however, required all novice principals to participate. Program designers who hope to provide quality mentoring programs should consider implementing methods that allow for participants to change partners or to withdraw from the program without penalty.

The results of this study have important implications related to the improvement, renewal, and retention of principals. A designer of professional growth programs for a school district should consider including a formal mentoring program as a component of the division's staff development program. This study's primary focus was on the benefits provided to novice principals through formal administrative mentoring. However, the results of the study indicated that veteran principals enjoyed and benefited from the experience, as well. Therefore, districts should also consider including formal mentoring experiences that focus on the needs of veteran principals.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Relying on the literature that identifies a growing demand for principals and recognizes the importance of the principal's leadership in creating an effective, successful school, researchers working in the field of school administration have focused on the skills of principals. There is limited research on effective ways of providing on-the-job-training and the support necessary for retaining and cultivating successful principals.

This study examined formal mentoring as one possible tool that could be used to support both novice and veteran principals. The recommendations discussed in this section are based on the data from the case study. First, this study focused on participants' involvement in a formal administrative mentoring program and the way in which mentoring assisted them with the components of role clarification, feelings of isolation, and socialization to the organization. An

interesting study might involve comparing and contrasting the effects of informal mentoring versus formal mentoring and the ways in which each assist novice and veteran principals with role clarification, feelings of isolation, and socialization to the organization.

Second, a study comparing the performance of formally mentored novice principals with non-mentored novice principals on skills perceived to be essential administrative skills could add to the body of literature and prove to be an interesting study.

Third, a study to assess the roles, expectations, responsibilities, and gained benefits of school districts implementing formal administrative mentoring programs compared to those not providing such programs could be of interest. Of special interest from such a study would be the answer to the question of whether or not a higher rate of principal retention occurs in districts with formal mentoring compared to those districts without such a program.

Fourth, additional study needs to be considered regarding ways to reduce the isolation of principals. All participants, both mentors and mentees, expressed the feelings of loneliness and isolation they experienced as principals. No doubt, it is impossible to provide every principal with a mentor; however, the importance placed by participants on having someone with whom to discuss their professional challenges should not be dismissed or considered to be simply a positive side effect of mentoring. These principals pointed out this need, a need that has also been recognized in the literature (Ginty, 1995; Hearne, 1991).



Consideration should be given to finding ways to create supportive networks to help principals combat the isolation and loneliness inherent in the position.

Fifth, the mentors of this study reported that the mentoring experience had a positive effect on their perceptions and behaviors as they carried out their responsibilities and filled their role as principal. Although their observations are reported here, further study of these effects might provide insight into ways that the educational community can develop programs of self-renewal and revitalization.

### Personal Reflections

In this report I discussed the importance and need for reflection. Therefore, it seems only fitting that I share my thoughts about my experience in the hope that others who want to conduct a similar study might benefit from them. Conducting the research and the actual writing of my dissertation took approximately fourteen months. The entire process however, took much longer and was completed in what I would describe as a series of stages. Conducting an investigation and gathering the data for a qualitative study can be a lengthy process from start to finish. I found it very helpful to read my notes from each interview as quickly as possible. This process kept salient themes and information fresh and helped me to conceptualize how I could begin to categorize and analyze the data I was collecting. Although each interview was audiotape recorded, I took detailed notes during the interview. For others who might follow the same process, I suggest labeling all notes well with identifying information

such as name, date, time, and page numbers; doing this allowed me to have easy access when I needed to refer back to my notes.

For this qualitative study, the primary tool I used to gather my data was interviewing. For anyone using interviewing as the primary tool, I have several suggestions based upon my experience. Prior to beginning the process I gathered all the supplies that I thought I would need and placed them in an accordion folder, which I kept in my car at all times. The supplies that I placed in the folder included several copies of each interview protocol, several pens, a writing tablet for taking notes, at least two blank cassette tapes, and a tape recorder. I experienced at least two mishaps during my interview sessions. On one occasion the cassette tape broke during the beginning of the interview, requiring me to use another tape. On another occasion the tape recorder would not work. The principal provided another tape recorder for me to use, but that took time from the interview and disrupted the process. After that experience I brought two tape recorders with me to each interview. I learned that planning, preparation, and organization were vital to conducting smooth, successful, interviews and allowed me to concentrate on my intended purpose for the interview. In addition, I suggest to anyone using interviewing as a primary method of collecting data that they hire a professional transcriber. Using a transcriber allows the researcher to continue collecting data while the audiotapes are being transcribed. Upon completing the interviews, the researcher can then

begin the initial analysis and coding of the data that have been transcribed. The services of a transcriber are well worth the cost.

### Ending Thoughts

The incentives that exist in business and industry are different from those in education. Superior performance in education does not result in a bonus in pay. There is less upward mobility in the career ladder of an educator than that of an individual working in private business. School administrators are well-educated professionals who have a genuine interest in helping others.

Principals seem to have a great deal of knowledge about many different educational theories and practices. Given the growing need for principals, it would seem wise to infuse theory with practical “how to’s” and to provide support for novice principals once they begin working. Mentoring provides one avenue through which principals may help each other. In addition, finding ways to develop administrative networks and long-term career support would enable the field to provide continual support and renewal to this group.

The participants in this study were hardworking, dedicated professionals. Many of them told eloquent stories about their careers, the teachers and children with whom they worked, their peers, and their supervisors, which extended beyond the intended structure of the interview. They seemed to have a compelling need to describe being an educator and principal in relationship to their sense of self. Their need to talk about what they did and the earnestness with which they talked about their feelings revealed their dedication. In

reconstructing their experiences in working with each other, these principals put an important exercise into words. Reflecting upon their work, their growth, and their changes, the principals validated themselves to themselves. It may be that the importance and need of reflection, sharing, and telling stories between one principal and another have been overlooked and need to be re-cultivated for the benefit of the educational community.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol for First-Year Principals

#### Part I

##### General Background Questions:

Name:

#### Part II

Lead in Question: Think about the mentor that you were assigned through the mentoring program. Tell me about your mentoring experience with that person.

1. What does mentorship mean to you? How would you characterize your experience?
2. What makes a good mentor?
3. How did you and your mentor form a relationship?
4. How would you describe the mentor relationship? Describe changes that took place over time.
5. Describe a situation, in which you worked with your mentor that illustrates what you mean when you say that...
6. How does the mentorship work? Please describe specific instances or things that your mentor has done that have been helpful to you.
7. In what ways does your mentor assist you in learning or developing skills necessary to complete the tasks required of you as a principal?

8. In what ways did the assignment of a mentor help you in your role as principal?
9. How important would you describe mentorship in career development and in your career?
10. How did the assignment of your mentor impact the forming of your relationship?
11. How has your mentor assisted you in understanding your responsibilities as a principal?
12. The literature suggests first year principals feel isolated or lonely in their new position, If you had similar feelings, in what ways has your mentor helped you cope with these feelings?
13. What are the ways that educational leadership is changing and how have these changes affected you as you carry out your duties? In what ways has your mentor helped you?
14. What aspects of your role has your mentor helped you with? Are there any specific tasks? Can you give examples?
15. Have you had other mentor relationships? How would you compare them?
16. How has your mentor assisted you in understanding the system?
17. How has your mentor assisted your learning and understanding of the administrative culture?
18. How would you describe your experience with the mentoring program? What did you expect to gain from it?

### Part III

1. In what ways does your school division promote and support you and your mentor in establishing and maintaining this relationship?
2. What changes or recommendations would you make in the development, implementation, or improvement of the mentoring program?
3. Is there anything else you would like to comment on that I may have not covered?

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol for Veteran Principals

#### Part I

##### General Background Questions:

Name:

#### Part II

Lead in Question: Think about a mentee that you were assigned or are currently assigned to mentor. Tell me about the mentoring process.

1. Tell me about the person you are mentoring or a person you were assigned to mentor.
2. What do you think are some of the characteristics that make a good mentor?  
Can you describe them?
3. How did you form a relationship with your mentee? How often do you meet?
4. Why were you selected to be a mentor?
5. Describe your role as a mentor.
6. How did you establish rapport? What mutual understandings resulted?
7. In what ways did you assist your mentee in his/her role?
8. What are some of the characteristics you feel make you a good mentor?
9. Describe some of the factors you feel are important in creating a mentorship that works.
10. How did the mentoring process assist you in your role as a principal?

11. How important is mentorship in career development or professional growth?  
Did your mentoring experience effect your professional development? If so how?
12. What specific advice do you give or would you give to a person you are mentoring regarding job training or networking?
13. What tasks did you assist your mentee with as he/she carried out the duties of being a principal? Did this have an effect on how you carried out your duties? If so how?
14. How did you assist your mentee in developing an understanding of the responsibilities of the principalship? What effect did this have on your own understanding of your role as principal?
15. The literature suggests that first year principals feel isolated or lonely in their new position. How did you assist your mentee in adjusting to the isolation of the principalship? Did the mentoring process decrease your feelings of isolation? If so how?
16. What specific activities did you engage in with your mentee?
17. As an experienced principal can you identify how the formal mentoring process has benefited you? Are there ways it has adversely affected you?

### Part III

1. In what ways does your school division promote and support you and your mentor in establishing and maintaining the mentoring relationship?



2. What changes or recommendations would you make in the development, implementation or improvement of the mentoring program?
3. Is there anything else you would like to comment on that I may have missed or not covered?

## Appendix C

Virginia Polytechnic and State University

Informed consent for Participants in

Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: A Case Study of: The Formal Mentorships of Novice Principals in One School District

Investigators: Patricia A. West, Jennifer Sughrue, Jean Crockett (faculty advisors)

### I. Purpose of this Project

The Purpose of this research is to describe the perceptions of novice and veteran principals who have participated in a formal mentoring program. A qualitative case study will be conducted. Interviews will be the primary research tool utilized to gather data. A minimum of 12 interviews will be conducted.

### II. Procedures

The procedures for this study include interviews, observations, and collection of documents. Interviews will be conducted with central office directors and novice and veteran principals with 3 years or less experience. Each interview will take place at your work site at a mutually agreeable time that is convenient for you. Interviews will last approximately 45-90 minutes; they will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later time. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview for accuracy and may add hand written comments to its contents.

### III. Risks

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study. Any potential concern or discomfort you may experience should be relieved by the assurance of confidentiality.

### IV. Benefits of this Project

The benefits of this study include providing a degree of insight into formal mentoring programs for principals, what aspects of formal mentoring appear

helpful, and what improvements may be needed. At the conclusion of the research project, you may contact the investigator for a summary of the results.

#### V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your identity as a participant in this study will be held confidential. A pseudonym will replace your name. The name of your school and of your school district will not be used. Only the investigators will be able to identify you individually within the data collected.

The audio-tapes of interviews and the transcripts of the interviews will remain in the primary investigator's possession except when being transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The tapes will be stored in the investigator's home office and will be destroyed with one year of the completion of the study.

#### VI. Compensation

No monetary compensation will accompany participation in this study.

#### VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to refuse to answer particular questions during interviews. You are also free to withdraw from participating in the study at any point in time without penalty.

#### VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic and State University; by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and by the school district.

#### IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I have the following responsibilities: (a) to participate in a 45-90 minute tape-recorded interview; and (b) to review the transcript of my interview for accuracy.

#### X. Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the conditions of this project and my role with in the project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. Based on the information provided in this form, I give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

I understand that I may withdraw at any time without penalty, I agree to abide by the conditions outlined in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this project, I may contact:

Patricia A West

(804) 740-2154/pwest@erols .com

Jennifer Sughrue, Jean Crockett  
Faculty Advisors

(540) 231-7845/jsugh@vt.edu  
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David M. Moore, Chair, IRB  
Office of Research Compliance  
Research & Graduate Studies

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This Informed Consent is valid from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix D

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### Demographic Characteristics of Novice and Veteran Principals

Coding	Level	No. of Years	Certified	Prior Administrative Experience	Education Level
Novice Principals					
AA	Elementary	2	Yes	2	MEd, Doctoral program
BB	Elementary	1	Yes	2	MEd
CC	Elementary	1	Yes	2	MEd, Doctoral program
II	Elementary	1	Yes	1	MEd
JJ	Elementary	1	Yes	1	MEd
KK	Elementary	1	Yes	0	MEd, Doctoral program
EE	Elementary	1	Yes	1	MEd, Doctoral program
GG	Middle	1	Yes	11	MEd, ABD
FF	Exceptional Ed. Center	2	Yes	0	MEd
DD	Alternative Middle	1	Yes	3	MEd, Doctoral program
HH	High	1	Yes	2	MEd, Doctoral program
LL	High	1	Yes	1	MEd, Doctoral program
Veteran Principals					
ZZ	Elementary	2	Yes	N/A	MEd, Doctoral program
VV	Elementary	2	Yes	N/A	MEd
YY	Middle	3	Yes	N/A	MEd, Specialist's certificate
XX	High	7	Yes	N/A	Ed.D
WW	High	7	Yes	N/A	MEd

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Appendix E

Formal administrative mentoring and role clarification	
<b>Novice Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
AA elementary	My assigned mentor didn't do anything to help me.
CC elementary	She helps me with specific instances. She walked me through step by step.
II elementary	Maybe it will help by knowing where the bar is – the level to strive for – what parameter to set. I don't know if it has.
BB elementary	I tried to do more than I should I didn't delegate as I should have. She helped me learn to facilitate and to delegate more.
KK elementary	He didn't. Did he help me develop skills? No.
EE elementary	If I'm working on a project I email and ask my mentor to make suggestions I learn a lot I can develop skills.
JJ elementary	She provides information, articles, resources, people resources, and how-to's. She makes me aware of certain things.
FF exceptional education center	She helped me define my role as principal vs. specialist vs. teacher.
GG middle	My mentor lets me reaffirm this is what I'm sensing and that I'm on the right track. The nuts and bolts I know. It's a different skill set – I don't know if they can teach you those skills – leadership.
DD alternative middle	My mentor helped me plan my opening week and staff development activities.
HH high	There are things I know I need to learn. Being assigned mentors who have done the job they know and understand the kinds of things I need to be thinking about.
LL high	He shares previous experiences when something is a judgment call. I trust him.
<b>Veteran Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
ZZ elementary	It helped. You really know something when you teach it.
VV elementary	In discussing with him about the multiple tasks required and how to prioritize them it helped me too.
YY middle	What it has had an effect on is how I think about things.
XX high	It provides me with the opportunity to reflect on what I do and do well.
WW high	It helped me create the boundaries of the role for myself.

Appendix F

Formal administrative mentoring and organizational socialization	
<b>Novice Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
AA elementary	She did actually help me understand exactly how far the power of the principal extends. What you can do and where other people pick up.
CC elementary	I observe her in her role and observe her organization.
II elementary	My informal mentor left me a notebook. My formal mentor didn't.
BB elementary	I knew about the organization after being an assistant principal.
JJ elementary	It provided a lot of assistance.
KK elementary	No.
EE elementary	I already had some understanding of the organization.
FF exceptional education center	I knew the organization.
GG middle	He helped with the unwritten rules. I already knew the organization.
DD alternative middle	She has helped me procedurally.
HH high	I need to understand the norms and culture of the organization.
LL high	A lot, one area that has been most beneficial is that if I have questions he directs me to the person I need to talk to.
<b>Veteran Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
ZZ elementary	It helped her to understand the organization and she helped me a lot.
VV elementary	To help someone else know who to ask or where to go for something you have to know it yourself.
YY middle	My mentee knows the organization she had been in the county for a while.
WW high	It makes me think about the things I have to do. If I'm going to explain a process I need to know it.
XX high	It strengthens my understanding when I'm telling him something then I need to know it well.

Appendix G

Formal administrative mentoring and feelings of isolation	
<b>Novice Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
AA elementary	She made me understand how lonely it was. It wasn't just how I felt. Everyone felt like that.
CC elementary	Yes, we arrange to ride together to meetings.
II elementary	There are days when I think it's a really lonely job and I feel very much alone. I try to balance between my informal mentor and my formal mentor.
BB elementary	She helped me form a network with several other new principals.
JJ elementary	Yes, sometimes I feel isolated but being able to share experiences, having dinner, and my mentor asking how are you doing helps
KK elementary	No.
EE elementary	She helped because I haven't felt the loneliness or isolation. I know I can call.
FF exceptional education center	Yes, whenever I picked up the phone she called me back. She had the experience to share. Her support kept the loneliness at bay.
GG middle	I haven't approached the subject with him. Unofficially I talked with a current principal and the former principal of this school.
DD alternative middle	My mentor calls on and off.
HH high	It's been very lonely. The isolation may come with the role as a separation with duties.
LL high	I pick up the phone and talk when the pressure is getting to me.
<b>Veteran Principals</b>	<b>Representative phrases of participants</b>
ZZ elementary	So those types of things that we've done as a zone have really helped.
VV elementary	It is a lonely job and in trying to help someone else it takes some of that isolation away.
YY middle	I never felt isolated. Isolation happens if you allow it.
XX high	It provides me the opportunity to take time to share.
WW high	It can be very lonely – very isolated the collegiality eases that feeling.



## Appendix H

Formal administrative mentoring and career advancement and development	
Novice Principals	Representative phrases of participants
AA elementary	Yes, it's a key factor to survival.
CC elementary	Extremely important.
II elementary	I firmly believe mentoring is important in career development.
BB elementary	It has been a key to my career development.
JJ elementary	It's a priority. It's very important. It should be required for anybody going into a new career.
KK elementary	Having a mentor in another school is so not helpful.
EE elementary	Anyone who can give a broader perspective can only aid in your development of your career.
FF exceptional education center	I think it's critical in career development. Those who have mentors have greater growth in their careers.
GG middle	Very important, two ways official and unofficial.
DD alternative middle	Mentorship wasn't a word used when I began my career. It seemed when I left one job and went to another, another mentor would show up.
HH high	It's been very important I learned to work with what I got. I used what I had and put it together. I moved very quickly I attribute that to my mentors.
LL high	There have been informal relationships with people who I consider mentors who advocate for me. Those people have been very instrumental in getting me to this position.

## Vitae

Patricia A. West

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### EDUCATION

- 2002          Doctor of Education (EdD) in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia
- 1978          Master of Education (MEd) in Exceptional Education  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville Virginia
- 1973          Bachelor of Science (BS) in Elementary Education K-8 and Mental  
Retardation Cum Laude  
University of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri

### EXPERIENCE

- 2000 – present          Director of Disciplinary Review: Henrico County Public Schools,  
Richmond, Virginia
- Responsible for the Student Code of Conduct, school crisis plans,  
and disciplinary hearings.
- 1996 – 2000          Assistant Principal: Henrico High School: Henrico County Public  
Schools, Richmond, Virginia
- Roles, tasks and responsibilities included instructional supervision,  
student supervision, staff supervision, master schedule, Mac school  
administrator, and operational duties.
- 1978 - 1996          Exceptional Education Teacher, Department Chairperson,  
Administrative Aide: Henrico County Public Schools, Richmond,  
Virginia
- Teacher of high school courses ninth through twelfth grades for  
exceptional education students.
- 1976 – 1978          Exceptional Education Teacher: Albemarle County Public Schools,  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
Teacher of math and wood shop, and student work coordinator.
- 1973 - 1975          Teacher: Special School District, St. Louis, Missouri  
Teacher of multiple handicapped students ages five through twelve.