ABSTRACT

Lloyd Y. Gardner, PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ELEMENTS OF MENTORING SUPPORT THAT MOST IMPACT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP CAPACITY (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, April 2016.

The current study sought to identify and gain a deep understanding of the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to be most effective in developing beginning principals' leadership capacity. Q-methodology was utilized to investigate the subjective opinions of public school principals within one school district in North Carolina. The research design of Q-methodology allowed the researcher to capture experienced principals' beliefs and viewpoints about elements of mentoring support through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Data analysis indicated four statistically significant factors that were named in the study: (1) Trust is the Prerequisite, (2) A Safe Place to Learn, (3) Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability, and (4) Relationship is Key. In addition to the statistical analysis, post-sort interviews were conducted for each emergent factor in order to gain further insight about the principals' perceptions of mentoring support. The findings pointed to gate-keeping mechanisms that lead to better practices for mentoring support. While the content of instructional leadership rose to the top as one of the focus areas for mentoring support, findings notably highlighted the elements of trust and relationship as critical to achieving growth in leadership capacity. The current study's findings generated implications for policy, further research, and educational practice, which are herein discussed.

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ELEMENTS OF MENTORING SUPPORT THAT MOST IMPACT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

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Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Lloyd Y. Gardner

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PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ELEMENTS OF MENTORING

SUPPORT THAT MOST IMPACT THE DEVELOPMENT

OF A NEW PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Stancil and Angie Gardner, my sister, Beth Gardner Lamb, and my niece, Rebecca Lamb, who have always provided me unwavering support, positive encouragement, and abundant love.

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From the start, as I embarked upon this journey, I have been blessed by many individuals who have surrounded me with their support. This incredible circle of family, colleagues, and friends have been constant in their offering of inspiration and encouragement and, as such, their positive energy fueled my drive, motivation, and determination in reaching my goal.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The steady, yet rapidly, growing sense of urgency for improved student achievement in any school district across the nation opens the gateways for increased attention and expectations to be placed on school leadership. While there are many interlocking components of educational reform efforts purposefully targeted at improving student performance, often at the core of a reform agenda is the topic of quality, effective school leadership (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007; Levine, 2005; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2006). Significant, mounting changes within the educational arena have placed school leadership at the forefront of educational discussions, debates, research, and policy development.

As higher standards for student achievement are established through both state and national legislation, policymakers create high-stakes accountability systems to implement and enforce those standards. Concurrent with higher student performance standards is an increasingly heightened level of attention, expectations, and demands from parents and the broader community for principals to demonstrate effective leadership in ensuring school success and student achievement. Consequently, the educational reform movement and related initiatives have significantly impacted the responsibilities of principals, serving as a catalyst for redefining the principal's role (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Research has begun to reveal a relationship between school leadership and student achievement, shifting the focus of the school principal's role from management to the need for quality instructional leadership. Principals will need new

skillsets to effectively meet the growing challenges that are progressively emerging on the horizon of a changing landscape (CCSSO, 2008; Crow, 2006; Tirozzi, 2001).

From a historical perspective, state and national legislation as well as national reports point to external factors that in large part can be viewed as having a role in shaping and molding the evolving focus on school leadership and its impact in schools. The widely publicized report *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), the *Goals 2000* Summit (Goals 2000, 1993-1994), the federal legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), and *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* with its Race to the Top initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) serve as examples of accountability systems and structures that focus on student performance; these ultimately influence and impact school leadership skills and practices. Similarly, in combination with such systems, higher community expectations for student achievement, changing demographics reflected in communities, and the increasing globalization of society have prompted stakeholders at all levels, both inside and outside the educational arena, to engage in discussions and initiatives focused on school improvement.

Emerging research illustrating the relationship of effective school leadership on student achievement, coupled with increased performance expectations for schools, has prompted the development of leadership performance standards at the federal and state levels. Those leadership standards cast a spotlight on the changing role of the school leader by defining leadership skills, practices, and traits critical for meeting the expanded demands, responsibilities, and expectations of the principal's role. At the national level, the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 set a framework for providing "high-level guidance and insight about the

traits, functions of work, and responsibilities expected of school and district leaders" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 5). In a similar fashion at the state level, through its adoption of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2008), North Carolina can be viewed as a state that also acknowledges the need for today's school leaders to be skilled in leading transformative change in schools and improving student achievement. Such examples of standards at both the national and state levels portray the evolution of the principal from one of a building manager focused on technical aspects of the job, to a strong instructional leader responsible for building and promoting the culture, systems, structures, and relationships that impact teaching and student learning outcomes.

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) report that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. While a principal must attend to management practices, the primary role of the principal is to be the instructional leader in the building, ensuring that effective instructional practices are occurring in every classroom. A principal's leadership is key in creating and influencing the conditions that yield student achievement, setting the vision for academic success, developing school culture focused on learning, and creating a professional learning community supportive of student achievement (Crow, 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

For a new principal who is in the early stages of launching his/her school administrative career, the challenges, complexities, and expectations that accompany the principal's role can be daunting and overwhelming (Gray & Bottoms, 2007). Principals today face many new challenges that did not necessarily confront their predecessors in the past. These include

unprecedented pressure to prioritize and drive sustained improvement of teaching and learning (Wallace Foundation, 2006). In addition to the focus on student achievement, communities are calling for principals to demonstrate an awareness of the social, economic, and political issues that shape the school environment, as well as to demonstrate fiscal and educational accountability (Daresh, 2007).

The school principal can be the central figure in the school who leads and influences authentic and lasting systemic educational change (Louis et al., 2010). As such, school districts have the responsibility to support effective school leadership among school administrators, especially the leadership development of its new principals. With the expectation for school leaders to effectively lead change and significantly impact student achievement, school districts may need to recognize the merit of formal mentoring and the avenue it paves in building leadership capacity (Hall, 2008; Hess & Kelly, 2005b; Mitgang, 2007, 2012). In accepting the responsibility for developing and supporting its leaders, the question school districts must address is how to adequately support principals in order for them to meet the higher expectations and increased accountability placed upon them.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing expectations, challenges, and complexities facing school principals today dictate the critical need for strong, effective school leadership. The higher standards and expectations for student achievement, coupled with national and state adopted leadership performance standards, have fueled much momentum in redefining the principal's role and highlighting the need for principals to possess and demonstrate new skillsets in their leadership. Consequently, there is a growing spotlight on the need for and value of providing mentoring to

beginning principals during the transition to their new role. In professions such as medicine, law, engineering, and business, individuals new to his/her field are given opportunities to receive mentoring from an experienced professional who has demonstrated successful productivity within that specific role. By contrast, this same notion of mentoring has not often been extended in a similar scope and structure to novice principals. For too long, a "sink or swim" mindset has been applied to the field of school administration (Mitgang, 2007).

The literature highlights the shortcomings that often exist in the mentoring support provided to principals (Gray & Bottoms, 2007; Lester, Hannah, Harms, Vogelgesang, & Avolio, 2011; SREB, 2008). Often, mentoring support is offered in a piecemeal, reactive approach. Furthermore, little to no formal training may be provided to school leaders serving in a mentor capacity; this leaves the principal mentor ill-prepared and unaware of the types of service and levels of support critical to aiding a new principal's successful transition to the role. At the school district level, there is an absence of policy that speaks to mentoring support for new principals; thus, school districts may not offer any level of mentoring services, or, if they do, the mentoring programs may be inconsistent or left to chance with no intentional design.

A veteran principal in a school district may be assigned to serve as a "mentor" to a new principal, yet the relationship often evolves to more of a "buddy" system in contrast to a true mentor-mentee relationship specifically tailored to help support the building of a new principal's leadership capacity. As such, the support that new principals receive may be haphazard, emergency-driven, and lack focus and depth. The lack of a meaningful, structured, and targeted mentoring program for new school principals may perpetuate a lack of student success that can be directly associated with the principal's dearth of skills in how to lead school effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to have the most influence and impact on developing new principals' leadership capacity. As a critical first step to the study, the topics related to effective school leadership and mentoring support for new school principals were researched. Drawing from the perspectives of school leaders, researchers, and other contributors to the extant body of scholarly literature, elements of mentoring support were identified and examined. Following this, the research design of Q-methodology was used to gain insight into school leaders' perceptions and beliefs concerning the elements they view as most important and valuable to developing a beginning principal's leadership capacity. The findings generated from the study offered a valuable set of perspectives and viewpoints that were then used to shape recommendations for designing and implementing a relevant, formally structured mentoring program for beginning principals.

Research Questions

The research questions that framed the current study are outlined below.

1. What do educational researchers and practitioners consider as the most important elements of mentoring support for developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
2. What elements of mentoring support do experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
3. Why do these experienced principals identify these elements as most effective?

Significance of the Study

In order for school district administrators, principal mentors, and policymakers to effectively structure and deliver high-quality mentoring support, it is important to first understand the elements of mentoring support that are significant to developing a new principal's leadership capacity The research questions for the current study were designed to identify the elements of mentoring support that educational researchers and practitioners consider as most important to developing the leadership skills of a new principal. At a deeper level, these questions also enabled the researcher to further explore and examine those elements related to what experienced principals perceive as having the most impact in a principal's leadership development. Data gathered in response to the research questions will potentially inform school district leaders on how to better support new principals through mentoring. Moreover, greater knowledge of the elements viewed as key to effective mentoring support will potentially provide the opportunity to prevent and/or eliminate gaps that may currently exist in a district's mentoring processes, thus paving the way for delivering more relevant, applicable support that addresses a new principal's needs and fosters a more positive, productive, and meaningful mentor-mentee relationship.

The study offered the opportunity to gain insight into what program components, design features, and training are essential for structuring and sustaining formal mentoring programs and embedding a mentoring culture within a school district. Furthermore, in terms of building leadership capacity, the study worked to capture aspects of mentoring that are critical to new principals' professional growth beyond the mastery level of managerial, technical leadership, so that they can shift to higher levels of instructional and transformational leadership domains.

By having principals identify the inherent elements crucial to the structure and delivery of mentoring support, this study sought to gain rich, insightful understanding that can set the course and lay the groundwork in a school district for the development of future policy related to mentoring support for beginning principals. The findings from the study can shape the language of the policy, and drive the required components of mentoring support to be captured within it. With district policy that directly addresses institutionalized mentoring support for beginning principals, the need, purpose, and importance of formal mentoring within the school district will be validated, and expectations and requirements clearly conveyed. Even more, policy influences funding—funding that impacts training and resources to support high-quality mentoring. Furthermore, the adoption of policy that calls for the implementation and delivery of mentoring support to new principals is more likely to prevent a fractured, haphazard, and loosely focused approach to mentoring.

The current study adds to the body of literature and research on the topic of mentoring, specifically mentoring support offered to new principals. Given the study's selected methodology and research design, the findings contribute to and build upon the knowledge base in this area by offering a unique perspective about the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive as having the most impact in developing a new principal's leadership capacity. As perceptions have the potential to influence and impact one's own ideas and actions, this study identified and sought to gain insight into the perceptions that experienced principals hold about the value of mentoring for building and enhancing leadership skills and behaviors. It is also worthwhile to examine principals' own beliefs and perceptions about mentoring in comparison to the elements of mentoring support suggested in current literature. By

revealing what principals perceive as effective mentoring support, the current study's findings are significant for researchers, and can be used as a source of information about the impact school districts can have on developing new principals' leadership capacity through mentoring.

The current study was limited to experienced principals within one single school district in the state of North Carolina. Researchers can build upon and expand the study by using principals throughout the United States. To fully understand experienced principals' perceptions about the elements of mentoring support that impact the development of new principals' leadership capacity, additional research methods can be utilized and additional research studies need to be conducted.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a Q-methodological design to capture experienced principals' beliefs and perceptions about mentoring new principals. The study examined perceptions from principals within one North Carolina school district. Drawing from the education literature and research as well as from practitioners in the education field, a collection of statements identifying elements of effective mentoring support, referred to as the *concourse*, was developed for use in the study. The concourse was refined to produce a representative sample of statements called the *Q-sample* or *Q-set*. The participants for the study, known as the *P-sample* or *P-set*, were comprised of current experienced principals. Using a forced distribution, participants in the study conducted a card sort of the Q-sample statements. Post-sort interviews were conducted with selected participants. The results of the sorts were analyzed along with the interview data to reveal four emergent factors.

Appropriate and structured research protocols were utilized in the sorting and interview processes. Throughout the study, anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants was maintained. In addition, adherence to research protocols, procedures, and processes as approved and regulated by the Institutional Review Board and university was faithfully exercised. A discussion of the methodology and research methods of the current study is presented in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, factors that could potentially impact the research design, the study's findings, and the interpretation of the findings are identified. The study population, secured through convenience sampling, was composed of current school principals within one school district in the state of North Carolina. While the study participants varied in their total years of experience in the principal role, there is the assumption that participants have a base of awareness and experience from which they can draw in reflecting upon and speaking about the challenges that first-year principals face and the support needed during their critical, first year of transition. The selection of the participants was consistent with the research design in obtaining and exploring as many different, insightful viewpoints about effective mentoring as possible; however, the findings are only applicable to the participants of this study.

The study involved 40 principal participants. Given the sample size in comparison to much larger participant samples that may be used in other research designs and studies, the potential to draw generalizations from the study's findings was limited.

Lastly, it is necessary to acknowledge the potential of researcher bias. For the research design of the current study, the researcher assumed the responsibility for the final selection of the

Q-sample and the factor interpretation. As such, several steps were taken as a cautionary measure to protect the study from researcher bias. The Q-sample was pilot-tested, and revisions were made to the wording and phrasing of the statements as necessary to improve clarity and enhance understanding. To address potential bias in the interpretation of findings, selected study participants representing each factor viewpoint identified from the Q sorts were interviewed, offering additional insight and perspectives.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are provided

Mentee - A beginning principal who, during his/her first year of principalship, is the recipient of mentoring support provided by an assigned principal mentor.

Mentor - An experienced principal who has been trained as a mentor and assigned to a beginning principal for the purpose of supporting the socialization of the new principal into his/her new role, as well as facilitating leadership development and growth.

Mentoring - A structured, coordinated process and approach in which the beginning principal (mentee) and the principal mentor engage in a proactive, learning-centered relationship aimed to promote increased leadership capacity, professional development, and support.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 1, the researcher provides the background and context of the study, the purpose and significance of the study, the research questions to be examined, and an overview of the research methodology.

Chapter 2 includes a review of research and literature focused on effective school leadership and its impact on student achievement. The review highlights the redefined role of the

principal and the resulting need for new skillsets and ongoing professional development and support. Professional support for beginning principals is especially examined in the review, with special attention devoted to mentoring.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of Q-methodology and the components of the research design used to answer the identified research questions.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed discussion of the study's findings, including both the quantitative data and qualitative data collected through the Q-methodological design of the study.

Chapter 5 offers a summary of the study's findings and draws connections of the findings to the literature. In addition, the chapter presents implications of the findings for policy development, future research, and educational practice.

Chapter Summary

The landscape of today's education setting, with its growing complexities and its increased accountability for student achievement, has placed heightened attention on the leadership skills and core competencies principals need for effectively leading today's schools. In a similar light, there is growing recognition for the need to have strong support systems and structures in place for early career principals. One such structure of support for new principals is delivered in the form of mentoring. This chapter has introduced the study and its research questions, designed to explore the elements of mentoring support that researchers and educational practitioners consider as most important for developing a new principal's leadership capacity. The study worked to identify which elements of mentoring support experienced principals perceive to have the most impact in developing a beginning principal's leadership

capacity, and why these elements are viewed as effective. The literature review presented in Chapter 2 further frames the context for the current study by examining themes that emerge from the literature, including the changing and evolving role of the principal, national and state adoption of leadership performance standards, the relationship between school leadership and student achievement, and the mentoring process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

School leadership is an essential ingredient for ensuring that every child in America receives the education they need to succeed (DeVita et al., 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). As schools change in response to community expectations for increased student achievement, labor market demands, expansion of technology, societal demographic changes, and the growing popularity of public school alternatives, so changes the principal's role. Ushered in with each new era, challenges that confront the field of education potentially influence and impact the skills and competencies needed for effectively leading schools. To provide the leadership necessary for addressing student achievement and meeting the demands and complexities facing schools today and in the future, principals need new skillsets. With such a heightened call for strong instructional leadership, for example, principals must have the skills and abilities to demonstrate behaviors and practices that enable them to serve as leaders for student learning (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). Discussions on both the state and national levels have shifted from a philosophical question of *why* leadership really matters, to a procedural question of *how*—how to train, place, and support high-quality leadership. Still, while improved leadership training is essential, it is not enough. New principals need additional layers of support such as mentoring—focused, structured mentoring from knowledgeable, experienced principals who have been trained for the mentoring role and are committed to be engaged in the mentoring process for a duration of time that will provide real benefits for the new school leader (DeVita, Covin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Mitgang, 2013; Villani, 2006).

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature associated with effective school leadership and the use of mentoring to support principals in new their role. This study was intended to better understand the elements of mentoring that experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principals' leadership capacity. Therefore, it is important to understand effective elements of mentoring support as identified in the literature. Understanding the evolving role of the principal, the factors that attribute to the new skillsets needed by today's principal, and the relationship between school leadership and student achievement is therefore a starting point for the literature review. The literature review herein devotes attention to the following sections:

- School Leadership: A Key Component of Educational Reform
- The Changing Role and Context of Today's Principal
- National and State Performance Standards
- Relationship of School Leadership and Student Achievement
- Essential Skills and Behaviors for Effective School Leadership
- Support Systems for School Leaders
- The Mentoring Process
- Benefits Derived from Mentoring Programs
- Problematic Areas of Mentoring Programs
- Design Features and Components Critical to Developing Mentoring Programs

School Leadership: A Key Component of Educational Reform

Amidst the national call to action to improve student achievement, school leadership has taken a prominent place on the national agenda focused on educational reform and

accountability. This has been in part ushered in by such historic moments in our educational system's history as the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) and the approved federal legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). As part of the national dialogue focused on school leadership, much attention has been devoted to determining the criticality of school leadership in achieving reform initiatives. Equally as significant, the importance of school leadership as a variable in the equation for impacting student achievement and school effectiveness has been widely discussed (Bass & Riggio, 2005; CCSSO, 2008; Hess & Kelly, 2005a; Marks & Printy, 2003; Murphy & Orr, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008; Tucker & Codding, 2002).

The United States Department of Education's (2010) *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* is another significant event that has added to the attention placed on the power of school leadership to improve the schools and address student achievement. Included among the focus areas of the blueprint is a call to improve teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader. In addition, the blueprint issues a call to improve student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools. The legislation clearly places an expectation and accountability for student academic growth on the shoulders of school leaders. Consequently, it directs states and school districts to develop and implement systems of principal evaluation and support that will also guide professional development focused on improving student achievement. Reflective of the increasingly growing national spotlight on the school principal and his/her expected role in raising student achievement, states have been charged to develop definitions that define "effective principal" and "highly effective principal" based in part

on student performance and growth. The legislation recognizes the need to support the development of principals and therefore, the blueprint directs states to strengthen principal preparation programs, provide training and support to principals of high-needs schools, and support principals' instructional practice through ongoing, job-embedded professional development targeted to student and school needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Increasingly, school leadership is being viewed as the bridge that can bring together all the reform initiatives and required elements of school reform into a coherent whole. No effective school reforms can occur in the absence of good school leadership (DeVita et al., 2007). There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by talented leaders. While other factors admittedly contribute to such turnarounds, leadership is the catalyst (Leithwood et al., 2004).

There is growing interest in examining the relationship between effective leadership and increased student achievement. An increasing body of research focused on studying the influence of school leadership on student outcomes points to a relationship, direct or indirect, between the strength of leadership and the achievement of students (Bell, Bolan, & Cubillo, 2003; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). In fact, research on school effectiveness promotes the notion that school leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). While the driving goal of reform efforts is aimed at improving teaching and learning, the leadership styles, focus of leadership efforts, and elements to be influenced may take many different directions and approaches (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Hersey, 2004; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Despite these

differences, however, reform efforts and school effectiveness in large part depend on the skill level, knowledge, and leadership capacity of the school leader (Datnow, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). The principal has therefore emerged as a key person in the efforts to raise student performance and create the conditions for teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Therefore, his/her leadership is increasingly viewed among one of the most crucial, pivotal elements necessary for achieving school success (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano et al., 2005).

Given the complex, interrelated, and manifold tasks and responsibilities of school leadership, the literature is fairly consistent in emphasizing that the principal's role can hardly be viewed any longer from the perspective of "traditional" leadership concepts and/or approaches. With the intense demand for "change and improvement" as a continuous process to meet the needs of students and schools, the push for school leaders to shift from being predominately management-oriented to a leadership orientation, or at least to strike a greater balance between the two, is clearly at the heart of discussions concerning conceptual frameworks for leadership (Huber, 2004).

School leaders can no longer maintain the status quo by managing complex operations. Instead, they must create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. School leaders must be adept at creating systems for change, a shared understanding of the purpose of the school's work, and a culture that promotes, encourages, and distributes leadership in people throughout the school, as well as in building relationships (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2006). Research conducted by Leithwood et al. (2004) highlighted that the basics of high-quality, successful leadership necessary for impacting student

achievement and school success must include the ability to set direction, develop people, and redesign the organization to ensure that it supports, rather than inhibits, teaching and learning.

Leadership has become a central theme in reform discussions, and evidence is expanding concerning the relationship between leadership and student achievement. As this evidence expands, additional areas surfacing for further examination and study include how to better prepare, recruit, retain, develop, and support school leaders. While the questions are important for the field of school administration overall, they are also growing in their significance and relevance for states and local school districts working with novice school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004).

University Preparation Programs

The literature addressing the evolution of school leadership within the context of the new and growing challenges facing school leaders frequently touches upon principal preparation programs. It indicates that major research universities can play an important role in the preparation of twenty-first century school leaders, equipping them with the skillsets to meet current and future changes and challenges confronting our schools and educational systems. The conceptualization of the principal's role has taken a dramatic departure from the view of the principal as a building manager to one of an instructional leader focused on the teaching and learning processes within the school. This has challenged university-based programs for aspiring school leaders to re-conceptualize both the knowledge base and the processes typical of most current pre-service programs. If schools are to successfully reform, university preparation programs must also reform. Many school systems remain dependent on university-based leadership preparation programs to prepare and supply new generations of school leaders. To

move beyond the “traditional” school administration focus, energy must be devoted to changing what is taught, how it is taught, and how to work with K-12 in designing and delivering the program (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Levine, 2005). Programs need to be redesigned and reorganized to reflect the findings from what has been learned from large-scale school improvement efforts and research related to the advancement of professional practices (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Walker & Qian, 2006). The new conceptualization of school-site leadership requires attention to be given to structures and processes outside of the traditional course delivery of knowledge, values, and compendium of skills. In response to this need, some states are pulling back from their alliance with university-based educational administration programs and creating alternative routes to administrative careers, including the establishment of their own school leadership programs. In addition, groups such as the Broad Foundation, professional organizations, and independent, non-profit programs have stepped into the arena of providing school leadership preparation initiatives (Levine, 2005).

Complicating the issue further are the federal and state accountability mandates that have fundamentally reshaped the role of the principal. Principals can no longer serve in a managerial role that is primarily focused on supervising the day-to-day operations of the school. Instead, principals must be deeply grounded in curriculum, instruction, and school improvement in order to facilitate necessary changes that impact student performance (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Murphy and Orr (2009) state that programs need to “address changing expectations for principal leadership, particularly to foster school improvement and meet accountability expectations for school performance” (p. 9). However, very little study in curriculum, instructional practices, data use, and school improvement are required of universities. There is also little alignment between

the courses required at most universities and the findings from effective school research and school improvement (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

Changes in the nature, focus, and structure of principal preparation programs have been slow to follow. Many preparation programs continue to fall short in the curricular coherence, rigor, pedagogy, and structure to deliver the knowledge, skills, and disposition critical for developing the school leaders needed to lead our schools (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; SREB, 2009). In his report "Educating School Leaders," Levine (2005) contended, "The majority of programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the county's leading universities" (p. 23). Levine (2005) attributed the poor quality to factors including disconnected curricula; low admission standards; insufficient attention to clinical education, practice, and mentoring; lack of alignment to the needs of today's schools and school leaders; and insufficient resources.

Often, principals themselves are the first to express discontent over their preparation curricula, suggesting that they are not fully prepared by their graduate leadership programs to assume the duties of the principal's role without significant levels of support. When assessing their formal coursework and identifying the missing elements they believe left them ill-prepared, principals have included such areas as human relations, conflict management, change management, data analysis, accountability measures, and authentic experiences embedded in the curriculum (Hess & Kelly, 2005a, b; Holloway, 2004; Lovely, 2004a; Michael & Young, 2006). School leaders frequently consider their leadership preparation programs more theoretical than practical, leaving them to learn necessary leadership skills through trial and error (Nicholson, Harris-John, & Schimmel, 2005). Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) offered

research evidence to support this claim. revealing that principals felt they were not adequately trained to cope with the demands of their position, and that they tended to view the traditional preparation approach as middle management training with no substantive mentorship included, thus leaving them to learn necessary, critical skills "on the job."

The literature examining the focus and design of preparation programs from the perspective of theory versus practice reflects the need to strike a balance. In the zeal to make preparation more relevant to practice, realistic, clinically-oriented, Immegart (2007) recognizes the importance of practical skills and skill development in the principalship. He acknowledges it as a field of practice in which most professionals are practitioners, yet at the same time warns that the shift in balance in advanced educational administration studies toward an emphasis on practice ignores the kinds of scholarly skill that should be part of a post-baccalaureate education. Preparation programs should have an expanded focus beyond skills development and attention to practice. Scholarship has a place in school administration preparation programs, as it offers opportunities for inquiry, analysis, reflection, formal research, field study, and a broad range of thoughts and points of view. Moreover, scholarship and knowledge development are far too important to be left to a few, often self-directed individuals. Instead, members of the field should be actively engaged in scholarly activities in order for the knowledge of the field to grow, develop, and refine. If not, knowledge—and practice—will suffer (Immegart, 2007).

Alternative providers offering school leadership programs emphasize on-the-job preparation and mentoring much more than their university counterparts. In creating a more relevant, challenging curriculum, Levine (2005) recommended that a new degree be developed, the Master's in Educational Administration, equivalent to a Master's in Business Administration

and consisting of both basic courses in management and education. The curriculum of this new degree program should blend the practical and theoretical, offering clinical experiences with classroom instruction and active learning pedagogies such as mentoring, case studies, and simulations (Levine, 2005).

While there may be more agreement in the literature about what school leaders need to know and be able to do, there appears to be less agreement on how to prepare and develop them. Approaches have been developed and implemented to support administrator preparation programs in an effort to better meet the needs associated with developing school leaders, including problem-based learning centers, the use of cohort groups, collaborative partnerships, field experiences, and technology such as online programs. New models of administration preparation programs have focused on pedagogy and program delivery; organizational, programmatic, and cultural features; and mentoring (Daresh, 2004; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Sykes, 2002; Tucker & Codding, 2002).

From an analysis of selected preparation programs that have demonstrated some progress and success in restructuring program components, the literature presents the following common themes, characteristics, and/or recommendations:

1. A clear vision that drives programmatic decisions and greater opportunities for programmatic coherence.
2. A clear, well-defined curriculum focus reflecting agreement on the relevant knowledge base needed for first-year administrators and/or during their first few years in the profession.

3. Alignment with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.
4. Collaboration with local districts in program development, planning, and implementation.
5. Use of team-taught arrangements, internships, cohort-based structures, and mentorships (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Levine (2005) notably points to the National College for School Leadership (NSCL) as a promising model that educational administration programs might seek to emulate. The leadership program promotes the following 10 principles that define the skills and knowledge needed by school leaders, along with the role the program has in their development:

1. Be purposeful, inclusive, and values driven.
2. Embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school.
3. Promote an active view of learning.
4. Be instructionally focused.
5. Reach throughout the school community.
6. Build capacity by developing the school as a learning community.
7. Be futures-oriented and strategically driven.
8. Draw on experiential and innovative methodologies.
9. Benefit from a support and policy context that is coherent, systematic, and implementation driven.
10. Receive support from a national college that leads the discourse on leadership for learning.

In-Service Professional Development

Similar to the call for reexamining school leadership preparation programs, the literature highlights the simultaneous need to examine the professional development offered to principals once they are hired and throughout their careers to ensure continuous skill enhancement and leadership capacity development. Traditionally, the emphasis on improvement of instruction has led to greater focus on professional development for teachers rather than principals. But the rising expectations for student performance coupled with accountability measures have prompted more discussion of the need to provide in-service professional development opportunities for principals as well. (Daresh, 2004; Nicholson et al., 2005). Principals are expected to demonstrate leadership in influencing student learning, so it is necessary for them to be just as actively engaged in teachers' ongoing professional development as the teachers themselves. Sadly, the literature conveys principals' dismay regarding traditional professional development practices, because in-service programs are often predicated on whims or the "hot" topic of the day and typically offered in an episodic fashion (Nicholson et al., 2005). The literature furthermore offers little evidence that principals actually discuss the implementation of the related strategies/concepts following their participation in professional development activities, or translate into implementation what is learned once they return to the school building (Lesnick & Goldring, 2008).

Ongoing professional development for school administrators should combine theory and practice, provide scaffold learning experiences under the guidance of experienced mentors, offer opportunities to actively reflect on leadership experiences, and foster peer networking. In addition, professional development should be approached as a continuous, cumulative learning

pathway from pre-service preparation throughout the different stages of the principal's career (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Peterson, 2002).

Districts that are noted as having exemplary in-service professional development programs offer an ongoing approach to the development of a holistic, identifiable professional practice, as opposed to treating professional development as a "flavor of the month." Such outstanding programs focus on standards-based content emphasizing instruction, organizational development and change management, pedagogies that connect theory and practice, mentoring and coaching support systems, and collaborative learning opportunities embedded in ongoing networks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The Changing Role and Context of Today's Principal

The principalship emerged as a formally recognized role in the 1920s. Through the decades since then, the principalship has experienced considerable evolution, often being shaped and influenced by the events and issues specific to the era. In the 1920s, the budding role of the principalship was characterized by being a values-based position in its pedagogy, ensuring the close connection between schools and family values that characterized the time. This role shifted in the 1930s from facilitating school-family connections to focusing on the scientific management of schools. Then, in the 1940s and early 1950s, the importance of education in a democratic and strong society was stressed. With the Cold War and the launch of the Soviet's rocket Sputnik in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a strong concentration on academic excellence, particularly in math and science, as American culture competed to best the U.S.S.R. Growing social problems in the 1970s caused principals to focus attention on a variety of remedies to combat and/or control the social issues and thus turn their primary attention away from academic

leadership. Education experienced a decline in public confidence during this decade, setting the stage for the theme of accountability. The rise of international economic competitors during the 1980s led districts and schools to refocus on academic achievement and the preparation of students for entering the workplace. This decade ushered in a focus on educational reform, calling attention to improvement efforts and increased leadership necessary to impact school effectiveness. In the 1990s, federal, state, and local governmental agencies and policymakers exercised control and influence over public education (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Education agendas and priorities tied to the different administrations of U.S. presidents have influenced the expectations for schools; this has naturally made an imprint on the context of the principal's role in leading schools to meet those expectations. Over several decades now, each U.S. president has elevated the expectations and accountability for schools and student achievement. Under President Ronald Reagan's administration, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform was introduced. President George H. W. Bush's administration is noted for the *Education Summit* and *America 2000* (U.S. Department of Education, 1989), followed by President Bill Clinton's *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (Goals 2000, 1993-1994). President George W. Bush's administration introduced No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) and under President Barack Obama's administration, *Race to the Top* legislation became part of the federal education reform agenda (New York State Archives, 2015). The focus on national and state performance standards, accountability measures, and student achievement has carried forward to present day, positioning the principalship as a complex, multifaceted role (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

In an outcome-based and high-stakes, accountability-driven era, schools are being held increasingly accountable for raising student achievement among all student population subgroups. In response, the focus has shifted to view learning as more important than instruction, and the student now takes center stage from the teacher. Schools are under pressure to achieve on-time graduation for their students, producing graduates who are better trained with more advanced skills and knowledge, and who can adapt to an ever-changing workplace. It is primarily the school principal on whom the burden of school reform—especially student achievement—rests. Principals are being called upon to lead in the redesign of their schools (Levine, 2005). The mounting demands ae leading to school administrators' job descriptions being rewritten every year, adding to the complexity of their roles (CCSSO, 2008; Nicholson et al., 2005). In essence, these accountability systems call attention to the expanded dimensions of leadership and the need for a new breed of principal (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

The hats that today's principal wears at any given time continue to multiply—educational visionary, instructional leader, curriculum and assessment expert, data analyst, budget analyst, facility manager, community relations specialist, and even change agent (CCSSO, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The need for a continuity of purpose and a commitment to excellence within schools requires leaders to demonstrate enlightened leadership, capability to lead curricular change, innovative and diversified instructional strategies, data-driven decision-making, and the implementation of accountability models (Tirozzi, 2001). Within the social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics in which the school is operating, it is increasingly important for the principal to possess the leadership skills necessary for developing the school into a learning organization that has the capacity to reform, change, and reinvent as necessary to

meet the needs of its students, teachers, and school community (Huber, 2004). The principal, then, should be viewed as the chief learning officer responsible for creating a school environment that focuses on improved student achievement and ensures that all students have access to high quality teaching and learning (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Peterson, 2002).

Higher expectations for instructional leadership place the principal in an ever more high-stakes policy environment under great public scrutiny. Meanwhile, principals work in a societal context that is much more dynamic and complex than in the past. Schools are experiencing dramatic demographic changes within student populations, coupled with increasing diversity and growing segregation by income and race (Levine, 2005). Hispanics and Asians will constitute 61% of the nation's population growth by 2025, causing a shift in the "majority-minority" populations that make up the demographic profile in states; this, in turn, will dramatically change the makeup of the school-age population (Tirozzi, 2001). School leaders will need to develop instructional materials, identify instructional methods, offer appropriate combinations of English language instruction, and develop the teaching force necessary to meet the needs of diverse groups of students and parents that many teachers and administrators have not previously experienced. Furthermore, while adolescents have changed drastically over the last several decades, instructional pedagogy, school organizational structures, and instructional delivery systems have experienced little to no changes (Crow, 2006; Tirozzi, 2001).

In further examining the dynamic societal context in which principals must lead, Rothstein (2004) explains how social class differences have important implications for learning and are likely to affect the academic performance of children. The influence of home, income, healthcare, safety, and community, among other factors, should all be considered in their relation

to the academic performance of a student as s/he proceeds through school. Rothstein (2004) analyzed how social class can shape learning outcomes, and he stressed the need to look at the differences in learning styles and readiness across students as they enter school for the first time. School leaders, in dedicating attention to the challenge of narrowing achievement gaps through school improvement efforts, must identify and implement intensified curricular and organizational reforms.

The knowledge explosion and pervasive influence of technology are additional factors attributing to the complex environment in which principals must now function. With the globalization of the economy and the growing focus on social and intellectual capital, principals and teachers must create school environments that promote continuous learning and build students' learning capacity. Also, the increased focus on digital learning mandates that principals must learn to respond to new and expanding technologies that support the delivery of instruction and student achievement. The transience of the American population paired with the increased mobility and technological savvy of students, presents its own unique challenges to continuity of instruction and performance. Even more, the aging population, who have greater opportunity for voter power in the school finance arena, provides an opportunity for principals to creatively think beyond the typical parent outreach activities in order to engage this segment of the school population (Tirozzi, 2001).

In addition to the expanded dimensions of principal responsibilities and societal changes, school districts find themselves bracing for a possible crisis in having an insufficient pool of principal candidates to tap when trying to fill job vacancies. Much of the looming principal shortage can be attributed to retirements, but others are choosing to leave the profession or not

even seek a principal's position in the first place. Discouraging factors that may be linked to individuals' decisions to leave or shun away from the field of school administration include, but are not limited to, the pressures of new accountability systems, increased stress from expanded responsibilities, removal of principal tenure, inadequate compensation, less job satisfaction, budget concerns, and lack of support (Crocker & Harris, 2002; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Levine, 2005; Tirozzi, 2001).

The extant literature also offers the perspective that the problem is not a shortage of certified administrators, but of well qualified school leaders who are willing to work in the places of highest demand, especially in schools where working conditions and/or students' needs are most challenging. Factors associated with the shortage include the inability of school leadership preparation programs to recruit high potential candidates committed to leadership roles in places where they are needed; the working conditions of often high-poverty schools with little opportunities for career advancement; and the lack of preparation and support offered to candidates to help them assume the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Levine (2005) points out that few principals are prepared to carry out the agenda and/or meet the expectations before them as leaders of today's schools, particularly in light of the changes and demands that have reshaped the role for which they were originally trained.

School districts will have to devote attention to creating a pool of qualified candidates ready and prepared for roles of school leadership, as well as to ensuring that new school leaders are equipped with the skills and knowledge for providing effective leadership. The diminishing

pool of principal candidates is unsettling for any district, and reinforces the need for school districts to explore avenues of support systems, such as those afforded by mentoring and induction programs (Crocker & Harris, 2002; Hall, 2008; Mitgang, 2007).

National and State Performance Standards

The *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008*, as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (CCSSO, 2008), acknowledges the changing role of the school administrator, and reflects the increasing accountability on schools and their leaders to raise student achievement. Updated from 1996, the new standards reflect the wealth of knowledge and lessons learned about educational leadership over the last decade, and are explicitly policy-oriented in their structure. Designed to serve as a broad set of national guidelines that states can in turn use to develop and/or revise their own standards, the educational standards provide "high-level guidance and insight about the traits, functions of work, and responsibilities expected of school and district leaders" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 5). As such, these educational standards firmly plant the topic of educational leadership at center stage of policy debate, planning, and research.

The *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008* (hereinafter referred to as *ISLLC 2008*) consists of six standards—standards that organize functions for defining strong school leadership and which represent high-priority themes critical for school leaders to address in promoting the success of each student. The ISLLC 2008 educational leadership standards are outlined below:

1. Standard 1: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
2. Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. Standard 3: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. Standard 4: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. Standard 6: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14-15).

In examining these standards, a clear distinction to establish is that they are intended to serve as policy standards, and therefore are purposefully designed to be discussed at the policymaking level to set policy and vision. As a set of policy standards, ISLLC 2008 provides a framework of high-level policy guidance for goal-setting, state standards identification and alignment, policy creation, and systems support. Policymakers can glean guidance from the

standards in improving school leadership preparation programs; school administration licensure requirements and practices; induction programs and leadership academy activities; performance assessment and evaluation; and career and professional development. ISLLC 2008 offers a foundation for a continuum of polices that can potentially guide education leaders throughout their career, and it highlights the importance and value of applying policy standards to leadership-related activities in an effort to improve the effectiveness of school leadership and, in turn, positively impact student achievement (CCSSO, 2008).

A significant strength of the standards is that ISLLC 2008 reflects and addresses the changes being viewed and experienced in the field of school leadership. The standards support and align with the many facets of school leadership that often serve as focus areas for school reform. Second, the standards utilize input gathered from research studies and projects; higher education officials; policy-oriented, practitioner-based organizations; and leaders in the education field (CCSSO, 2008). They also clearly focus on student achievement and the leadership necessary for building the culture, practices, systems, and structures for supporting this achievement. Fourth, the standards provide a foundation for building leadership capacity at all stages of a school leader's career, presenting elements that can be translated into efforts for improving the quality and relevancy of professional development programs. Fifth, the standards are action-oriented in nature, and thus provide policymakers with a targeted focus and direction for strengthening and enhancing educational systems and school leadership. Finally, the standards are reflective of many facets of the principal's role and, therefore, present areas where mentoring support can be crucial to the professional development and success of new principals (Villani, 2006).

On a state level, in 2006 the North Carolina State Board of Education approved new leadership standards for school administrators. Clearly, the state standards portray a new vision of leadership, calling for a new type of school leader who acts as an executive rather than an administrator. The standards frame an expectation that school leadership can no longer maintain the status quo; instead, today's school leader must be skilled at creating schools as organizations that can learn and adapt quickly to improve performance (North Carolina Board of Education, 2006). The *North Carolina Standards for School Executives* (North Carolina Board of Education, 2006) outlines seven critical performance standards that are designed to guide, shape, and influence the leadership demonstrated by school leaders in schools across the state. These seven standards include the following leadership areas: (1) Strategic Leadership, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Cultural Leadership, (4) Human Resources Leadership, (5) Managerial Leadership, (6) External Development Leadership, and (7) Micropolitical Leadership.

The 2006 *North Carolina Standards for School Executives* were developed as a guide for school administrators as they reflect upon and work to improve their professional growth, development, and effectiveness as leaders throughout the stages of their career. Among the philosophical foundations for the standards, leadership is not viewed as a position or a person. Instead, leadership is deemed as a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at every level of the school and school district. The standards are interrelated and connected in practice, and they are not intended to isolate competencies. Notably, the stated purposes of the standards were of significant importance to the current study, particularly in the purpose that states leadership standards have in serving as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for school

executives (North Carolina Board of Education, 2006). Additional intended purposes of these standards include the following:

1. Inform higher education programs in the development of content and requirements of school executive degree programs.
2. Focus the goals and objectives of districts as they support, monitor, and evaluate school executives.
3. Guide professional development for school executive (North Carolina Board of Education, 2006)

The standards were developed from a base of research and relevant national reports focused on leadership practices that impact student achievement. One of the primary sources used in the identification and development of the standards included the Wallace Foundation's (2013) study. This particular study examined what principals actually do in contrast to what they might or should do. The study is grounded in practice, and it supports distributed leadership (Portin et al., 2003). Other major conclusions drawn from school visits and interviews conducted in the study include the following:

1. The core of the principal's job is to diagnose the school's need and decide how to best meet them with the resources available.
2. Schools need leadership in seven critical areas: instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, and micropolitical, regardless of the type of school or grade level.
3. Principals are responsible for ensuring that leadership occurs in all seven areas, but the principal does not have to provide it alone.

4. School governance matters and the governance structure affects the ways in which key leadership functions perform.
5. Principals learn by doing with most principals thinking they learned the skills they need on the job (Portin et al., 2003, p. 1).

In alignment with the 2006 *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*, the 2007 *North Carolina Standards for Superintendents* outlines seven identical performance standards (North Carolina Board of Education, 2007). Both sets of standards for school executives and superintendents share a common philosophical foundation grounded in the belief that the concept of leadership is extremely complex and systemic in nature, and that leadership is not a position or a person. Instead, leadership is a collection of practices that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school district. Furthermore, these two sets of standards highlight the need for proactive leaders who possess a great sense of urgency to positively impact student achievement and ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared for life in the twenty-first century (North Carolina Board of Education, 2006, 2007).

With this heightened emphasis on leadership supported by the North Carolina Board of Education (2006, 2007), it is no surprise to find that the standards identify practices focused on building leadership capacity and creating processes and systems that foster, construct, and expand leadership qualities in individuals throughout the school district. One of the human resources standards set by the state, for example, speaks to creating processes for distributed leadership, professional development, and succession planning. Furthermore, this standard specifically outlines the expectation for superintendents to ensure that processes are in place for

hiring, inducting, and mentoring new school executives that result in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified and diverse personnel (North Carolina Board of Education, 2007).

Relationship Between School Leadership and Student Achievement

As school leadership has taken on added significance in educational reform movements, attention has been devoted to uncovering the relationship of leadership to increasing student achievement. There is a growing body of research examining and analyzing school leadership's positive, although indirect, effects on students' academic performance (Bell, Bolam, & Cubillo, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hargraves & Fink, 2006; Heck, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Leithwood et al. (2004) claimed that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. While the relationship between the principal's leadership and student achievement is indirect, the relationship should not be minimized, nor should the role of the principal in influencing student learning be diminished. The Educational Research Services (2000) report claims, "Without the principal's leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed" (p. 1). The importance of the principal's role and the essence of his/her leadership in achieving results through others, developing and maintaining school culture, promoting a vision of academic success for all students, and creating a professional learning community are all critical areas that surface in the research related to school leadership and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Crow, 2006; Louis et al., 2010).

Research evidence reveals the effects of school leaders on student achievement across a spectrum of schools. Some indicates that the demonstrated effects of school leadership are

greater in schools that are in more difficult and challenging circumstances. Leadership is a significant catalyst for change and improvement in the turnaround of underperforming schools, calling attention to the value of adding to the leadership capacities of these schools (Louis et al., 2010).

In drawing the relationship between the principals' leadership and student achievement, Leithwood et al. (2009) point to the school leader's influence on school and classroom conditions, emphasizing the significant effects that can be yielded in the area of student learning through the synergy created across a range of human and institutional resources. The principal is positioned to ensure these synergistic effects. In addition to recognizing the importance of exercising influence, it is valuable to understand the core functions of leadership that involve setting the direction and striking a balance between stability and change. In achieving this balance, school leaders should be guided by the priorities of developing and supporting their people to do their best, and redesigning the organization to improve effectiveness (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995).

In further examination of the link between school leadership and student achievement, Leithwood et al. (2009) recognized that the circle of the principal's influence includes collective, shared, and distributed leadership. *Collective leadership* refers to the sum influence exercised on school decisions by educators, parents, and students associated with the school. *Shared leadership* relates to teachers' influence and participation in school-wide decisions with the principal. When speaking of *distributed leadership*, one examines leadership practices,

leadership patterns, and the different people involved in leadership functions (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Spillane et al., 2004).

Recognizing that school leadership contributes to student learning indirectly through the influence on other people or through features of the organization, the research evidence provides insight into what and whom school leaders should pay the most attention to and/or assign priority within their organization. Examples of such areas include, but are not limited to, instructional practices; leadership development of personnel; decision-making processes; class sizes; school mission, goals, and culture; district culture; and alignment of goals, policies, programs, and professional development (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 2002; Halverson, 2003; Leithwood, et al. 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Printy, 2008; Robinson et al., 2008; Spillane, 2006).

Essential Skills and Behaviors for Effective School Leadership

Viewing leadership as a hallmark element of school performance, much focus in the literature has been on the skills and practices critical for effective leadership in the schools. Framed in the context of leadership needed to effectively lead today's complex and ever-changing schools in the face of reform movements, this particular section of the literature review highlights essential leadership skills, competencies, and behaviors that characterize effective leadership as gleaned from research studies and related educational literature. In addition, the review was conducted to gain insight into critical leadership skills that school leaders, especially beginning principals, may need support in developing in order to ensure leadership effectiveness.

In studying principals recognized for effectively leading change in school and classroom practices that resulted in raised student achievement, Bottoms & O'Neill (2001) identified 13

critical success factors for effective principals. Organized around three key competencies, these factors are outlined below:

1. Competency I: Effective principals have a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement.
2. Competency II: Effective principals have the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement continuous student improvement.
3. Competency III: Effective principals have the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices.

In addition to the three overarching competencies tied with effective school leadership, each of the three competency areas has related critical success factors that support it. Table 1 presents the critical success factors for each of the competency areas.

Based upon 35 years of research concentrated on school leadership, Marzano et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis focused on identifying effective principal leadership behaviors. From the research, 21 categories of leadership behaviors (which the researchers referred to as responsibilities) were identified as having a significant impact on student achievement and school effectiveness. Some of the identified responsibilities include behaviors that have been commonly highlighted in theoretical literature for decades. However, given its findings, the research study reveals the significant relationship between leadership behaviors and student performance, and validates the importance and value of all the leadership responsibilities in the effective execution of school leadership (Marzano et al. 2005).

Marzano et al. (2005) found an average correlation of .25 between principals' leadership behaviors and student achievement. As highlighted from the study, "the correlation indicates that

Table 1

SREB 13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals

Competency	Critical Success Factors
I. Effective principals have a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement.	1. Focusing on student achievement: Create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible. 2. Developing a culture of high expectations: Set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content. 3. Designing a standards-based instructional system: Recognize and encourage good instructional practices that motivate students and increase student achievement.
II. Effective principals have the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement continuous student improvement.	4. Creating a caring environment: Develop a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult. 5. Implementing data-based improvement: Use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and in student achievement. 6. Communicating: Keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement. 7. Involving parents: Make parents partners in students' education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.
III. Effective principals have the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.	8. Initiating and managing change: Understand the change process and use leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively. 9. Providing professional development: Understand how adults learn and advance meaningful change through quality, sustained professional development that leads to increased student achievement. 10. Innovating: Use and organize time and resources in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement. 11. Maximizing resources: Acquire and use resources wisely. 12. Building external support: Obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for the school improvement agenda. 13. Staying abreast of effective practices: Continuously learn from and seek out colleagues who keep abreast of new research and proven practices.

Note. (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

an increase in principal leadership behavior from the 50th percentile to the 84th percentile is associated with a gain in the overall achievement of the school from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 30). Likewise, if there were an increase in leadership behavior from the 50th percentile to the 99th percentile, student achievement would increase from the 50th percentile to the 72nd percentile. This study revealed that all 21 of the leadership responsibilities have a statistically significant relationship with student achievement. The leadership responsibility of situational awareness had the highest average correlation, a value of .33. Of the 21 responsibilities, 20 had a correlation value between .18 and .28, indicating how very close the correlation values are for all of the responsibilities in their strength of relationship with student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). In addition to revealing the relationship of leadership behaviors to student achievement, Marzano et al. (2005) used the study to highlight the importance of first-order and second-order change with regard to how behaviors influence and impact school systems, processes, and leadership decisions, among other factors. Table 2 details the 21 leadership responsibilities identified in the study.

Similar themes as those represented within the leadership responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) can also be seen reflected and/or embedded in the broad categories of core leadership practices presented in another study on leadership and its relationship to student achievement. Leithwood et al. (2009) identified the following four categories as essential practices: (1) setting direction, (2) developing people, (3) redesigning the organization, and (4) managing the instructional program through strategic allocation of resources and support. These essential practices can be viewed as the basic core of successful leadership, ones that can be exercised across contexts in which school leaders may serve.

Table 2

The 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader

Responsibility	The Extent to Which the Principal
1. Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failure
2. Change Agent	The school leader challenges the status quo and leads change initiates, considers new and better ways of doing things, and operates at the edge versus the center of the school's competence
3. Contingent Rewards	The school leader recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
4. Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and between teachers and students.
5. Culture	The school leader fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation among staff
6. Discipline	The school leader protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time or focus
7. Flexibility	The leader adapts his/her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
8. Focus	The leader establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention
9. Ideals/Beliefs	The leader operates from a set of strong ideals and beliefs and shares those beliefs about school, teaching, and learning with the staff
10. Input	The school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies

Table 2 (continued)

Responsibility	The Extent to Which the Principal
11. Intellectual Stimulation	The school leader ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices regarding effective schooling and makes discussions of the theories and practices a regular aspect of the school's culture
12. Involvement in Curriculum, -Instruction, and Assessment	The school leader is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities at the classroom level
13. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	The school leader is aware of best practices in these domains
14. Monitoring/Evaluating	The leader monitors the effectiveness of school practices in terms of student achievement
15. Optimizer	The leader inspires others and is the driving force when implementing a challenging innovation
16. Order	The leader establishes a set of standard operating principles and routines
17. Outreach	The leader is an advocate and a spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
18. Relationships	The school leader demonstrates an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff
19. Resources	The leader provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their duties

Table 2 (continued)

Responsibility	The Extent to Which the Principal
20. Situational Awareness	The leader is aware of the details and the undercurrents regarding the functioning of the school and the use of this information to address current and potential problems
21. Visibility	The school leader has contact and interacts with teachers, students, and parents

Note. (Marzano & McNulty, 2005).

The conceptual framework of learning-centered leadership offers further insight in the literature on essential leadership skills for school effectiveness. Based on studies of high-performing schools, school districts, and school leaders, the learning-centered model captures a comprehensive set of key leadership behaviors; in accordance, it identifies the following eight dimensions for the framework: (1) vision for learning, (2) instructional program, (3) curricular program, (4) assessment program, (5) communities of learning, (6) resource acquisition and use, (7) organizational culture, and (8) social advocacy. Consistent with other literature, learning-centered leadership is framed on the idea that leaders influence the factors that, in turn, influence outcomes. The model conceptualizes leadership behaviors as impacting factors both at the school level (e.g., structure of the leadership team) and the classroom level (e.g., student group practices). The learning-leadership model takes into account the factors that the leader brings with him/her to the school leadership position; specifically, these include (1) previous experiences, (2) knowledge base amassed over time, (3) personal characteristics, and (4) set of values and beliefs (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006).

In examining the leadership skills, behaviors, and practices that have surfaced from the research as essential for achieving successful schools and impacting student achievement, common parallels and themes can be noted among the different categories. In addition, connections can be drawn between many of the skills and behaviors identified and the strands of leadership behaviors reflected in the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*.

Coaching vs. Mentoring

Given the increasing complexities of the principal's role, it is becoming imperative that school districts acknowledge and embrace the need to provide intensive support for novice

principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Lovely, 2004a; Villani, 2006). Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, & Mererson (2005) emphasized that effective professional development programs for school leaders are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) learned from their research focused on in-service professional development that exemplary support programs offer a well-connected, continuous set of learning opportunities grounded in both theory and practice. In addition, the research revealed that programs typically offered support systems in the form of mentoring, participation in principals' networks and study groups, collegial school visits, and peer coaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). In a study of urban school districts, it was revealed that successful in-service support programs for school leaders incorporated a comprehensive set of supports including principals' institutes and monthly conferences, principals' networks and study groups, and coaching from instructional leaders and mentor principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Even in light of the need and the research illustrating the inclusion of some type of support system for new principals in these exemplary in-service professional development programs, there are significant variations in the ways states and school districts approach the use and implementation of support systems for beginning principals (Villani, 2006). Attention is given in the following sections to several of the more commonly used support systems of coaching and mentoring that are highlighted in the literature.

Coaching

While the popular term *coaching* often references support systems offered to school leaders, coaching for new principals is often vaguely defined, and little research has been

conducted related to its efficacy (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). The Southern Regional Education Board (2008) defines *coaching* as an interactive process through which managers and supervisors offer personal support, technical help, and individual challenge in an aim to solve performance problems or develop employee capabilities. According to Bloom et al. (2005), coaching is "the practice of providing deliberate support to another individual to help him/her to clarify and/or to achieve goals" (p. 5). Adding to the definition, Bloom et al. (2005) identifies key elements of effective leadership coaching that include a relationship based upon trust and permission, the opportunity for the coach to offer a fresh perspective, the recognition that problems and needs are valued learning opportunities, and the coach's ability to exercise a variety of coaching skills and coaching strategies. They indicate that coaching is not training, supervision, or therapy, and furthermore clarify that it is not mentoring, although effective mentors utilize coaching skills. Instead, a blended coaching model is used to describe the practice of leadership coaching, and includes such strategies as instructional, facilitative, consultative, collaborative, and transformational coaching (Bloom et al., 2005). The coach is often an individual from outside the school or school system with expertise in school leadership (Bloom et al., 2005; Silver, Lochmiller, Copland, & Tripps, 2009).

In describing leadership coaching, Hargrove (1995) draws similar comparisons to the relationship maintained between an athlete and his/her coach. Just as the coach helps athletes recognize possibilities in their circumstances to help them reach and sustain peak performance, the leadership coach works from the inside out to propel new principals into the "zone" where the individual is in total concentration, free of distractions and capable of effortless actions and decision-making (Hargrove, 1995; Lovely, 2004b).

Research on the outcomes of coaching support strategies and the effectiveness of leadership coaching programs is minimal (Silver et al., 2009). However, one study of a university-based coaching program conducted by Silver et al. (2009) revealed that new principals viewed the leadership coaching experience positively, and that the university-based coaching program was a positive addition to the induction experience. The participants viewed the coaching they received as a personalized, differentiated form of professional development focused on their expectations and goals as a new principal; consequently, they identified the personalized support as one of the coaching model's most significant assets (Silver et al., 2009). Of note is the New Teacher Center at the University of California in Santa Cruz, often cited as having one of the most comprehensive coaching programs available to new principals. Their nationally recognized training program, called Coaching Leaders to Attain Student Success (CLASS), develops highly individualized coaching relationships and applies a blended approach of instructional and facilitative coaching (Lovely, 2004a).

Mentoring

In a historical context, the source of the term *mentor* is derived from Homer's epic *The Odyssey.* In the epic, Odysseus, upon leaving for a journey to fight in the Trojan War, entrusted his loyal friend, Mentor, with the responsibility of educating and nurturing his son, Telemachus, in every facet of his life. Homer's literary description depicts the image of a wise, patient counselor who serves to shape and guide the lives of younger, less experienced colleagues (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 1995). Over time, there have been many variations in definitions and themes of mentoring, and mentoring has occurred within many contexts (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Zachary, 2005). Zachary (2005) states, "learning is the fundamental process,

purpose, and product of mentoring" (p. 3). He defines mentoring as a reciprocal, collaborative learning relationship between two individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability in helping the mentee achieve clear, jointly defined learning goals (Zachary, 2005).

One definition of mentoring presented in the research literature deems it as an extended process of support from a more experienced colleague to help a beginning principal with personal and professional growth (Villani, 2006). It is also viewed as a socialization strategy that supports new administrators in learning the requisite knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values to take on complex, responsibility-laden school leadership roles (Crow & Matthews, 1998). The Southern Regional Education Board (2008) defines mentoring as the offering of advice, information, or guidance by one who has useful experience, skills, or expertise to help support another's professional development. Their resource guide further describes mentoring as the all-inclusive process to facilitate and support one's orientation and professional development (SREB, 2008).

Mentoring programs can provide needed support for pre-service internship experiences or for in-service support programs for new administrators who become principals. Too, the practice of mentoring has evolved as knowledge of how to best facilitate learning. Mentoring practices have shifted from a product-oriented model to a process-oriented relationship involving knowledge acquisition, application, and critical reflection. Mentoring is a self-directed relationship, driven by the learning needs of a mentee (Zachary, 2005). While increased attention devoted to mentoring is prompting the development of more formal, structured mentoring programs, informal mentoring relationships commonly remain the practice among school administrators (Silver et al., 2009). Notably, in contrast to coaching programs, more empirical

research exists related to principal mentoring programs. An analysis of the literature indicates that mentoring support programs can be essential for beginning principals' success (Silver et al., 2009).

Often, *mentoring* and *coaching* are terms that are used interchangeably, with little distinction drawn between the two support strategies. In fact, coaching is frequently used synonymously with mentoring, induction, and professional development (Silver et al., 2009; Zachary, 2005). However, these support strategies do differ in ways that should be noted, in both focus and practice. Coaching is technical support centered on the development of techniques that effective employees need to know and be able to perform, while mentoring is viewed in the larger context as a developmentally appropriate process for learning the professional and personal skills needed for success (SREB, 2008). Coaching is a skillset often used by mentors in a mentor-mentee relationship. Moreover, coaching focuses on boosting performance and skills enhancement, but mentoring focuses on achievement of personal and/or professional development goals. The appointment of persons to these roles differ as well; coaches are often hired outside the organization, and mentors are usually secured from within the organization (Zachary, 2005). Table 3 presents additional distinctions between the two strategies of coaching and mentoring.

The Mentoring Process

Given the focus of this research study, this section of the literature review devotes additional attention to mentoring and its related processes. With growing recognition and acknowledgement of the complex and demanding nature of the principalship, support systems such as mentoring programs for school leaders is receiving increased attention as a much needed

Table 3

Coaching and Mentoring: Key Differences

	Coaching	Mentoring
Key Goals	To correct inappropriate behavior, improve performance, and impart skills that the employee needs to accept new responsibilities.	To support and guide personal growth of the protégé.
Initiative for Mentoring	The coach directs the learning and instruction.	The mentored person is in charge of his or her learning.
Volunteerism	Through the subordinate's agreement to accept coaching is essential, it is not necessarily voluntary.	Both mentor and protégé participate as volunteers.
Focus	Immediate problems and learning opportunities.	Long-term personal career development.
Roles	Heavy on telling with appropriate feedback.	Heavy on listening, providing a role model, and making suggestions and connections.
Duration	Usually concentrates on short-term needs. Administered intermittently on as "as-needed" basis.	Long-term.
Relationship	The coach is the coachee's boss.	The mentor is seldom the protégé's boss. Most experts insist that the mentor not be in the person's chain of command.

Note. (Harvard Business Essentials, 2004).

pathway for providing critical, relevant support to novice principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh 2004). The increased attention is prompting states and school districts to adopt some form of mentoring for school leaders, either as pre-service preparation of future administrators or as part of induction programs designed to assist leaders during their first years in the position. Still, however, the harsh reality is that most existing mentoring programs are falling well short of their potential (Daresh, 1995; Mitgang, 2007).

Part of the challenges facing the fidelity of implementation of the purpose and framework that mentoring programs are intended to have could possibly be attributed to the inconsistency and disagreements in how mentoring is used within an organizational system and/or the confusing roles associated with mentoring services. Even in the literature, mentoring can often be described with many different definitions and foci. The literature acknowledges that, in the absence of a shared common definition of mentioning to distinguish different types of supportive relationships, complications can surface in the implementation and delivery of mentoring services (Mertz, 2004).

Learning is the fundamental process and primary purpose of mentoring; therefore, it is critical that mentoring support be grounded in a learner-oriented approach (Zachary, 2000). A successful mentoring relationship is not stagnant, but rather a dynamic, ongoing process in which mentors and mentees move through different stages of learning and growth. Mentoring should be viewed as a learner-centered paradigm with the learner—the mentee—playing an actively engaged role in their learning, as opposed to the former mentor-driven paradigm that more often than not characterized former mentoring relationships. Current mentoring programs should reflect a shift away from the more traditional authoritarian teacher-dependent student paradigm

in which the mentee passively receives information. Instead, information and knowledge should be discovered in a learning process with the mentor serving as a facilitator (Barnett, 1995; Daresh, 2001; Zachery, 2000).

To address shortcomings often experienced with current mentoring programs, Mitgang (2007) points to quality guidelines for states and school districts to use in designing, strengthening, and sustaining mentoring programs for beginning principals. The guidelines are outlined below.

1. Guideline One: High-quality training for mentors should be a requirement and should be provided by any state or district with mentoring.
2. Guideline Two: States or districts that require mentoring should gather meaningful information about its efficacy, especially how mentoring is or is not contributing to the development of leadership behaviors that are needed to change the culture of schools toward improved teaching and learning.
3. Guideline Three: Mentoring should be provided for at least a year, and ideally two or more years, in order to provide new leaders the necessary support as they develop from novices to self-assured leaders of change.
4. Guideline Four: State and local funding for principal mentoring should be sufficient to provide quality training, stipends commensurate with the importance and time requirements of the task, and a lengthy enough period of mentoring to allow new principals a meaningful professional induction.
5. Guideline Five: The primary goal of mentoring should be unambiguously focused on fostering new school leaders who place learning first in their time and attention,

recognize when fundamental change in the status quo is needed, and have the courage to keep the needs of all children front and center.

A significant and vital component of mentoring programs is the process of self-inquiry and reflection that it affords new school leaders. In working with novice school administrators, mentors have the opportunity to serve as the catalysts for developing autonomous thinkers. Using cognitive coaching practices and principles, mentors can move the beginning principal to be more independent decision-makers skilled in reflective thinking and problem-solving abilities (Barnett, 1995, 2007; Kirkham, 1995; Southworth, 1995).

Among the many valuable aspects of the mentoring process, the literature highlights the merit of the mentoring process as a basis for principal socialization. Four conceptual elements of socialization include: anticipatory socialization, professional socialization, organizational socialization, and personal socialization. Given that most school leaders make their entry into school administration after having served in the classroom, *anticipatory socialization* speaks to the transition that a teacher may make to the role of school administrator; this offers insight into how beginning principals often develop their instructional orientation and conceptions of instructional leadership. *Professional socialization* focuses on what happens in the university coursework, internships, school district and school, calling for the opportunity to blend the university and school/district context. During *organizational socialization*, the principal begins to learn about the culture, history, practices, traditions, and the like within the current school and school community, including knowledge about social and health agencies, religious and governmental entities, and other schools with similar and different demographics. Finally,

personal socialization refers to the leader's change of self-identity as s/he learns about the new role (Crow, 2006; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Lovely, 2004a).

A professional socialization hierarchy for principals presented by Parkay, Currie, and Rhodes (1992) includes the following five stages: Stage 1, Survival; Stage 2, Control; Stage 3, Stability; Stage 4, Educational Leadership; and Stage 5, Professional Actualization. In Stage 1, Survival, the individual experiences the shock of the beginning leadership and concern about how to sort it all out. At this stage, personal insecurity and concerns tend to be high. In Stage 2, Control, the principal's primary concern is with setting priorities and "getting on top of" the situation. The individual achieves veteran status in Stage 3, Stability, and there is greater effectiveness and efficiency in handling management-related tasks. The principal's primary focus in Stage 4, Educational Leadership, turns to curriculum and instruction. Stage 5, Professional Actualization, is marked by the principal's internal confirmation of themselves, and there is a focus on attaining vision such as creating a school culture characterized by empowerment, growth, and authenticity. In either view of the socialization process, a primary goal would be to provide support to the principal during the first several stages of socialization as the principal transitions to their new role. The stages of the socialization process have great implications for the value of mentoring and the mentoring practices employed to support new principals (Villani, 2006).

Benefits Derived from Mentoring Programs

New principals experience intense stress as they strive to transfer and apply what they learned from their administration certification programs to real-world practice. Areas of need and concern can be addressed through the support offered from a mentoring program; these areas of

concern include feelings of inadequate preparation, loss of support systems, and feelings of isolation that often frame an individual's transition to school administration. Generally, the research studies assessing mentoring programs reveal that the benefits of mentoring outweigh the negative aspects and/or limitations of its processes. Participants involved in such support systems, especially mentees, typically report overwhelmingly positive responses from their experiences in a mentoring relationship. Research literature offers evidence that mentoring programs can yield significant benefits for the mentee, mentor, and school district and/or organization (Daresh, 2004; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Mitgang, 2007), as discussed further in the sections below.

Benefits for the Mentee

Mentoring relationships and the experiences that evolve through those relationships can prove to be powerful learning opportunities (Daresh, 2001). Across studies that examine the reflections and feedback from individuals who have participated in mentoring programs, the following outcomes commonly rank among the top benefits identified for the mentee:

1. Support, guidance, empathy, and counseling from a more experienced peer
2. Opportunities to learn from a veteran administrator in an environment and/or relationship characterized by trust, confidentiality, encouragement, and without fear of judgment
3. Increased self-confidence about his/her professional competence
4. Increased communication skills and knowledge of the job's practical and technical aspects
5. Opportunities to see educational theory translated into daily practices

6. Opportunities to discuss, examine, share, and problem solve issues and challenges, as well as exchange views and perspectives with experienced administrators
7. Opportunities to self-reflect and gain insight into one's own values, style, and actions
8. Reduced isolation and loneliness as a beginning principal
9. Greater sense of purpose and organizational understanding
10. Opportunity to network
11. Opportunity for feedback
12. Framework for role clarification and socialization to the new professional role as principal (Bolam & McMahon, 1995; Bush & Coleman, 1995; Daresh, 2001; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Lester et al., 2011; Playko, 1995; Southworth, 1995)

Benefits for the Mentor

A recurring theme in the literature is that mentoring is mutually beneficial to both the mentee and mentor. Mentors working with mentees entering the field find their work challenging and stimulating, which results in increased job satisfaction. Mentors draw from their work a sense of satisfaction in being instrumental in helping to transfer and promote the school district's values and culture to a new generation of school leaders. Just as the mentor-mentee relationship presents a growth opportunity for the novice school administrator, the mentoring arrangement becomes a learning experience for the mentor as well; the relationship often serves as a two-way process of professional development through which the mentor has the opportunity to receive new ideas and perspectives, improve communication, and enhance teaching and coaching skills. Mentors further identify the benefits of improved problem analysis, insight into current

professional practices, and the opportunity to discuss professional issues with a fellow peer, causing them to view the mentoring relationship as an avenue for receiving reciprocal support for themselves. The mentor's commitment to the role and process often leads to renewed enthusiasm, greater collegiality among both new and veteran professionals, increased recognition from peers, and an enhanced professional reputation (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Daresh, 2001, 2004; Mitgang, 2007).

Benefits to the School and School District

In addition to the benefits that individuals directly derive from their participation in the mentoring process, the literature suggests that a school district as a whole can gain from the implementation of a mentoring program. Benefits range from the development of more capable staff to greater employee productivity and retention. Additionally, the networking that surfaces from mentoring programs fosters a culture of collegiality and collaborative learning, and often prompts administrators to develop common values and share experiences and practices. Mentoring programs can break down the all too popular notion that if a principal seeks assistance or support from another administrator, s/he must be inadequate or incompetent in their skill level and knowledge. By sending the message that principals no longer need to approach their work in isolation as the "Lone Ranger," but rather engage in a collaborative process of sharing talents and ideas for problem-solving and tackling complex challenges, mentoring programs can do much to change this perception (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Playko, 1995). An effectively organized and delivered mentoring program can promote a positive climate of support and lifelong learning, commitment to the success of employees, and higher levels of motivation (Daresh, 2004; Mitgang, 2007).

Developing leaders, especially during the early stages of their careers, can strengthen the district's supply of trained, highly skilled administrators. The adoption of mentoring programs can also serve as a proactive measure in the identification, recruitment, and preparation of school administrators (Daresh, 2001; Playko, 1995). This particular aspect of mentoring programs is significant for school districts in the face of anticipated shortages of principal candidates. School districts will be challenged to create a pool of qualified candidates who are ready and prepared for complex roles of school leadership, as well as to ensure that their new school leaders are equipped with the skills and knowledge to enable effective leadership. Implementing mentoring programs can be viewed as an investment that yields successful new school leaders (Daresh, 2004; Hall, 2008; Mitgang, 2007).

While the literature suggests such outcomes for school districts and the educational system in general, at the same time it points out that research is scant in identifying direct outcomes for schools or students. It is not unreasonable to expect a positive, beneficial impact as a result of having greater motivated and further nurtured, developed school leaders. However, this area presents an evident opportunity for additional research and clarity on the topic (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006).

Problematic Areas of Mentoring Programs

With all the benefits that can be derived from mentoring programs, a snapshot into the current state of the programs reveals several key shortcomings that could potentially have significant impact on the quality of mentoring practices. One shortcoming involves inadequate preparation for an individual to serve in a mentoring role. In the research literature, mentors identify a lack of or inadequate training for them as a negative outcome of their experiences in

the capacity of mentor (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). The problem with this is that inadequate training can lead to more of a "buddy" system than true mentoring (Mitgang, 2007). All too often, one may find that when a district requests an individual to work as a mentor, little attention is given to the administrator's record of leadership effectiveness, especially as tied with its impact on student achievement (Gray, Fry, & Bottoms, 2007). The selection of an individual to serve as a mentor may be based on the assumption that long-term service as a principal automatically equates to an ability to step into the role of mentor (Playko, 1995). The opposite is, notably, just as true. A school district may tend to turn to a school principal with a demonstrated success record of exemplary leadership to serve as a mentor for novice administrators. However, the literature cautions school districts that good principals do not necessarily make good mentors—it takes a special skillset to effectively serve in a mentor role (Daresh, 2001). Individuals may at times accept mentoring responsibilities either from a sense of personal obligation or good will. The assumption that no specific talents or training are essential to providing effective mentoring leads districts to often take a hands-off approach beyond the initial mentor appointment, resulting in insufficient preparatory training, resources, incentives, or support for developing mentors to lead in this capacity. With even the most dedicated mentor, the overall effectiveness of the mentoring program is short-changed when there is a lack of training, mentors are unrewarded, and the mentoring responsibility is viewed as an add-on duty (Gray et al., 2007).

Second, the literature indicates that a lack of sufficient time for mentoring is frequently cited by both mentors and mentees as a negative outcome experienced from their involvement in mentoring programs (Bolam & McMahon, 1995; Bush & Coleman, 1995; Ehrich et al., 2004;

Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). The lack of time to effectively develop the mentor-mentee relationship and perform the mentor role can negatively impact the effectiveness of the mentoring program and the support afforded to new school administrators (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006).

Similar to the commonalities in negative outcomes reported among mentors and mentees, stemming from insufficient time for the mentor to fulfill their mentoring role, both groups also point to professional expertise and/or personality mismatch between the mentor and mentee as a problematic area impacting mentoring programs' effectiveness (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Ehrich et al., 2004; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). Besides incongruities in expertise and personality, mismatches can stem from differences in experiences, educational interests, and/or ideology. While there are no absolutes or guarantees to ensure the perfect match between mentor and mentee, careful attention must be given to the process used for pairing mentors and mentees in an effort to foster the most productive relationship possible. School districts should therefore exercise care in making assumptions or relying upon traditional reasons for matching mentors and mentees, including such factors as gender, age, and type of school, among others. For example, it would be false to assume that men can only mentor men, or that women can only mentor women (Playko, 1995).

A fourth problematic area for current mentoring programs is that they often focus on the wrong things, or the mentor him/herself is not clear about the focus and expectations of their role (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Mitgang, 2007; Playko, 1995). A dangerous consequence of such an unclear focus or lack of understanding related to program objectives is the potential disintegration of the mentor-mentee relationship. Too many mentoring partnerships seem to be

characterized by greater focus on the day-to-day operations and task checklists rather than supporting the mentee's development of knowledge and skills to effectively impact the learning environment and student learning. Mentors need to demonstrate the ability to aim questions that lead to self-reflection and inquiry on the part of the mentee. It is not about providing the "answers," but it is about developing independent decision-makers and catalysts of change for supporting learning. Mentoring should have an unwavering focus on developing school leaders concentrating their time and attention on putting learning first, identifying when fundamental change in the status quo is needed, and acquiring the courage to keep the needs of all children in the forefront when leading change (Mitgang, 2007).

In addition to the lack of program focus, districts lack insight into the value of mentoring. The value of mentoring will not be realized if little consideration is given to planning what a mentoring program should look like, other than merely an apprenticeship arrangement in which the veteran administrator teaches and models for the new person. If school districts readily accept the notion that learning to be a principal is a personal, individual journey where mistakes are expected and accepted as a routine part of the journey, the district is unlikely to adopt mentoring as a valid, valuable approach to learning and to providing a support system for new administrators. School districts need to view mentoring programs as a form of instruction from the start, with both the mentor and mentee proactively engaged in the process as opposed to a structure wherein the experienced principal is expected to offer occasional help when a beginning principal is in a moment of crisis. In essence, the mentoring program should promote the development of true leadership, not survivorship. Without focus and value, the resources and commitment to professional development necessary for achieving successful mentoring

programs will not likely receive serious consideration and will be subject to elimination in any first cuts to the school district's budget (Daresh, 2004; Playko, 1995).

It is furthermore important to note the barrier that stems from having mentoring programs simply reinforce and/or maintain existing role conventions and traditional leadership approaches. Instead, a rethinking of approaches is needed in our ever-changing educational climate and environment. A school district's approach to the design and implementation of a mentoring program can determine either a pathway of perpetuating the status quo or challenging a new leader's growth through critical self-review and reflective practice. In a similar vein, depending on the program's focus, structure, and identified objectives, the process of mentoring could potentially sustain a belief in the centrality of the school leader, minimizing the value and importance of other leaders and their capacity in the school (Southworth, 1995).

Design Features and Components Critical to Developing Mentoring Programs

With an increased awareness of the benefits derived from mentoring, the recognition of the pitfalls often experienced when implementing mentor programs, and the acknowledgement of the current conditions of mentoring practices, one can gain insight into the components that are critical to the development of quality mentoring programs. Program components, features, and guidelines that need to receive attention when structuring mentoring programs as a support mechanism for novice principals are discussed in the next sections.

Institutionalization of the Mentoring Program

Institutionalizing a mentoring program is an essential step to conveying a clear message to the district's employees that mentoring is valued and encouraged. In promoting mentoring practices and services, it is crucial that words translate into action (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992). It is

important to establish and communicate clear expectations, goals, defined outcomes, and guidelines when institutionalizing mentoring (Hall, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Furthermore, it is important to establish high standards and expectations for performance, standards that are grounded in research-based competencies and help foster growth in school leaders for supporting teachers, overseeing curriculum and instruction, and promoting increased student achievement (Gray et al., 2007).

Mentor Selection

Much care and thought needs to be exercised in selecting mentors as well as matching the mentors with mentees. Mismatches in terms of personality and expertise can undermine the conditions that are key to a highly interpersonal and developmental relationship (Hall, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Walker & Stott, 1994). The mentor candidate should display exemplary performance as a principal, as well as the ability to teach, coach, share knowledge and successful practices, encourage reflection, and provide constructive feedback. The mentor candidate should also be knowledgeable and skilled in human relations, communication, curriculum, district procedures, and community politics (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992). In order to foster the necessary support for mentee participants, the mentor should be one who listens, acts non-judgmental, offers confidentiality, demonstrates trust and respect, and exhibits open and enthusiastic behavior. Other criteria in this area involve the mentor's ability to devote the necessary time to the process, and consideration of geographical proximity when pairing mentors and mentees (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Walker & Stott, 1994).

Training

Adequate training must be provided to mentors so that they can effectively demonstrate the skills critical to supporting, guiding, and building the leadership capacity of new principals. Having success as a principal does not equate to success as a mentor. High-quality training should be seen as a requirement for mentors, and should address the essential skill areas, practices, and expectations linked to effective, productive mentoring services (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992; Mitgang, 2007; Walker & Stott, 1994; Woolsey, 2010).

Structure of the Program

To provide new principals with the support and time necessary for transitioning from the novice stage to higher developmental stages on the growth continuum, mentoring should be sustained for at least one year and, if possible, for two or more years (Mitgang, 2007). The structure and design of a mentoring program should provide frequent opportunities for the mentor and mentee to meet face-to-face, with the mentor assuming the greater level of responsibility for initiating contact with the mentee (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002; Woolsey, 2010). In addition to regular meetings, other structural components include expectations being established for contacts between the mentor and mentee, a system for identifying areas for support, opportunity for feedback, and a monitoring system for accountability (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992).

Clear Focus on Learning

Mentoring should promote opportunities that are grounded in problem-focused learning. In contrast to focusing on tasks or checklists, mentoring needs to rise to a new level of helping equip new principals with the skills and knowledge necessary for focusing on instructional

improvement and leading change to address critical teaching and learning issues. Mentoring support should focus on developing a principal's capacity to lead as an instructional leader, ensuring that s/he is knowledgeable of instructional practices and the organizational structures and systems that support high student achievement (Davis et al., 2005). The mentoring programs can, in essence, play a significant role in fostering leaders of change that can transform the instructional focus and environment of a school (Barry & Kaneko, 2002; Gray et al., 2007; Mitgang, 2007). Mentoring programs should thus be designed and structured based on leadership standards that foster instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning (Villani, 2006; Wallace Foundation, 2006). Mentoring support should promote the self-reflection on one's practices, actions, decisions, and learning needs that support continuous professional growth (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Davis et al., 2005; Templeton & Tremont, 2014).

State and Local Funding

For the most part, funding devoted to supporting the delivery of mentoring programs is fairly modest, if it exists at all. This limited funding consequently leads to inadequate training, short-lived program services, and limited or lack of stipends. To reverse this pattern, state and local agencies must step forward and commit adequate funding to support training, stipends, and assurance of a sufficient time period for offering mentoring services to new principals (Mitgang, 2007).

Efficacy of Mentoring Programs

To date, few school districts have gathered data to demonstrate that mentoring impacts leadership behaviors in ways that significantly affect learning and teaching. If mentoring programs are to be created and implemented in the manner and high-quality level necessary for

fostering and supporting novice principals' leadership development, districts will need to devote attention to documenting these programs' efficacy. As part of the mentoring program design, districts will need to show how developing principals' behaviors through mentoring connect and align with state and local standards, as well as produce concrete results of improvement in teaching and learning (Mitgang, 2007).

Chapter Summary

The review of literature identifies the many factors impacting traditional roles of leadership. Furthermore, the literature highlights the leadership skills and competencies that are critical for principals to have and demonstrate if expected to effectively lead today's schools. Factors that impact the school environment and reshape school leadership include education reform initiatives, adoption of state and national leadership standards, and the growing national, state, and community expectations and demands for increased student achievement and higher school performance. Accordingly, the principalship has evolved into a complex, multifaceted role requiring the principal to wear many hats in leading school change; facilitating effective, targeted school improvement; and positively impacting student achievement. Many of the challenges confronting education today are unlike any faced or experienced before in the educational landscape; these challenges have increasingly drawn attention to the need for retooling and expanding principals' skillsets. In a high-stakes accountability era, among the many dimensions of leadership, a growing emphasis has been placed on the principal's capacity to demonstrate strong, focused instructional leadership. The review of the research literature offers insight in the relationship of school leadership to student achievement, highlighting that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in its impact and influence on student

performance. Even more significant is that the principal is viewed as having an instrumental role in creating the conditions that support and impact teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Given the complexities of the principal's redefined role, the literature review captures the need to provide focused and intensive support to principals; this need for support is especially true for novice principals as they transition to their new role for the first time. Aside from the immense challenges and complexities that beginning principals face from the start, early career principals often experience feelings of inadequate preparation, a sense of loss of support systems, and feelings of isolation. In examining support that new principals should be provided, this chapter's literature review highlights the value and merit of mentoring. The mentoring process is examined, and benefits for both the mentor and mentee are identified. In addition, components, including common pitfalls, to consider when structuring and delivering mentor support are discussed as reflected in the literature.

Despite the value of mentoring reflected in the literature, the literature review reveals shortcomings in how mentoring is approached and delivered. Too often, mentoring is delivered in an informal, sporadic format with little focus or structure. Research is limited in identifying components of mentoring support that effectively impact a new principal's professional development and growth. To assist in filling in the information gap concerning components of mentoring support that can impact a new principal's leadership, the current study was designed to identify the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity, as culled from the literature and educational practitioners. The study also worked to capture why experienced principals view the identified components as having the most impact.

Chapter 3 presents in detail the methodology that was used in the current study to answer the identified research questions. The chapter describes the research design, including a description of the quantitative and qualitative procedures used in collecting the data and analyzing the findings.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study sought to identify and understand the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing new principals' leadership capacity. Q-methodology was the research method used to study principals' different viewpoints and beliefs about effective mentoring support. In this chapter, an overview of Q-methodology is presented, and the phases, processes, and protocols of the research design are described. Included as part of this chapter's description of the research design is a table of the Q-statements used in the study. Furthermore, the chapter addresses how the study's findings were analyzed and interpreted.

Overview of Q-Methodology

Q-methodology, first introduced by William Stephenson in 1935 as a mixed-methods research approach, emerged as an innovative adaptation of the traditional method of factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2012). *Q-methodology* is essentially a research approach that allows for the study of human subjectivity. The methodology framework encompasses a "distinctive set of psychometric and operational principles that, when combined with specialized statistical applications of correlational and factor-analytical techniques, provide researchers with a systematic and rigorously quantitative means for examining human subjectivity" (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. xvii). When applying Q-methodology as a research approach, qualitative research is brought into the quantitative realm (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q-methodology affords the researcher the opportunity to use study participants' qualitative and subjective

thoughts, perceptions, and opinions on a specific topic in conjunction with quantitative factor analysis, in order to gain insight in the understanding the participants have about that topic.

A key principle fundamental to Q-methodology is subjective communicability; that is, subjectivity refers to one's communication of a personal point of view (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). An underlying premise of Q-methodology is that subjective points of view are communicable and advanced from a position of self-reference, an internal frame of reference related to a specific topic or phenomenon of interest about which an individual expresses a perspective, point of view, value, belief, or opinion (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Subjective communication is open for objective and quantifiable analysis and understanding. Q-methodology seeks to ensure that the self-referential properties are preserved when studying participants' subjective opinions and attitudes about a specific topic, instead of being altered or compromised with an external frame of reference brought by the researcher (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Subjectivity is the sum of behavioral activities that constitutes a person's current viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012). As part of the human thought processes, subjectivity becomes evident when individuals communicate their thoughts, beliefs, values, feelings, attitudes, and opinions (Paige & Morin, 2014). Unlike research involving a conventional survey design wherein participants rate items in a questionnaire format, studies that utilize Q-methodology have participants compare items (opinion statements) with every other opinion statement in a rank-ordering procedure. Participants involved in a Q-methodological study rank-order the opinion statements about a specific topic into a normal distribution grid (- to +). As such, the rank-ordering procedure causes participants to reveal their personal choices, feelings,

and underlying beliefs about the topic at hand (Paige & Morin, 2014). Then, through factor analysis, those who share similar viewpoints or perspectives related to the given topic are clustered together. However, instead of factoring by traits as in conventional factor analysis, Q-methodology is considered a by-person factor analysis, providing the opportunity to examine response patterns across individual participants rather than across variables (Militello & Janson, 2012; Paige & Morin, 2014). In Q-methodology, factor analysis examines how people sort specific statements.

Conducting a Q-methodological study involves the following steps: (1) identifying and defining the concourse; (2) selecting a representative sample of statements from the concourse known as the *Q-sample* or *Q-set*; (3) selecting participants for the study referred to as the *P-sample* or *P-set*; (4) facilitating a process of card sorts with the study participants referred to as a *Q-sort*; and (5) analyzing and interpreting the study's findings.

To structure adequate mentoring support for beginning school principals, it is important for district leaders and principal mentors to have a thorough understanding of the elements critical to effective mentoring. Armed with a deeper understanding, district and school-based leaders are in a position to have greater influence and impact in the design, implementation, and delivery of a high-quality mentoring program and the needed support such programs offers to first-year principals. This study sought to identify and understand the elements of mentoring support that principals perceive as having the most impact on developing new principals' leadership capacity. To answer the research questions for this study, a research method that measures, quantifies, and analyzes individuals' perceptions and beliefs about the specific topic of mentoring was needed. Q-methodology is thus an ideal research method for studying

perceptions, beliefs, and viewpoints, which is why Q-methodology was selected as the research design for the current study.

Having an exploratory orientation, Q-methodology is designed to facilitate the expression of personal viewpoints, allowing specific individuals to self-categorize on the basis of a Q-sort that they produce. Q-methodological studies reveal a series of shared viewpoints or perspectives pertaining to a specific topic of interest (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Furthermore, according to Watts and Stenner (2012), Q-methodological studies are better suited to the exploration of specifics; the viewpoints of specific people, specific groups, specific demographics; or the viewpoints at play within a specific institution.

Q-methodology allowed for an examination of perceptions and viewpoints as they are understood by the participants in the current study. Q-methodology provided the opportunity to examine, compare, and contrast similarities and dissimilarities among the participants' perceptions and perspectives. In this study, the use of Q-methodology was used to quantify subjective data—perceptions, opinions, and viewpoints—and allowed the researcher to analyze and draw patterns across the sample group in order to gain rich insight about the principals' perceptions concerning elements of effective mentoring support.

Phase I: The Concourse Theory to Develop the Q-Statements

Essential to the concourse theory, communicability represents a field of shared knowledge from which an identifiable universe of statements about a topic can possibly be extracted. This identifiable universe of statements is called a *concourse* (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In methodological terms, Watts and Stenner (2012) describe concourse as a term for the overall population of statements from which the final Q-set is sampled. The exact nature of the

concourse focuses on the topic of the study, and is driven by the particular research question in the context of the specific study (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For this study, the concourse focused on elements of mentoring support provided to new principals.

Statements for the concourse can be extracted from many different sources including, but not limited to, books, journals, dissertations, newspapers, and interviews. The set of statements for this Q-methodology study was based on an extensive literature review of the topic. In addition, statements were based on input solicited from education experts about the topic to be researched. A total of 20 education leaders including principals and district senior leaders were asked to provide input. A collection of statements representative of the entire concourse, referred to as the *Q-sample*, was culled from the concourse and created for the study.

The original concourse for the study consisted of 85 statements related to mentoring support. Through a careful review process of the statements, the researcher adjusted statements that seemed similar in meaning, and then continued to sort, combine, and remove statements until 42 statements representative of the research and opinions on effective mentoring support and in alignment with the research questions remained.

The next step taken in preparing the Q-sample involved having a group of school administrators review the collection of statements. The principals were asked to review the statements and provide feedback concerning clarity and clear understanding of meaning. The professional group included seven building-level principals that represented elementary, middle, and high schools.

Principals were asked to consider the following four questions as they reviewed the statements, and were encouraged to provide feedback in response to the questions:

1. Are the statements worded clearly and are they understandable? If not, what changes would you suggest?
2. Are there any statements that are similar in nature and should be combined?
3. Are there any statements that you would remove from the list?
4. Are there any additional statements that you would add to the list?

Overall, the principals' feedback about the statements was positive in how the statements capture and accurately reflect significant, critical aspects of mentoring support. The principals were in consensus that the statements should be accepted.

The statements were edited as appropriate upon review and consideration of the recommendations suggested from the principals concerning any changes to improve their clarity. Edits made in response to the principals' recommendations are described below.

- Statement 4 originally read as "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust." One administrator recommended that trust be characterized as "mutual trust," and the statement was edited to read "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on mutual trust."
- When principals were asked to review the statements, Statement 4 read, "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust." Statement 5 originally read, "Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal." Four of the principals questioned if these two statements should be combined. The researcher, along with the dissertation chairperson, viewed trust and confidentiality as two different variables in their own

right, and felt they should therefore be addressed in separate statements. After careful consideration of the feedback and continued review of Statements 4 and 5, both statements remained separate in the final Q-sample.

- Statement 7 originally read, “Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one’s practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.” It was recommended by one administrator to change the last part of the statement to read as “to identify areas for further growth”. The change was made and the statement finally read as “Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one’s practices, decisions, and skillsets to identify areas for further growth.”
- Statement 12 originally read, “Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.” For clarity and flow, it was recommended to delete the words “as a change agent” from the statement, so that it read as “Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills for leading change.”
- Statement 13 originally read, “Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.” One administrator recommended adding the word “actively” in front of the word “listen” so that the statement used the words “actively listen.” The change was made to the statement.

- Statement 16 originally read, “Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.” It was recommended by one principal to change the words “teacher performance” at the end of the sentence to “teacher effectiveness.” The statement was edited with the recommended change.
- Statement 28 originally read, “Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and, therefore, supported by policy and funding.” For increased clarity, one principal recommended adding the words “for new principals” after “effective mentoring support,” so that the statement finally read as “Effective mentoring support for new principals should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and, therefore, supported by policy and funding.”
- Statement 30 originally read, “Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.” One principal recommended placing the work “appropriate” in front of the word “data” to read as “appropriate data.” This change was made to the statement. As part of editing the statement, the researcher also added the word “new” in front of the word “principal” for greater consistency among the statements.
- Statement 37 originally read, “Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.” One principal recommended changing the wording to “become a skilled communicator.” Another principal recommended changing the

word “other” that precedes stakeholder groups to the word “all.” The statement was changed in response to both recommendations to finally read, “Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become a skilled communicator with staff, parents and all stakeholder groups.”

- Statement 18 originally read, “Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.” Several principal reviewers questioned the clarity of this statement, indicating that it seemed to imply that the new principal is not already capable of making decisions independently. Based on the feedback, this statement was deleted from the sample.

In addition to having a group of principals review the statements and provide feedback concerning their construction and clarity, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the Q-sort with a group of four school administrators. The four administrators included three current school principals and one senior district leader who works directly with principals. The pilot test afforded the opportunity to test protocols and procedures for conducting the Q-sort phase of the research study. Furthermore, the pilot test provided yet another opportunity to gain feedback about the clarity of the statements in the Q-sample. The pilot-test group provided positive feedback about the facilitation of the card sorting activity. The administrators were in consensus concerning clarity of the statements, and had a clear understanding of the process and procedures for sorting the statement cards. The pilot-test group emphasized the need to have adequate working space for the participants in the study to sort the statement cards, similar to the

arrangement provided for them to conduct the pilot Q-sort. Table 4 outlines the final Q-sample statements for the study, including the source of each statement.

Phase II: The Q-Sort

Q-sorting is a means of capturing subjectivity—reliably, scientifically, and experimentally. Q-sorting is so called because the participants in the study are required to sort provided items into a rank order with ranking values (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) state, "The participant's viewpoint is made to impact upon the immediate environment, i.e. the Q-set items, under controlled experimental conditions, and the nature of that impact is captured in the publicly accessible form of their completed Q-sort" (p. 26).

For this study, the Q-sort process was a card sorting activity that served as the primary data collection source. Study participants were given a set of randomly numbered business-sized cards, each printed with a statement from the Q-sample outlined in Table 4. Using a forced-choice distribution, participants were asked to individually sort the cards into a Q-sort distribution grid. In Q-methodological studies, the distribution is numbered from a positive value at one pole, through zero, to the equivalent negative value at the other pole (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The distribution grid in this study was a quasi-normal fixed distribution designed for use with a 42-item Q-sample. The grid has 9 points on the scale, ranging from strongly disagree (-4) on the left side to strongly agree (+4) on the right. Figure 1 illustrates the Q-sort distribution grid used in the current study.

Table 4

Elements of Mentoring Support Q-Sample Statements

No.	Statement	Source
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Gray et al., 2007 Kirkham, 1995 Mitgang, 2007 Wallace Foundation, 2006 Survey Participants 6, 12, 13
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	Brier, 2005 Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 Daresh, 2004 Hall, 2008 Hansford & Ehrich, 2006 Playko, 1995 Southworth, 1995 Walker & Stott, 1994
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005 Mitgang, 2007 Playko, 1995 Riley, 2009 SREB, 2007 Walker & Stott, 1994
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on mutual trust.	Barnett, 1995 Brier, 2005 Kinsella & Richards, 2004 Lester et al., 2011 O'Mahoney, 2003 Riley, 2009 Southworth 1995 Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participants 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	Barnett, 1995 Brier, 2005 Kinsella & Richards, 2004 O'Mahoney, 2003 Riley, 2009 Southworth 1995 Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participants 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical ideas and experiences in working through a specific problem.	Daresh, 2004 Mitgang, 2007 Playko, 1995 Survey Participants 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, and skillsets to identify areas for further growth.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Barnett, 1995 Brier, 2005 Davis et al., 2005 Education Alliance, 2003 Kirkham, 1995 Playko, 1995 Southworth, 1995 Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participant 2
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	Darling-Hammond et al., 2007 Gray et al., 2007 Leithwood et al., 2004 Leithwood et al., 2009 Mitgang, 2008
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	Playko, 1995 Survey Participant 18

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Barnett, 1995 SREB, 2007 Survey Participants 5, 10, 12, 13, 14
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	Daresh, 2004 Davis, et al., 2005 Playko, 1995 Southworth, 1995 Survey Participants 2, 4, 5
12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills for leading change.	Daresh, 2004 Davis, et al., 2005 Playko, 1995 Southworth, 1995 Survey Participants 2, 4, 5
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor actively listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Barnett, 1995 Southworth, 1995 Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 7
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process of transitioning to his/her new role as principal.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Browne-et al., 2004 Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 Crow, 2006 Daresh, 2004 Playko, 1995 Southworth, 1995
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.	Barnett, 1995 Kinsella & Richards, 2004 O'Mahoney, 2003
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher effectiveness.	Davis et al. , 2005 Kirkham, 1995 Survey Participant 16

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal, in promoting professional growth in leadership.	Browne-et al., 2004 Daresh, 2004 Southworth, 1995 Survey Participants 13, 15
18	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal plan and facilitate school improvement.	Survey Participants 2, 4
19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.	Zachary, 2000 Survey Participant 4
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	Brier, 2005 Education Alliance, 2003 Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participants 3, 20
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	SREB, 2008 Survey Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 19
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.	Templeton & Tremont, 2014 Survey Participants 12, 13, 16
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.	Survey Participants 1, 4, 7, 12
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	Survey Participants 6, 10, 13

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	Zachary, 2000
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	Barnett, 1995 Barnett, 2007 Kirkham, 1995 Southworth, 1995
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	Playko, 1995 Survey Participants 8, 11, 16
28	Effective mentoring support for new principals should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	Brier, 2005 Browne-et al., 2004 Cohen & Sweeney, 1992 Daresh, 2004 Hall, 2008 Hansford & Ehrich, 2006 Kirkham, 1995 Mitgang, 2007, 2008 SREB, 2007
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal learn how to develop and build positive relationships with staff.	Lovely, 2004a Saban and Wolfe, 2009 Survey Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 16, 19
30	Effective mentoring support should help a new principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using appropriate data for instructional decisions and planning.	Survey Participants 1, 2, 4, 12, 16
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus growing and building capacity in others	Survey Participants 1, 3, 18

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor "modeling" personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	Survey Participants 7, 11
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.	Survey Participants 5, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	Survey Participant 6, 16
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	Survey Participant 6, 16
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	Survey Participants 5, 14, 18
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become a skilled communicator with staff, parents, and all stakeholder groups.	Zachary, 2000 Survey Participants 1, 16
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive "informal" mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	Bynum, 2015
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support	Bynum, 2015 Survey Participants 2, 4, 15
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school's district's culture, policies, and procedures.	Crow, 2006 Daresh, 2004 Survey Participants 5, 13, 14

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Statement	Source
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	Survey Participants 4, 5, 9, 14, 17
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006 Barnett, 1995 Lester et al., 2011 Survey Participants 10, 11, 12

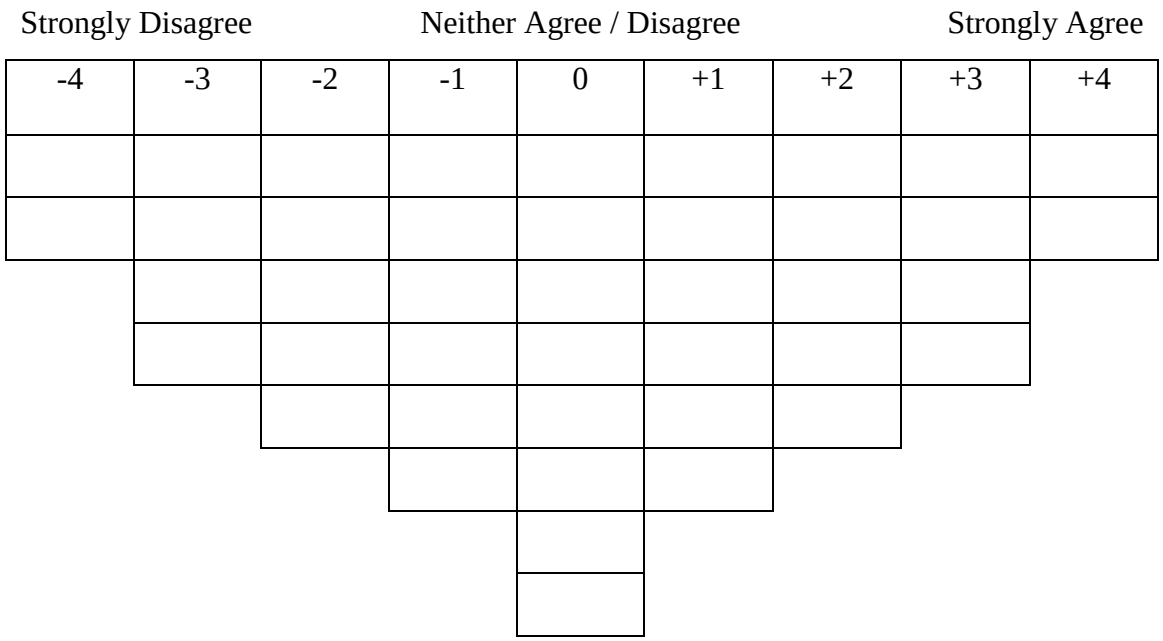

Figure 1. Q-Sort distribution grid.

Participants in Q-methodological studies are referred to as the P-sample. Q-methodology is not interested in taking head counts or generalizing to a population of people. While it is possible to generalize from Q-methodological findings, generalizations are instead made in relation to concepts, categories, theoretical propositions, and models of practice. Q-methodological studies only need enough participants to establish the existence of factors. Q-methodology generally aims to establish the existence of particular viewpoints and, thereafter, to understand, explicate, and compare them; this can potentially be done through the engagement of a small sample of participants. An acceptable number of participants is approximately 40-60, although good studies can be conducted with considerably less. For statistical reasons, it may even be sensible to conduct a study using a number of participants that is less than the number of items in the study's Q-set (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

For this study, the P-sample included 40 principals, representing elementary, middle, and high school levels within the same urban school district in North Carolina. At the time of this study, the school district in which these principals served had 172 schools and a student population of 158,175 students. The district regularly posted student achievement results on end-of-year and end-of-year course assessments above the state average. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, and invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Each month during the school year, principals attended area principals' meetings; for convenience, it is this existing structure, where principals regularly assemble and are already out of their respective buildings, that was utilized to conduct the Q-sorting process with the study participants.

At the time of facilitating the Q-sorting process, the first phase of data collection, participants were assigned a participant identifier code that was pre-labeled on the Q-sort

distribution grid score sheet. For confidentiality, the researcher maintained a master list that contained the names of the participants matched with the corresponding identifier code. The master list was maintained in a secure, locked place, and was destroyed upon successful completion of the study.

Prior to the Q-sort, each participant was given a consent form for the card-sorting activity and post-sort questionnaire (see Appendix A). As part of the consent gathering protocol, participants were informed that they could change their mind about participation at any time of the Q-sort process. Participants received written instructions detailing the procedures for the Q-sort process (see Appendix B). In addition, the researcher described the study and discussed in detail the steps involved in completing a Q-sort.

Participants were asked to lay out the nine-point scale cards across the table to replicate the distribution grid as shown on the Q-sort distribution grid score sheet they were provided (see Appendix C); this grid began with (-4) on the far left to (+4) on the far right side. As stated earlier, a set of business-sized cards with each card containing one statement from the Q-sample was given to the participants. The statement cards functioned as the main research instrument during the Q-sort. Each of the cards in the deck had a randomly assigned number printed on it that enabled the researcher to later match the number from each participant's Q-sort to the actual statement.

Participants were asked to first read through all 42 statements to become familiar with them. The participants were then asked to read the statements a second time and, as they read each statement, organize the cards into three separate piles: (a) on the right, the statements with which they most agree, (b) on the left, the statements with which they most disagree, and (c) in

the middle, the statements with which they feel more undecided or in less agreement/disagreement in relationship to the other statements placed on either side of the grid. Following the initial sort, participants were asked to further sort the statements in each of the three piles in relationship to the grid's rank value. The process continued until the participants had completed the distribution grid by sorting and ranking each statement relative to one another.

Participants were allowed as much time as needed to decide the placement of statements on the distribution grid. Furthermore, participants could have changed the placement of the statements at any time during the card sorting process. Once a participant completed the Q-sort and felt comfortable about the ranking of the statements, they were asked to fill out the Q-sort distribution grid score sheet (see Appendix C) by recording the randomly assigned number printed on each statement card in the corresponding grid space on the scoring sheet.

After completing the Q-sort, participants were asked to answer a post-sort questionnaire designed to gain deeper insight and understanding of their perceptions and respective backgrounds (see Appendix D). Participants were asked to explain their rationale and reasoning for placing statement cards in the "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" columns of the distribution grid.

Phase III: Follow-Up Interviews

In addition to the quantitative date captured from the Q-sorts and post-sort questionnaires, an additional phase of data collection and analysis involved the facilitation of post-sort interviews. The qualitative data collected from the post-sort interviews were used, in conjunction with the Q-sort quantitative data, to gain further understanding of the principals' perceptions, opinions, and viewpoints about mentoring support. The post-sort interviews

provided the opportunity to obtain an additional layer of insight from the participants' point of view that could not be directly observed or gathered from the Q-sort. Selected participants from the P-sample who represented specific viewpoints of emerging factors in the current study's analysis were interviewed. In the interview, the researcher sought understanding of the participants' thoughts, perspectives, and feelings about their respective Q-sort statement arrangements and ranking order in the distribution grid.

Interviews were conducted with selected participants in a focus group session at a location convenient for the participants. At the time of the Q-sort, participants had the opportunity to indicate on the post-sort questionnaire their willingness to voluntarily participate in a post-sort interview. Those who participated in the interview were provided a consent form to sign that indicated their agreement to be interviewed (see Appendix E). The interviews were semi-structured around five key questions (see Appendix F), yet there was opportunity for some fluidity as the interview was facilitated to allow for follow-up questions as needed based on the participants' responses. The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. The recorded participants' responses from the interviews were transcribed, coded, and used, as stated earlier, to supplement the statistical interpretations of the Q-sorts. Transcriptions were maintained in a secure, locked location, and the data sets, transcriptions, and digital recordings were destroyed upon successful completion of the study.

Data Analysis

To conduct the quantitative data analysis for the study, the data collected from the Q-sorts were entered into a statistical software program called PQMethod to perform a by-person factor analysis and generate statistical interpretations of the Q-sorts completed by study

participants. The software program created a correlation matrix showing the inter-correlations of each sort with the other completed sorts. A factor analysis was performed to show relationships between the sorts, as well as to identify groups of participants who sorted their statements from the Q-sample similarly. For Q-methodological studies, it is the Q-sorts that are factor analyzed, not the individual opinion statements (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Emergent factors, based on their Eigenvalues, were rotated through the Varimax method, offering an indication of the strength and potential explanatory value of a factor (Militello & Benham, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Z-scores for the statements were used to draw comparisons among the statements and to determine those statements the participants ranked the highest. Similar sorting patterns were identified by Q-sorts that loaded significantly on a particular factor. Factor arrays were generated that represented the viewpoint of a factor and served as the basis for the factor interpretations (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Factor interpretation assisted in gaining understanding of the viewpoints and perceptions provided by the study's participants. Coupled with this quantitative data analysis was the analysis of qualitative data gathered from the post-sort interviews.

In analyzing the interviewees' responses, the researcher sought to identify major categories of information gathered from the participants in the interviews. The researcher identified similar statements that provided insight into the participants' perceptions about elements of effective mentoring support. In addition, the researcher sought to identify themes and patterns among the statements to gain meaning and understanding of the participants' viewpoints.

Throughout the data collection and data analysis phases, the researcher used member checks as a practice; this enabled the participants to confirm and validate the study's findings, add to the findings, or clarify any misinterpretations on the part of the researcher. The process of conducting member checks helped the researcher analyze and interpret the data correctly, and ensure the participants' input was being represented as intended.

Conceptual Framework

Levine (2005) states, "The job of school leader has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological, and global change" (p. 11). In addition to societal changes, high-stakes accountability measures, fueled by growing demands and increasing expectations for higher student performance results, have reshaped the principal's role and impacted the leadership skills and competencies needed by today's principal. The literature highlights the critical need for principals, especially new principals, to have support systems available to them as they strive to meet the rising expectations and complexities facing them. The literature further highlights mentoring as a support structure for new principals, and identifies elements important to the mentoring process. The interrelationship of the themes as gleaned from the literature—the context of today's principal, needs of the beginning principal, and elements of effective mentoring—framed the current study. Figure 2 illustrates the overlap among these factors and the center point at which all three facets intersect; this served as the focus for the study and guided the research questions designed to identify the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's capacity.

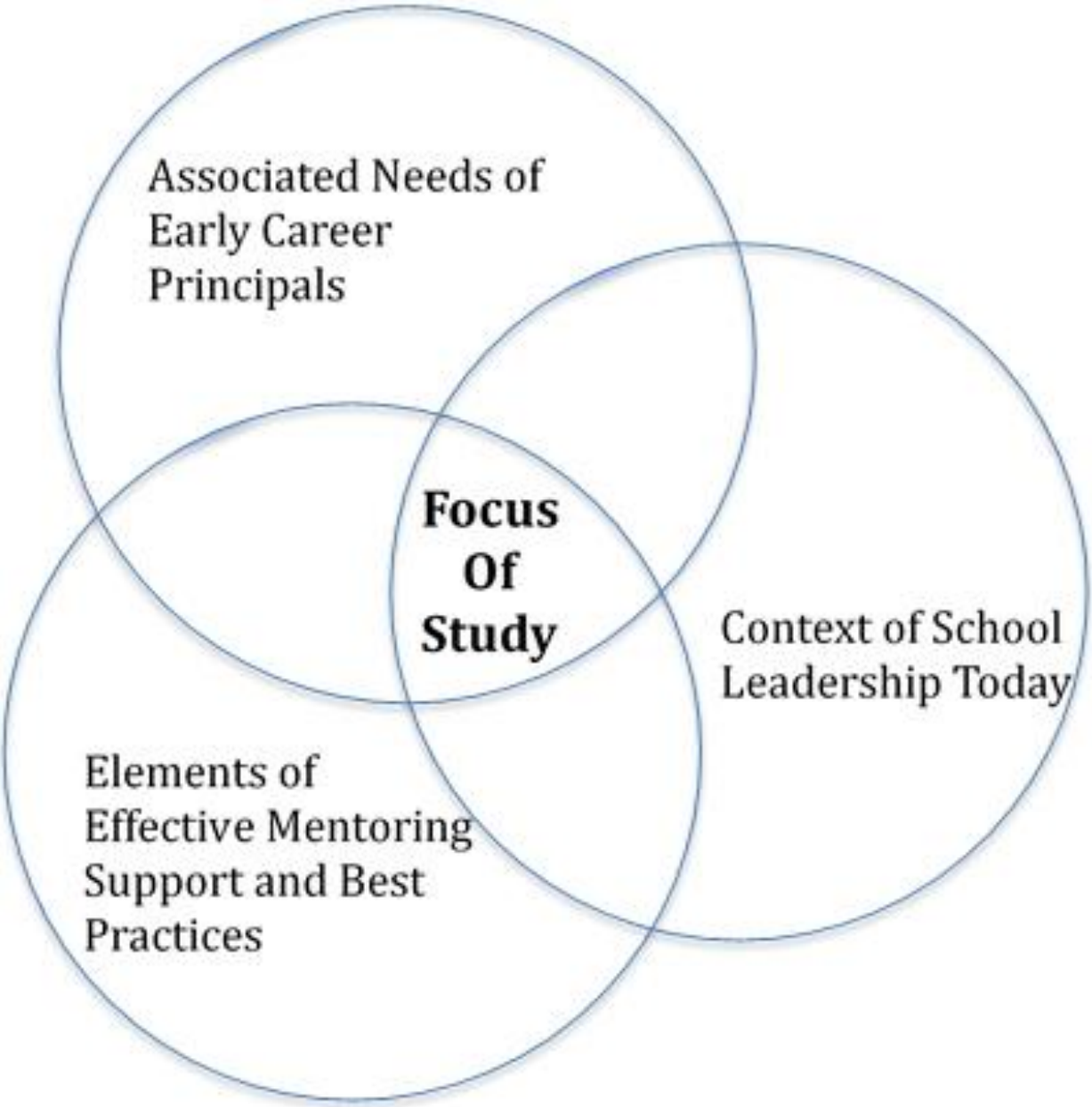

Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

Subjectivity Statement

A researcher's experiences can potentially shape and impact the perceptions, analysis, and interpretations of the data gleaned from a study; therefore, it is beneficial for the reader to have insight in the researcher's background and experiences as related to the topic of the study. The purpose of this subjectivity statement is to offer the reader a description of the researcher's experiences and views related to the current study.

Having the interest and desire to work in the field of education from an early age, I pursued and obtained both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in education from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Upon graduation, I secured a teaching position in 1986 at Fuquay-Varina High School, part of North Carolina's Wake County Public Schools, North Carolina. While working as a teacher, I earned my Master's Degree in School Administration from North Carolina State University in Raleigh in 1989. In 1991, I assumed the role of assistant principal at William G. Enloe High School in Raleigh, part of the Wake County Public Schools System. I was appointed principal there in 1997, and served in this role for eight years until I was appointed in 2005 as the Area Superintendent for Wake County Public Schools. To date, I continue to serve in this leadership role within the school district.

Throughout my career in education, I have had a keen interest in leadership and leadership development. I am consistently drawn to examining and studying leadership frameworks and leadership behaviors and skills that attribute to effective leadership. Moreover, I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to experience and witness firsthand how highly effective leaders can inspire, empower, and motivate others. I have also seen how such leaders can impact an organization's culture, lead change, leverage the talents and skills of

others, foster professional growth; and yield results. I regularly find myself intrigued to learn more about influential leaders who have demonstrated success—their philosophy, leadership style, and skillsets.

In my current role as Area Superintendent, a primary focus of my work is providing support to principals as they lead their respective school and school community. Recognizing the criticality of the relationship of effective school leadership to high student achievement and teacher performance, I seek to help school leaders build upon and enhance their leadership capacity for effectively leading schools. Among the many facets of the work I facilitate with principals, I regularly structure professional development opportunities in monthly principals' meetings to support continuous professional growth. The responsibility of hiring new principals has allowed me to understand the many challenges that beginning principals face and, as a result, the crucial support they need during the transition to their new role. This belief underlies my passion and interest in the value and merit of providing high-quality mentoring support for beginning principals. My first goal in conducting the current study was to understand, at a deeper level, the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals identify as having the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity. Second, I want to make the study's findings and the interpretations and insights gathered from those findings available to other principals and school district leaders, who serve a vital role in prioritizing a need for mentoring support and ensuring the implementation of a structured, relevant, and meaningful mentoring program.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of Q-methodology and the rationale for selecting this methodology as the research method for the current study. Steps of the research design were outlined and described, including building the concourse, developing the Q-sample, facilitating the Q-sorts, and conducting the post-sort interviews. Protocols for conducting the different steps of the research design and collecting data, as well as the procedures for maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, were explained. Chapter 4 presents the statistical findings of the study and the data gathered from the post-sort interviews.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this Q-methodological study was to identify and examine the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity. In addition, the study was designed to understand why the experienced principals in this study's sample believed the identified elements are critical to the mentoring support provided to new principals.

Perceptions have the potential to influence and impact one's own ideas and actions. As such, the current study was structured to gain insight into the perceptions experienced principals hold about the value of mentoring for building and enhancing leadership skills and behaviors, specifically those elements of mentoring support that have the most influence. In an effort to provide meaningful mentoring support and increase the ownership one takes in the need for and the delivery of such support, it is worthwhile to examine principals' own beliefs and perceptions about mentoring in comparison to the elements of mentoring support suggested in extant literature. Recognizing the value and importance of investigating the research questions through the lens of school-based administrators, the researcher designed the study to seek answers about effective mentoring support directly from experienced principals in the field, who are often tapped to deliver such support.

The research design of Q-methodology allowed the researcher to capture experienced principals' beliefs and perceptions about effective elements of mentoring support through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The statistical software program PQMethod was used to analyze the data collected from 40 Q-sorts. Providing a quantitative analysis of the

data, the PQMethod computes variances, factors, and relationships between and among the study participants based on the input from the Q-sorts. Once the factors and relationships were determined, qualitative data from post-sort interviews were used to further clarify and substantiate the statistical data. The subjective, contextual thoughts and opinions gathered from the participants were used to interpret, describe, and deepen the understanding of the factors that emerged from the statistical analysis.

Chapter 4 provides a thorough, comprehensive understanding of the study's findings. The statistical findings derived from the Q-sort process and factor analysis are presented in detail. The chapter begins with a discussion of the correlation matrix, factor analysis, and factor loadings. Subsequent sections offer insight and meaning to the PQMethod analytics by presenting information from participants used to name and describe each factor. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research study's findings.

Correlation Matrix

Principle component analysis is used to construct a correlation matrix among the different Q-sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Calculated and produced by the PQMethod analytics software, the correlation matrix reveals the extent of the relationship between any two Q-sorts, and is hence a measure of how similar or dissimilar they are with one another (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The correlation matrix indicates for the researcher how well each participant's sort agrees or disagrees with another person's sort.

For the current study, the matrix measured 40x40, based on the number of participants in the study (n=40), and displayed correlation coefficients ranging between -1.0 to +1.0. A correlation of +1.0 reflects an identical match with each card sorted in the same column on the

Q-sort distribution grid as another participant. A correlation of -1.0 represents perfectly opposing sorts, with all cards in the exact opposite column as another sort. Participant 2 and Participant 8, for example, had a correlation matrix sort value of .66, a high correlation. In contrast, Participant 3 and Participant 38 had a correlation matrix sort value of -.05, revealing very little similarity between their respective Q-sorts. Table 5 provides an abbreviated correlation matrix for the current study.

Factor Analysis

The first step of the data analysis process is factor analysis, in which Q-sort data are organized into meaningful clusters based on factor loadings. The factor analysis shows relationships between sorts, and provides the opportunity to identify groups of participants who sorted and rank-ordered their statements from the Q-sample in a similar manner. For Q-methodological studies, it is the Q-sorts that are factor analyzed, not the individual opinion statements (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For highly corresponded Q-sorts that are grouped together, the emerging similarity among the sorts serves to frame a factor. Characteristics of the sort, coupled with survey question responses and interview information from the study participants in each factor group, are used to name the factor. For this study, the PQMethod analysis produced eight unrotated factors. These eight factors emerged as the software-clustered participants who had similar sorts. Each factor that emerged potentially reveals participants who share similar perceptions and viewpoints about the most critical elements of mentor support.

Upon examination of the unrotated factors, a scree plot of Eigenvalues was created and used to help determine where a noticeable change existed between the factors. All of the Eigenvalues of this study's eight unrotated factors were greater than 1.0. The first factor had an

Table 5

Correlation Matrix Between Sorts (Truncated)

Sorts	1	2	3	…	38	39	40
1	1.0	.05	.09	...	.41	.24	.20
2	.05	1.0	.41	…	-.26	.18	.24
3	.09	.41	1.0	…	-.05	.56	.21
…	…	…	…	…	…	…	…
38	.41	-.26	-.05	…	1.0	-.01	.12
39	.24	.18	.56	…	-.01	1.0	.37
40	.20	.24	.21	…	.12	.37	1.0

Eigenvalue of 10.51; the second factor had a value of 4.81; the third had an Eigenvalue of 2.74; the fourth had a value of 2.26; and the fifth had an Eigenvalue of 1.99. The sixth, seventh, and eighth factors had an Eigenvalue of 1.79, 1.60, and 1.54, respectively. Figure 3 illustrates the distinct "elbow" that forms after Factor One when graphing and analyzing the Eigenvalues. In the illustration, the y-axis represents the Eigenvalues, and the x-axis represents the factors.

As noted, when analyzing the Eigenvalues for factor strength, a distinct "elbow" formed after Factor One. However, Q-methodology studies with a single factor do not offer robust results, because a strong factor analysis needs additional factors to examine. The researcher worked with his dissertation chairperson to carefully examine the results of the factor analysis; through a comprehensive and collaborative analysis, a four-factor rotation solution was decided. A summary of the information leading to the decision of the identification of the four-factor rotation is presented in Table 6. Factor One represented 26% of the explained variance; Factor Two represented 12% of the variance; Factor Three represented 7% of the explained variance; and Factor Four represented 6% of this variance. Using Factors One through Three accounted for 45% of variance among the sorts, and adding Factor Four increased the percentage of accounted variance to 51%. When using Factors One through Four, while the accounted variance did increase to 55%, the number of 39 participants out of the completed 40 Q-sorts did not change, and the correlation among the factors was low. In summary, when combined, Factors One, Two, Three, and Four represented 51% of the explained variance. It was therefore decided that the four factors would be rotated due to the high correlation and support of the consensus statements and the low correlation among the factors in the four-factor solution.

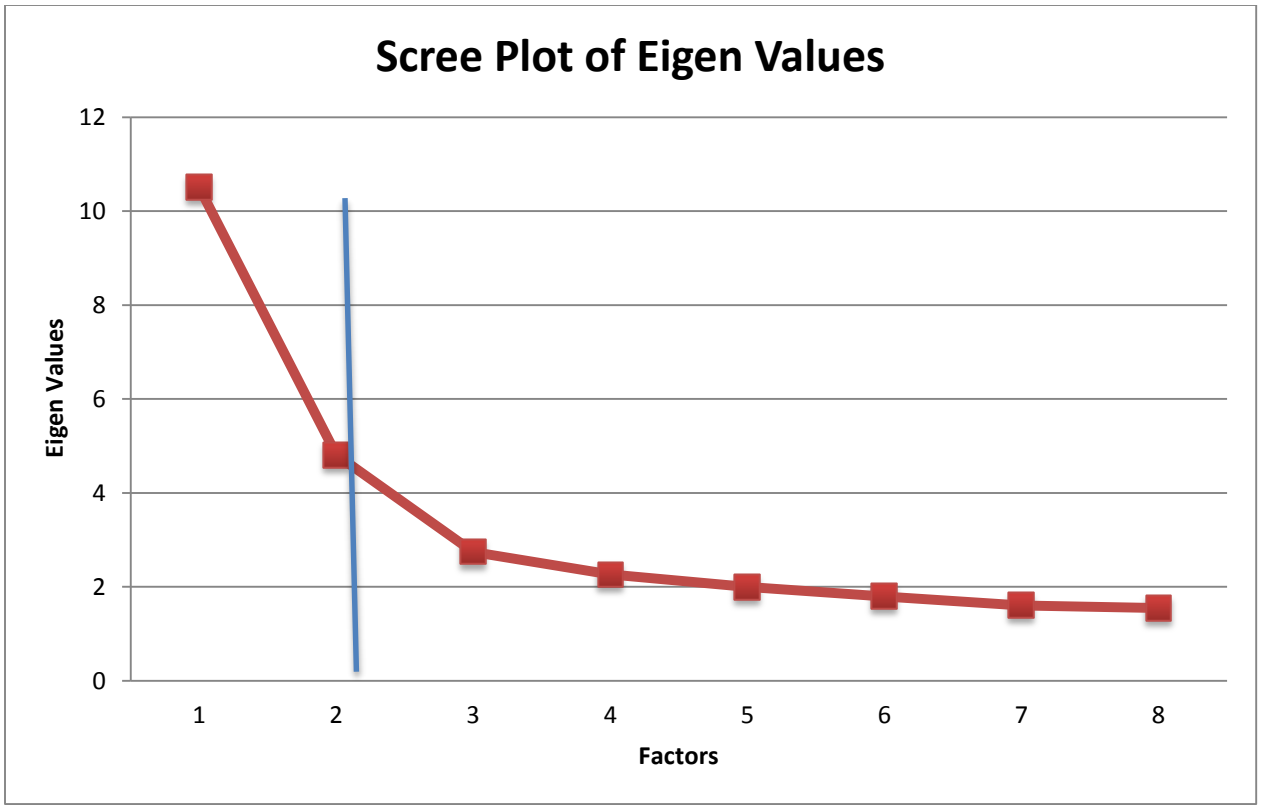

Figure 3. Scree plot of eigenvalues.

Table 6

Information Used to Determine the Factor Rotation

Factor Rotation Solution	Eigen Value	Explained Variance	Number of Participants	Correlation Among Factors	
	10.5			0.1767	
3	4.8	45%	36	0.4882	
	2.9			0.3522	
	10.5				
	4.8			0.5100	0.1676
4	2.7	51%	39	0.2769	0.3231
	2.26			0.3680	0.4071
	10.5			0.1241	0.5006
	4.8			0.2516	0.1431
5	2.7	55%	39	0.1684	0.2514
	2.26			0.2579	0.3327
	1.99			0.2065	02092

Table 7 presents the correlation between the selected factors, highlighting how related the four factors are to one another.

Factor Loadings

To gain greater understanding of the four factors, a four-factor Varimax rotation was conducted. Through the Varimax rotation, each Q-sort was loaded on a factor and provided a factor correlation score for each factor. The correlation score is a measure of association between all of the individual Q-sorts. The correlation score reflects an estimate of position that most closely approximates a perfect Q-sort for that specific factor (Militello & Benham, 2010). For the current study, Table 8 presents the factor scores for each participant in relation to the four factors.

Participants' significance, as previously outlined in Chapter 3, was .30 ($p<.05$ level). The participants who loaded significantly on a factor are marked with an asterisk in Table 9. The rotated factors represent 51% of the explained variance, with Factor One representing 17%, Factor Two representing 11%, Factor Three representing 13%, and Factor Four representing 10%. Factor One had 14 participants who loaded significantly at the $p<.05$ level. For Factor Two, there were nine participants who loaded significantly at the $p<.05$ level, while Factor Three had 11 participants load significantly at this level. Factor Four had five participants loading significantly at the $p<.05$ level. Only one participant, Participant 23, did not load significantly on any of the four viewpoints that emerged; this person had a unique viewpoint that is not captured by any of these four factors. Participant 20, while significant, was the exact opposite of Factor Two, and did not sort like Factors One, Three, or Four. This is further elucidated in the description of Factor Two.

Table 7

Correlations Among Factor Scores

	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
Factor One	1.0000	0.5100	0.1676	0.2769
Factor Two	0.5100	1.0000	0.3231	0.3680
Factor Three	0.1676	0.3231	1.0000	0.4071
Factor Four	0.2769	0.3680	0.4071	1.0000

Table 8

Statements and Factor Placements

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	0	1	2	2
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	3	-1	-1	1
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	-1	2	-2	-4
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.	4	4	2	4
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	2	2	1	3
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical insights, ideas, and experiences in working through a specific problem at his/her school.	2	-1	0	-2
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.	2	4	1	1
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	1	-1	4	3

Table 8 (continued)

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	2	3	0	-2
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	1	2	-2	1
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	0	0	-3	-1
12	Effective mentoring support helps a principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.	0	-2	2	-4
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	1	3	0	2
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.	-2	-3	-4	-2
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.	3	-1	0	-2
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.	1	0	3	2

Table 8 (continued)

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.	1	-1	-3	-3
18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision-maker.	0	0	-2	-3
19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.	-4	1	0	0
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	-2	-2	2	-3
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	-3	-2	1	-1
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice-versa.	-3	-4	-4	1
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.	4	3	3	4

Table 8 (continued)

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	3	3	1	3
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	-1	-2	-2	0
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	0	0	0	0
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skills sets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	3	1	-1	-1
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	2	0	2	1
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal to learn how to develop and build relationships with staff.	-2	1	0	2
30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.	-4	-1	3	-1
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus building capacity in others.	-1	0	-1	-1
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor "modeling" personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	0	2	-3	1

Table 8 (continued)

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.	-1	-3	-1	0
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	-2	1	4	0
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	-2	2	3	0
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	-1	-3	-1	-1
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.	-3	0	-1	3
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive “informal” mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	0	-4	-2	-2
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.	0	0	-3	-3
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school’s district’s policies, procedures and practices.	-1	-3	1	2

Table 8 (continued)

Card	Statement	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	-3	-2	0	0
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	1	1	1	0

Table 9

Factor Matrix Using Participants' Q-Sorts (Loadings)

Participants	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
Q1	0.5228*	-0.0235	0.4362	0.1005
Q2	0.3389	0.6059*	-0.2179	0.0906
Q3	0.5169*	0.3459	-0.0608	0.2812
Q4	0.8103*	0.1259	0.1247	-0.0860
Q5	0.4469*	0.2036	-0.0751	0.3214
Q6	-0.0947	0.3812	0.6503*	-0.2036
Q7	-0.2377	0.1529	0.5540*	0.4746
Q8	0.6910*	0.3895	-0.0425	0.0366
Q9	0.1102	0.4632	0.5168*	0.3819
Q10	-0.0131	0.3734	0.2490	0.7080*
Q11	0.1399	-0.0349	0.6957*	0.1562
Q12	0.2960	0.5535*	0.3405	0.1602
Q13	0.1093	0.3988	0.6145*	0.0681
Q14	0.0775	-0.1702	0.1060	0.6826*
Q15	0.5765*	0.3455	0.0873	-0.1445
Q16	0.4198	0.2269	0.5329*	0.2851

Table 9 (continued)

Participants	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
Q17	0.3650	0.4107*	0.3817	0.3406
Q18	-0.0594	0.5014*	0.2098	0.3092
Q19	0.0721	0.0999	0.1930	0.3495*
Q20	0.2880	-0.5179*	0.2424	0.1042
Q21	0.5483*	-0.1680	0.1769	0.3397
Q22	0.5779*	0.2483	-0.0968	0.4180
Q23	-0.1106	0.1854	0.2963	0.1465
Q24	0.6327*	0.1182	-0.0608	0.2513
Q25	0.7842*	0.1058	0.1736	-0.0703
Q26	0.7894*	-0.0309	-0.0709	0.1082
Q27	03.192	0.6681*	0.0748	0.1046
Q28	0.0719	-0.0209	0.6154*	0.4055
Q29	0.4425*	0.1628	0.2370	0.3969
Q30	0.3715	0.4484*	0.3575	-0.1976
Q31	0.3351	0.4696	0.0943	0.5322*
Q32	0.2662	0.5340*	-0.0574	0.3747
Q33	0.0196	-0.2098	0.6363*	0.0429

Table 9 (continued)

Participants	Factor One	Factor Two	Factor Three	Factor Four
Q34	0.1847	0.1058	0.0322	0.5027*
Q35	0.0566	0.0130	0.3763*	0.3224
Q36	-0.4332	0.3129	0.5291*	0.2680
Q37	0.7060*	0.0450	0.0347	0.1375
Q38	0.0438	-0.1349	0.7921*	-0.0990
Q39	0.5251*	0.1845	-0.0192	0.4642
Q40	0.2429	0.5116*	0.1629	0.1022
Cumulative % Explained Variance	17%	11%	13%	10%

Note. * Denotes .05 significance $1/\sqrt{42}$ X 1.96 = .30 at or above significance $p<.05$.

As previously presented in Table 6, a four-factor solution was selected for this study, effectively reducing 42 Q-sort statements and 40 Q-sorts to four factors, each of which can be represented by its own unique Q-sort. Table 9 outlines each Q-sort statement and indicates where each of the four factor groups sorted the statements on a continuum of "Strongly Agree" (+4) to "Strongly Disagree" (-4). Table 9 also delineates where each statement falls under each factor with regard to its model Q-sort.

The z-scores for each sort were transformed into column placement for Table 9. For example, Statements 4 and 23 had the highest z-scores on Factor One and, therefore, both have a sort of +4.

Factor One, Mentoring: Trust is the Prerequisite

A total of 14 participants loaded significantly on Factor One, representing 35% of the participants and 17% of the variance. This means that 14 participants looked at the factor array and agreed with the sort. Eight of the participants were males, and six were females. Among the 14 participants, six participants serve as elementary school principals, five are in the role of middle school principals, and three are high school principals, with experience as a principal ranging from 1 to 15 years. During their school-based administrative career, 12 had either received some form of mentoring support and/or provided mentoring support. Table 10 provides a summary of the characteristics for this specific subgroup.

In the statistical analysis of the study's findings, the z-score indicates how far, and in what direction, the statement deviates from the distribution mean. Table 11 presents the ranking of the statement cards and their respective z-scores for the participants loading significantly on Factor One. The statement with the highest agreement among the subgroup of

Table 10

Participants Loading Significantly on Factor One

Participant	Gender	Number of Years as Principal	Current Grade Level	Received Mentoring	Provided Mentoring
Q1	Male	1-5	Middle	Yes	No
Q3	Male	11-15	Middle	No	Yes
Q4	Male	6-10	High	No	No
Q5	Female	6-10	Elementary	No	No
Q8	Female	1-5	Middle	Yes	No
Q15	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q21	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q22	Male	11-15	Middle	No	Yes
Q24	Male	6-10	Middle	Yes	No
Q25	Female	6-10	Elementary	Yes	Yes
Q26	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q29	Male	6-10	High	Yes	Yes
Q37	Male	6-10	High	No	Yes
Q39	Male	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No

Table 11

Factor One, Normalized Factor Scores

Card	Statement	Z-Score
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.	1.774
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings frustrations, and concerns.	1.767
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	1.656
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	1.493
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	1.436
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principals.	1.432
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	1.403
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.	1.125
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical insights, ideas, and experiences in working through a specific problem at his/her school.	0.978

Table 11 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	0.886
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	0.885
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	0.859
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.	0.750
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	0.724
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	0.635
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	0.112
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.	-0.123
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	-0.125

Table 11 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.	-0.164
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	-0.172
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor “modeling” personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	-0.257
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	-0.278
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive “informal” mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	-0.279
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.	-0.332
18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.	-0.374
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.	-0.412
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	-0.457
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school’s district’s policies, procedures and practices.	-0.492
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	-0.526

Table 11 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	-0.646
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus building capacity in others.	-0.737
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.	-0.749
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	-0.752
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	-0.928
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	-0.972
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal to learn how to develop and build relationships with staff.	-1.019
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	-1.101
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.	-1.104
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.	-1.298
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	-1.419

Table 11 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.	-1.496
19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.	-1.702

participants was Statement 4, “Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.” With a z-score of 1.774, this statement is at the highest rank order compared to the other statements, and it is the first statement recorded in the +4 column of the Q-sort.

As outlined in Table 11, the statements continue in descending order, proceeding to the least agreed upon statement, Statement 19, “Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.” As noted, Statement 19 had a z-score of -1.702 and, as a result, it is in the -4 column.

Figure 4 is a model factor array, Factor One, representing what these 14 participants perceived to be effective elements of mentoring support. Watts and Stenner (2012) note that a model sort can be seen as a Q-sort configured to represent the viewpoint of a particular factor; it captures the viewpoint as a whole based on all participants’ Q-sorts, and serves as a basis for data interpretation and naming of factors. As displayed in Figure 4, Statements 4 and 23, placed under the +4 column, correspond with the two highest z-scores shown in Table 11. The two least agreed-upon statements, Statements 19 and 30, are placed under the -4 column.

Table 12 outlines the highest- and lowest-placed statements in the distribution matrix. Statements that are placed at the boundaries of the sorting grid continuum are most representative of Factor One and the subgroup of participants who loaded significantly on this factor. The high-positive statements represent the elements of mentoring support that Factor One participants perceived as having the highest impact and influence on developing a new principal’s leadership capacity.

Strongly Disagree Neither Agree / Disagree Strongly Agree

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
19	21	14	3	1	8	5	2	4
30	22	20	25	11	10	6	15	23
	37	29	31	12	13	7	24	
	41	34	33	18	16	9	27	
		35	36	26	17	28		
			40	32	42			
				38				
				39				

Figure 4. Factor one model sort.

Table 12

Factor One, High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Score	Card	Statement
+4	4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.
+4	23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.
+3	2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.
+3	15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.
+3	24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.
+3	27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.
-3	21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.
-3	22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.
-3	37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.
-3	41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.

Table 12 (continued)

Score	Card	Statement
-4	19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.
-4	30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.

Of the principals participating in the current study, 35% loaded significantly on Factor One. This particular subgroup sorted Statements 4, 23, 2, 15, 24, and 27 on the +4 and +3 ("Strongly Agree") side of the distribution grid. The highest-scoring statements regarding effective mentoring support in Factor One contain language such as a mentor-mentee relationship based on trust; safe, risk-free environment; careful match of mentor to mentee; flexible and adaptive support; approachable and responsive; and a mentor selection based on demonstrated skillsets and competencies.

As reflected in the literature, to foster the necessary support for a beginning principal, the mentor should be one who listens, acts non-judgmental, offers confidentiality, demonstrates trust and respect, and exhibits open and enthusiastic behavior (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Walker & Stott, 1994). Parallel themes are reflected in the statements sorted by principals who loaded significantly on Factor One. In fact, the elements of trust and a safe, risk-free environment surfaced as the highest-ranked statements on the distribution grid for Factor One. During the post-sort interview conducted with the Factor One focus group, each principal echoed the isolation and loneliness of the job, and emphasized the importance and value of having a mentor-mentee relationship established on a solid foundation of trust. Participant 4 remarked, "It is a lonely job to a large degree and where you can find that trust, you cling to it and it is the mentor with whom you can find that trust" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 26 further added:

> Trust ranks high as a critical element because in our position we do not often have that person at a level that falls beneath the principal's position who you can turn to at early

> stages in your career and have the trust you may need to discuss critical issues. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

To highlight the elements of trust and a safe, risk environment even further, the principals noted that the mentor should not be viewed as the mentee's evaluator, thus affording the opportunity for trust to develop and shape the mentor-mentee relationship. Based on their respective personal experiences with their previous mentors, both Participant 8 and Participant 26 noted in the post-sort interview that they knew the things they told their mentor were not going to be received in an evaluative nature. Participant 26 added, "The mentor is not there to judge" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 4 similarly stressed:

> The context of the supportive environment in which the mentor-mentee relationship operates is one that embraces the variability and uncertainties of the principal's job and that it is a safe, non-judgmental and non-threatening place where it is okay to fail. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

Participant 4 shared the perspective that a new principal will know that the elements of trust, approachability, and responsiveness underpin the mentor-mentee relationship when the new principal senses s/he can immediately turn to the mentor to seek support without having to first vet or filter questions or topics they want to discuss. Similarly, Participant 26 noted:

> The elements presented in Factor One are critical to forging a relationship that is characterized by a willingness to be vulnerable and the ability to lay issues out there in an unguarded manner and ask, without trepidation, "Can you help me?" (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

Participant 8 further highlighted that the elements of mentoring support sorted in Factor One are instrumental in fostering a reciprocal relationship wherein the mentor and mentee feel as partners who willingly and collaboratively ask each other questions, share ideas and experiences, and learn from one another.

The reflections shared by the participants in the post-sort interview revealed how their respective experiences influenced the sort for Factor One. All participants agreed that the highly structured, often regimented, processes typically characterizing a beginning teacher-mentor relationship would not have met their needs as a first-year principal. Instead, the participants stressed the importance for the mentor to be responsive to the mentee's unique needs, differentiating the support provided. Such a fluid structure is in contrast to a process framed in the format of a mere checklist of activities to be accomplished within specified benchmarks of time and deadlines. The participants described the mentor-mentee relationship as needing a structure that is both tight and loose, offering the opportunity to be flexible and adaptive in accordance to the needs of the mentee. Regarding the significance of the elements of mentoring support identified in the Factor One model sort, the participants in this study pointed to the importance of fostering and nurturing an *organic* development of the mentor-mentee relationship, driven and influenced by the needs of the mentee. Participant 8 stated, "It speaks to situational leadership" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 4 remarked, "The mentoring can be purposeful in structure, but flexible to meet the needs of the mentee. The mentor-mentee relationship, in essence, should be calibrated based on needs of the beginning principal" (personal communication, September 10, 2015).

This shared thought among the participants, centered on a support system grounded in trust and driven by the mentee's needs, sparked further reinforcement of Statement 27, "Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience." Ranked highly at the positive end of the distribution grid, this statement captures the participants' conviction that a principal's capacity and effectiveness to serve as a mentor does not equate to years of experience in the principalship. The focus group participants were in agreement that the selection process for mentors should go much deeper and extend far beyond the number of years of experience as a principal. Instead, the participants stressed the critical importance of having capabilities and skillsets for developing and sustaining a trusting, open, and responsive relationship targeted on supporting professional growth.

In selecting a candidate to serve as a mentor, the current study's participants highlighted the consideration of such factors as personality match; leadership style; affective traits of honesty, genuineness and transparency; capacity for relationship building and/or having a pre-existing relationship with the mentee; collaborative nature; skill in problem-solving; and interest in one's professional and personal welfare. Participant 8 added, "To be a great mentor, it is more than knowing the nuts and bolts. The mentor needs to be a person who is emotionally committed to and has a passion for growing others as leaders" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). This conviction was echoed by Participant 4 in his statement, "It is about caring to build other leaders" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Such input and comments reveal the importance placed by this subgroup of participants on relationships and trust; consequently,

these remarks offer insight into why the elements of mentoring support represented in the Factor One model sort fell on the higher, positive end of the distribution grid.

When asked how the elements of mentoring support represented in the highest-ranked statements of the Factor One sort are instrumental to building a new principals' leadership capacity, the participants remarked that these elements are "foundational" to any focused effort to building capacity in others. Participant 4 remarked, "Trust yields the opportunity to build capacity" and further elaborated, "Trust, in combination with the other elements in the statements, promote and support authenticity and vulnerability" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 26 offered that the elements presented in the +4 and +3 columns of the distribution grid are fundamental to moving one out of his/her comfort zone, and essential to fostering the opportunity to push one's thinking and reflection to a deeper level. Participant 26 said, "The elements support the opportunity for the mentor to push you to another level through the questions they ask and the experiences they share" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 4 followed up stating, "[The] mentor leads with questions" (personal communication, September 10, 2015).

The Factor One participants expressed views and opinions about the set of elements identified at the upper end of the distribution grid that suggested these elements lead to the new principal's willingness to openly share experiences, ideas, and thoughts; in doing so, the mentor-mentee relationship supports the broadening of the mentee's thought processes and the shaping and/or solidifying of one's leadership philosophy. Furthermore, the identified elements of mentoring support promote opportunities for the enhancement of skillsets and leadership behaviors, as well as growth of strategic planning and problem-solving skills. The principal

participants emphasized that when the elements reflected in this cluster of statements found on the higher, positive end of the sort are fostered and become evident in the mentor-mentee relationship, the mentee gains a greater level of confidence in his/her leadership skills. Participant 8 shared, “Through the elements, the mentor is building the new principal’s confidence in reading their school, assessing a situation, and problem-solving” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). As part of building leadership capacity, Participant 4 remarked that the elements attribute to the beginning principal’s growth “in the resilience necessary for facing the challenges inherent in the job” (personal communication, September 10, 2015).

The participants shared similar thoughts concerning how the Factor One elements foster a collaborative process, noting that collaboration goes both ways between mentor and mentee. The outgrowth of the mentor-mentee relationship becomes two professional peers leaning on one another, needing to hear each other’s thoughts and perspectives, and resulting in each individuals’ professional growth. Participant 8 stated, “Being in that lonely seat and having collaboration going both ways is important; it is not just about spooning out what you [the mentee] needs to do. This is where flexibility and the tight/loose are so necessary” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 8 further expressed:

> While the elements attribute to building confidence, you are naturally becoming stronger as a result but at the same time you still have that person to lean on when something arises. It evolves into a balanced relationship more of a colleague to colleague, not mentor and mentee. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

The conviction in which the participants described trust as the fundamental building block to the support of the mentoring process influenced the title for this factor, *Mentoring: Trust is the Prerequisite*. The participants were in agreement that trust must be established, nurtured, and remain unquestioned during the mentoring process if mentoring is to accomplish the goal intended. As reflected in the viewpoints expressed by the participants, trust directly influences and impacts other variables of the mentor-mentee relationship and as such, trust is critical in paving the way for professional growth to occur.

Factor Two, Mentoring: A Safe Place to Learn

A total of nine participants loaded significantly on Factor Two. This particular group accounts for 23% of the study participants and 11% of the variance. In examining this group, it should be noted that Participant 20 was significant but negative on the sort. With the exception of one male in the subgroup, the remaining eight participants who loaded significantly on Factor Two were all females. The principal participants in the Factor Two group ranged in experience from 0 to 15 years. Seven participants served as elementary school principals, and two were middle school principals. Six of the nine participants had received and/or provided mentoring support during their career as principal. Table 13 summarizes the characteristics of the Factor Two subgroup.

Table 14 outlines the sequence of statement cards for Factor Two participants, including the corresponding z-scores. The rankings of statements for Factor Two ranged from the highest-ranked with a z-score of 2.087, to the lowest-ranked statement with a z-score of -2.037. The statement with the highest agreement among the subgroup of Factor Two participants was Statement 4, “Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based

Table 13

Participants Loading Significantly on Factor Two

Participant	Gender	Number of Years as Principal	Current Grade Level	Received Mentoring	Provided Mentoring
Q2	Male	6-10	Elementary	Yes	Yes
Q12	Female	11-15	Elementary	Yes	Yes
Q17	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q18	Female	< 1	Elementary	No	No
Q20	Female	1-5	Middle	Yes	No
Q27	Female	6-10	Elementary	No	No
Q30	Female	6-10	Middle	Yes	No
Q32	Female	11-15	Elementary	No	No
Q40	Female	6-10	Elementary	Yes	No

Table 14

Factor Two, Normalized Factor Scores

Card	Statement	Z-Score
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.	2.087
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.	1.841
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	1.523
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.	1.354
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	1.183
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	0.960
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	0.922
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	0.849

Table 14 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor "modeling" personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	0.813
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	0.768
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	0.728
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	0.595
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	0.532
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	0.509
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	0.469
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal to learn how to develop and build relationships with staff.	0.373
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	0.338

Table 14 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	0.082
18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.	0.080
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus building capacity in others.	0.048
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.	0.043
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	0.034
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communication—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.	-0.013
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.	-0.017
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.	-0.211
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical insights, ideas, and experiences in working through a specific problem at his/her school.	-0.325

Table 14 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.	-0.393
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	-0.454
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	-0.464
30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.	-0.504
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	-0.571
12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.	-0.579
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	-0.807
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	-0.885
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	-1.253

Table 14 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	-1.466
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.	-1.529
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.	-1.668
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school's district's policies, procedures and practices.	-1.688
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.	-1.712
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive "informal" mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	-2.037

on trust." The lowest rank-ordered statement was Statement 38, "Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive 'informal' mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship."

Figure 5 is a model sort for the participants who loaded significantly on Factor Two, representing what the principal participants in this subgroup perceive to be effective elements of mentoring support. As reflected under the +4 column, Statements 4 and 23 received the highest agreement among the participants in this subgroup. The two statements correspond with the highest z-scores presented in Table 14. Statements 22 and 38 were the two least agreed-upon statements for Factor Two, as depicted under the -4 column.

Table 15 outlines the highest- and lowest-placed statements in the distribution matrix for Factor Two. Statements that were placed at the boundaries of the sorting grid continuum are most representative of Factor Two and the subgroup of participants who loaded significantly on the factor. The high-positive statements represent the elements of mentoring support that Factor Two participants perceived as having the highest impact and influence.

The participants who loaded significantly on Factor Two sorted the Statements 4, 7, 9, 13, 23, and 24 on the +4 and +3 ("Strongly Agree") side of the distribution grid. The language in the highest-ranked statements speaks to a mentor-mentee relationship based on trust, a safe and risk-free environment for openly sharing thoughts and concerns, and the availability and responsiveness of the mentor to the mentee. In addition, the statements in this factor highlight elements of mentoring support that are proactive, not reactive, in developing a new principal's leadership; stimulate self-reflection and critical review of skillsets and decisions; and enable the new principal to find his/her own solutions and decisions.

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree / Disagree				Strongly Agree	
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
22	14	12	2	11	1	3	9	4
38	33	20	6	16	19	5	13	7
	36	21	8	18	27	10	23	
	40	25	15	26	29	32	24	
		41	17	28	34	35		
			30	31	42			
				37				
				39				

Figure 5. Factor two model sort.

Table 15

Factor Two, High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Score	Card	Statement
+4	4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.
+4	7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.
+3	9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.
+3	13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.
+3	23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.
+3	24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.
-3	14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.
-3	33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.
-3	36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.
-3	40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school's district's policies, procedures and practices.

Table 15 (continued)

Score	Card	Statement
-4	22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.
-4	38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive "informal" mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.

As captured from studies referenced in the literature review, mentees have indicated through their reflections and feedback that benefits of a mentor-mentee relationship include the opportunity to learn and to receive support, empathy, and guidance from a more experienced peer when in a relationship and/or environment characterized by trust, as well as confidentiality and the absence of fear of judgment (Daresh, 2001; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Lester, Hannah, Harms, Bogelgesang, & Avolio, 2011). While a mentor needs the capability and capacity to teach, coach, encourage reflection, and formulate constructive feedback, the literature further highlights the need for the mentor to be knowledgeable and skilled in human relations, active listening, non-judgmental behaviors, and developing and demonstrating trust.

Indeed, the findings from the current study correspond to these themes and elements gleaned from the literature review. In the post-sort interview, the participants in the Factor Two focus group strongly asserted the importance of trust in establishing and nurturing an effective mentor-mentee relationship. Similar to the participants loading significantly on Factor One, Factor Two focus group participants' assertion is reflected in their high priority and ranking of Statement 4, "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust." Collectively, the participants identified this statement, among all statements in the Q-sort, as the easiest statement to rank given their view about the element of trust. Participant 12 stated:

> If you do not have trust in the relationship between the mentor and mentee when you are having critical discussions concerning problems of practice, the mentee is not 'going there' to any depth of a discussion with the mentor. Trust is critical to getting the

> beginning principal to the point where he/she will freely open up and share ideas and perspectives. In order for the relationship to support professional growth, trust is essential. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 27 further expanded upon this thought, remarking,

> You have to trust someone enough to show raw emotion; you have to work through problems and issues in an honest way. It is difficult to get to the core of a challenging situation or issue without trust or any of the elements reflected in the higher ranked statements. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 2 added, "If the mentor and mentee have built relational trust, grounded in openness and honesty, the mentee does not stay in crisis mode" (personal communication, September 22, 2015).

Closely connected with the element of trust outlined in Statement 4 are the elements of a safe, risk-free environment and listening and observing in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, which are represented in Statements 23 and 13, respectively. The participants in the post-sort interview emphasized that each of these elements interplay with and support one another in fostering an effective mentor-mentee relationship. Given the value placed on the relationship itself and how it needs to evolve in structure, meaning, and purpose for the beginning principal, the participants viewed it as reasonable to see how these specific elements cluster closely to one another at the upper end of the distribution grid. Participant 27 stated, "In essence, these elements allow the mentee to fail forward. You have to have a safe environment in order to live it and learn from it" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Reflecting upon his own previous experience, Participant 2 issued a cautionary reminder that, when entering a mentor-

mentee relationship, the mentee may come in with a jaded experience of not having a prior opportunity to work in a risk-free environment. As such, it can take time for a mentee to emotionally and mentally transition to trusting that a risk-free environment can now exist with a mentor; this places an even greater importance on the need for the elements ranked at the upper, positive end of the Factor Two model sort. Participant 2's views called for the mentor to carefully assess the dynamics of the relationship, and to purposefully attend to elements of trust and non-judgmental behaviors.

With regard to the importance of trust as an element of effective mentor-mentee relationship, Participant 12 shared:

> Going into the principal's role was the hardest thing I have ever had to do and when you are in that seat, you do not know the scope of the job until you live it. The mentee needs the grace of time. As a new, beginning principal, it is tough and this is why trust as well as the other elements reflected in the higher prioritized statements are crucial in the mentor-mentee relationship. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 27 agreed, and added:

> Thinking the move from assistant principal to principal would be fairly easy, the transition, however, was hard. It was helpful for a mentor, in a trusting way, to acknowledge this feeling and to share he felt the same way when making the transition. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Addressing the importance of a trusting, risk-free environment, Participant 12 further elaborated on the importance of Statement 13, "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as

necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions." Participant 12 felt that, if the mentor appears judgmental in his/her approach and comments, the mentee is going to shut down, further stating:

> You, as the mentor, have to be mindful of and careful in how you ask questions, how you respond, and how you give feedback so that it is done in a way that opens the lines of communication and allows the mentee to talk and not choose to shut down. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participants 2 and 27 felt similarly. Participant 27 added, "This is where active listening, on the part of the mentor, comes into play as a critical skill" (personal communication, September 22, 2015).

While discussing the elements identified at the upper end of the distribution grid, Participant 12 remarked:

> You have to recognize that as a new principal, it is about survival mode some times and as a mentor, while you have to occasionally use 'kid's gloves,' you have to have the capacity, for learning purposes, to draw thoughts and solutions out of the person and not allow it to be a situation where you are always 'telling' the mentee the answer or what to do. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 27 commented:

> As a new principal, survivorship is the first stage of mindset and through trust and the other elements of the mentoring relationship depicted in the statements of a higher value, the mentee is able to take steps forward. You are building their self-esteem and confidence. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

The notion of a new principal often operating in a survival mode is echoed in the literature. As one example in particular, Parkay et al. (1992) speak to *survival* as the first of five stages of a professional socialization hierarchy for principals; they note that, in the survival stage, personal insecurity tends to be high as the new principal experiences the shock of beginning leadership and the concern of sorting it all out. This is a similar contextual description to that which the participants painted when justifying why, within mentoring support, the elements of trust, availability, responsiveness, risk-free environment, sensitive, non-judgmental listening, and self-reflective inquiry are so necessary; in the study participants' opinions, these elements are assigned a high value in the ranking.

The participants' thoughts are further reinforced through the insight they offered about their ranking of Statements 7 and 9. Statement 7 highlights the element of "stimulating the new principal in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices and decisions," and Statement 9 captures mentoring support as "proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship." The participants stressed that, in order to facilitate critical conversations and cause a mentee to think of different perspectives, the mentor has to be able to ask probing questions in a climate of trust. Participant 27 offered, "While a mentee can seek a simple textbook answer, the mentoring process is about helping the mentee learn and develop skillsets necessary for thoughtful, reflective thinking and problem-solving" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Such discussion among the participants prompted them to quickly describe the mentoring process and the support it affords as a journey—a journey focused on continuous learning, capacity building, and development of a cycle of thought processes as a framework for proactively working through situations. Participant 2 commented:

> A mentor needs to know when the relationship and support have to be tight and when it has to be loose. Structuring informal, fluid opportunities for learning and support is just as important as having formal opportunities that may typically tend to play out as highly structured meetings. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

The participants' expanded views expressed about the higher-ranked statements correlated with even additional themes presented in the literature review. The literature review highlights how mentoring should be viewed as a learner-centered paradigm with the learner—the mentee—playing an actively engaged role in their learning. In contrast to having the mentee passively receive information from a mentor, information and knowledge should be discovered by the beginning principal in a learning process in which the mentor serves as a facilitator (Daresh, 2001; Zachary, 2000). Learning, then, should be the fundamental process and primary purpose of mentoring. The mentoring relationship should not be stagnant, but rather an ongoing process in which both the mentor and mentee move through different stages of learning and growth (Zachary, 2000). When working with novice school principals, mentors have the opportunity to serve as the catalysts for moving the beginning principal to be more autonomous, independent thinkers and decision-makers (Barnett, 2007). As Participant 2 emphasized in the post-sort interview:

> Mentoring is not about imposing your own beliefs and thoughts or creating a carbon copy of you, the mentor, but instead, you are helping the mentee grow into his/her own as a leader. Through leveraging the elements of support represented at the higher end of the sort, you are actually engaging in a process focused on building up their skills, traits, and confidence as a leader. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

The focus group participants described in unison the higher-ranked statements of the Factor Two model sort as relationship-oriented, and viewed the other statements at the lower end of the distribution grid as more skills-related. Participant 27 described the lower valued elements as "some of the foundational skillsets that you think that the mentee would have had as an assistant principal prior to moving to the principal's role" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). With the manner in which the statements fell in value from -4 to +4, the focus group viewed the grid as a continuum reflecting "movement from textbooks to people to relationships". Participant 2 remarked:

> For the statements at the middle and lower end of the sort that focus on skillsets in finance, communication, teacher evaluation, and the like, you cannot facilitate critical conversations or ask the probing questions that are needed without first having the trust and risk-free environment. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Agreeing, Participant 12 stated in support:

> The elements of the mentoring relationship captured on the positive side of the distribution grid are key to building and strengthening the new principal's leadership capacity. The presence of such elements in the mentoring relationship helps the new principal develop critical thinking skills and it is this set of skills that continuously need sharpening. The cluster of elements at the upper end help build the mentee's confidence and thus an enhanced ability to address and demonstrate the areas depicted in the statements at the lower end. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 2 expressed a similar view:

> The areas of focus represented in the statements at the lower end will always be present through a principal's tenure. However, with the mentor-mentee relationship being short-term, the upper end of the distribution grid is where the energy and priority should be placed so that the mentor is equipping and propelling the new principal forward with the capacity and skills, long term, to address the areas identified across the lower and middle parts of the sort. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Participant 2 further added, "Putting energy into the relationship-oriented areas of the upper end of the grid first are the areas that will carry and sustain you as a new principal. It is the sustainability" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). This participant likened it to building a house that first needs a firm foundation, stating,

> You may repaint, replace the roof, and refurbish the house to address changes and to weather the storm, but it is the foundation that you do not typically replace and it carries you through the other experiences of the journey. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

The participants described how the elements highlighted in the higher-ranked statements serve a dual role. They agreed that these elements are instrumental in forging an effective, supportive mentor-mentee relationship; at the same time, though, they acknowledged that, when effectively modeled by the mentor, the mentee can use these experiences and insights as a point of reference when utilizing these skills and behaviors in working with students, staff, and parents within his/her own respective school environment.

When discussing the Factor Two statements, several participants shared how previous experiences with an assigned mentor influenced the way in which they viewed the importance of

elements reflected in the statements. Participant 2 referenced the risk-free environment in which the mentor shows vulnerability and the reasoning behind decisions in an effort to make a choice that is in the best interest of the student, teacher, and/or parent. Similarly, Participant 12 stated:

> I appreciated the extra time and effort that the mentor took in working with me and checking in on me. As a new principal, it is like having a hole beside you and you are trying to stay out of it with the help of the guidance and advice from the mentor. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

To demonstrate the trust and the other elements identified in the higher-ranked statements, Participant 27 commented, "The mentor needs to be 'present' emotionally and mentally" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Remarking on how to evolve the mentor-mentee relationship into one of trust, approachability, responsiveness and risk-free judgment, Participant 27 added, "The mentor must reciprocate in an exchange of ideas and information and the elements identified in the upper end of the sort foster this reciprocal partnership" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Participant 12 likewise shared, "My mentor said 'you do not sit at that desk by yourself; you reach out to me [as your mentor] with any help with critical problem-solving'" (personal communication, September 22, 2015).

Factor Three, Mentoring: Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability

A total of 11 participants loaded significantly on Factor Three, accounting for 28% of the participants and 13% of the variance. Of the participants loading significantly on Factor Three, four participants were male and seven were female. Seven of the participants were elementary principals, representing the majority of the subgroup, while two participants were middle school principals and two were high school principals. One principal participant had less than one year

of experience, five had a range of experience from 1 to 5 years, one had a range of 6 to 10 years, two had a range of 11 to 15 years, and two had principal experience in the range of 16 to 20 years. Eight participants indicated that they had received some form of mentoring support during their career. Table 16 summarizes the characteristics of this particular subgroup.

Table 17 details the sequence of statement cards for Factor Three participants, and includes a corresponding z-score for each statement that indicates how far and in what direction each statement deviated from the distribution's mean. With a z-score of 2.323, the highest-ranked statement was Statement 8, "Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement." The lowest-ranked statement receiving the least agreement among the Factor Three participants was Statement 14, "Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role." As reflected in Table 17, Statement 14 had a z-score of -2.223.

Figure 6 depicts a model sort for the participants who loaded significantly on Factor Three. The model sort represents what 28% of this study's participants perceived to be the most effective elements of mentoring support. In alignment with the z-scores reported in Table 17, Statements 8 and 34 were placed under the +4 column of the distribution grid.

Table 18 outlines the highest- and lowest-placed statement cards for the Factor Three subgroup. Statements that are placed at the extreme boundaries of the distribution grid are important indicators, representative of the Factor Three participants' perceptions of the most effective elements of mentoring support.

Table 16

Participants Loading Significantly on Factor Three

Participant	Gender	Number of Years as Principal	Current Grade Level	Received Mentoring	Provided Mentoring
Q6	Male	1-5	High	No	No
Q7	Male	11-15	Elementary	Yes	No
Q9	Female	< 1	Middle	No	No
Q11	Male	1-5	Middle	Yes	No
Q13	Male	11-15	Elementary	Yes	No
Q16	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q28	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q33	Female	16-20	High	Yes	Yes
Q35	Female	16-20	Elementary	Yes	Yes
Q36	Female	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q38	Female	6-10	Elementary	No	No

Table 17

Factor Three, Normalized Factor Scores

Card	Statement	Z-Score
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	2.323
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	1.649
30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.	1.491
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.	1.427
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.	1.266
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	1.244
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.	1.141
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	1.110
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	0.615
12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.	0.596

Table 17 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	0.579
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.	0.571
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	0.567
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school's district's policies, procedures and practices.	0.543
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	0.537
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	0.476
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	0.461
19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.	0.435
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical insights, ideas, and experiences in working through a specific problem at his/her school.	0.187
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	0.160

Table 17 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	-0.018
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.	-0.208
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	-0.223
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	-0.292
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal to learn how to develop and build relationships with staff.	-0.394
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	-0.400
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	-0.419
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.	-0.491
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matters.	-0.508
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	-0.606
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus building capacity in others.	-0.624

Table 17 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	-0.719
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	-0.786
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	-0.811
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive “informal” mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	-0.878
18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.	-0.934
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	-1.151
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor “modeling” personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	-1.223
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.	-1.268
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.	-1.375
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school’s setting and vice versa.	-1.825
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.	-2.223

Strongly Disagree Neither Agree / Disagree Strongly Agree

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
14	11	3	2	6	5	1	16	8
22	17	10	27	9	7	4	23	34
	32	18	31	13	21	12	30	
	39	25	33	15	24	20	35	
		38	36	19	40	28		
			37	26	42			
				29				
				41				

Figure 6. Factor three model sort.

Table 18

Factor Three, High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Score	Card	Statement
+3	9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal's leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.
+3	13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.
+4	8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.
+4	34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.
+3	16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.
+3	23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.
+3	30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.
+3	35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.
-3	11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.
-3	17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.

Table 18 (continued)

Score	Card	Statement
-3	32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor “modeling” personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.
-3	39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.
-4	14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.
-4	22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school’s setting and vice versa.

The participants who loaded significantly on Factor Three ranked the Statements 8, 34, 16, 23, 30, and 35 on the +4 and +3 ("Strongly Agree") side of the distribution grid. The highest-ranked statements speaking to mentoring support contained language such as developing instructional leadership skills to impact student achievement, developing instructional leadership skills to impact teacher performance, developing skills for creating a strategic vision, developing skills for implementing a strategic plan, developing skills in collecting and analyzing data for instructional planning, and providing a safe and risk-free environment for openly sharing thoughts and concerns.

During the post-sort interview with the participants who loaded significantly on Factor Three, each participant stressed the critical need for a principal to be a strong instructional leader. In fact, all participants in the Factor Three post-sort interview subgroup pointed to instructional leadership as the most important competency domain for today's principal. As evidenced in how the participants sorted the statements, the participants indicated that a primary focus of mentoring support should be on helping new principals' develop and grow in instructional leadership skills and capacity. To extend this perspective, Participant 11 shared, "Instructional leadership and strategic leadership go hand-in-hand and as such, the skillsets in these two areas compliment and support each other in yielding school results" (personal communication, October 2, 2015). Participant 9 similarly noted:

> When tailoring mentoring support for the mentee, the mentor should approach the role with a commitment of helping the beginning principal become the most effective leader possible. Attention must be given to the areas of instructional leadership and strategic

leadership, especially in light of current accountability measures and community expectations of the school principal. (personal communication, October 2, 2015).

Participant 9 elaborated on this, stating, “The skillsets reflected in the statements ranked at the higher end of the distribution grid represent what is valued and expected of principals today, and therefore cannot be underemphasized as significant areas for mentoring support to address” (personal communication, October 2, 2015).

The participants in the current study recognized that, when faced with the challenge of leading positive change in student outcomes, a new principal may often feel overwhelmed and ill-equipped. To truly impact teaching and learning and build a supportive culture of expectations for high student achievement, the participants stated that it is essential for a principal to have the skillset to lead as an instructional leader; for a new principal in particular, the participants believed their respective sort captured the areas of need for framing the mentoring relationship and support. Each participant in the Factor Three focus group commented how interconnected the items were to one another in the highest-ranked statements of the sort. For example, strategic leadership and instructional leadership influence vision, direction, and culture; data analysis informs instructional decisions and shapes strategic planning; instructional leadership influences teacher feedback and grows teachers’ instructional capacity; and strategic leadership and instructional leadership have a results-oriented focus impacting student and teacher performance results.

The Factor Three participants revealed how their sort was influenced by their personal experiences. Participant 9 shared, “The urgency to move the school forward in student achievement and outcomes influenced the ranking of instructional leadership and related skillsets

as high" (personal communication, October 2, 2015). The study participants also pointed to the influence of their previous experiences with an assigned mentor, and/or those experiences they had during their tenure as an assistant principal. Each participant of Factor Three focus group commented on how valuable it was having the opportunity to work as a new principal with a mentor or as an assistant principal, under the supervision of a principal who had a strong, clear instructional focus. Participants 9 and 11 conveyed that the instructional behaviors modeled and the instructional questions asked by principal mentors or former supervising principal were influential to their growth as instructional leaders. Participant 11 further commented

> The experiences we shared, conversations facilitated about instructional strategies, and the ability to chunk instructional facets of the school into targeted focus areas were instrumental in helping me see the priority that should be placed on instructional leadership within the school. (personal communication, October 2, 2015)

The participants collectively highlighted the value of mentoring support in building and enhancing their own capacity for leading instructional programming, assessing instructional practices and teacher performance, using data to monitor students' academic performance, and building an instructional culture.

Subsequently, the personal experiences shared in the post-sort interview prompted the participants to emphasize the need for the mentor to be a strong instructional leader with proven instructional leadership experience, in order to be positioned for providing mentoring support devoted to helping a new principal grow in instructional leadership capacity. In terms of mentor selection, the participants expressed the importance for the mentor to be knowledgeable of curriculum, deeply grounded in instruction, and capable of impacting instructional practices in a

school. Participant 13 stressed, “The mentor needs to have the ability to talk through curriculum and instructional issues in a substantive manner, offering insights, experiences, and resources to support the discussions” (personal communication, October 2, 2015). Participant 9 further added that the mentor should be intentional and purposeful in structuring discussions about instruction and to exercise higher-order questioning skills when examining instructional challenges and issues with the mentee. Participant 9 reflected upon the benefit in observing how instructional questions that are examined are turned into strategic action (personal communication, October 2, 2015).

When comparing the highest-ranked statements of the model sort to statements ranked at the lower end of the distribution grid, the participants indicated that the higher-ranked statements identified a more complex set of skills and competencies, offering even greater credence for the need to structure mentoring support for a beginning principal. By the way in which the elements are sorted in the Factor Three Q-sort, the participants viewed a greater impact of change on student achievement as one moves from left to right on the distribution grid. Participants 9 and 13 shared the perspective that the skillsets represented in the statements at the lower end of the grid are skillsets that should have already been cultivated and in place as an assistant principal. They commented that, if the school-based administrator does not already have these skillsets reflected in the lower-ranked statements, the challenge of being a principal is going to be even greater. Participant 11 expressed the belief, “A new principal will be unable to demonstrate the skillsets depicted in the highest ranked statements without first having a strong foundation of the skillsets and attributes reflected in the lower end of the distribution grid” (personal communication, October 2, 2015).

The participants remarked that the Factor Three Q-sort in part portrays a continuum of skills development, moving from more managerial, “soft” skills at the lower end of the distribution grid to a more complex, higher domain of leadership skills at the upper end. Participant 13 pointed out that, years ago, mentoring support would more than likely have been structured to help address leadership areas in the managerial realm, similar to the elements at the lower end of the distribution grid, whereas now it is much more focused on instruction and supporting a new principal’s growth in this capacity. To this, Participant 9 reinforced a theme highlighted earlier—the higher end of the distribution grid reflects what is expected of principals today and, for mentoring support to be effective and relevant, it should be structured in response accordingly (personal communication, October 2, 2015).

Factor Four, Mentoring: Relationship is Key

A total of five participants loaded significantly on Factor Four, accounting for 10% of the study participants and 10% of the total variance. Three participants were male and two were female. Three in the Factor Four subgroup were elementary principals, one was a middle school principal, and one was a high school principal who collectively ranged in years of experience from 1 to 20 years. Three of the five participants indicated that they had received some form of mentoring support during their school-based administrative career. Table 19 provides the characteristics of the participants in this subgroup.

The ranking of statements for Factor Four ranged from a z-score of 2.503 (“Strongly Agree”) to -2.388 (“Strongly Disagree”). Statement 4, which read, “Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust,” was the highest ranked statement by the Factor Four subgroup. As reflected in Table 20, the lowest ranked statement was

Table 19

Participants Loading Significantly on Factor Four

Participant	Gender	Number of Years as Principal	Current Grade Level	Received Mentoring	Provided Mentoring
Q10	Male	11-15	High	No	Yes
Q14	Female	6-10	Elementary	Yes	Yes
Q19	Male	1-5	Elementary	Yes	No
Q31	Male	11-15	Middle	No	Yes
Q34	Female	16-20	Elementary	Yes	Yes

Table 20

Factor Four, Normalized Factor Scores

Card	Statement	Z-Score
4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.	2.503
23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.	1.899
5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.	1.371
24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.	1.113
37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.	0.953
8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.	0.906
13	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor listen and observe in a sensitive and non-judgmental way, acting as a sounding board as necessary to enable the new principal to find his or her own solutions and directions.	0.848
16	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills as an instructional leader to impact and support teacher performance.	0.803
29	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal to learn how to develop and build relationships with staff.	0.769
1	Effective mentoring support includes structured opportunities for the mentor and the beginning principal to meet on a regular basis.	0.760

Table 20 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
40	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal understand the school's district's policies, procedures and practices.	0.754
7	Effective mentoring support stimulates the new principal to engage in self-reflection and critical review of one's practices, decisions, skillsets, and areas for further growth.	0.691
10	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to ask the mentee probing questions that lead to discovery in contrast to simply providing answers.	0.677
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	0.660
32	Effective mentoring support should involve the mentor "modeling" personal attributes, skills, and behaviors that an effective leader should emulate.	0.542
28	Effective mentoring support should be a priority and an embedded cultural norm within a school district and therefore, supported by policy and funding.	0.660
2	Effective mentoring support requires a structured process of carefully matching mentors to mentees opposed to a random assignment.	0.315
22	Effective mentoring support should include opportunities for the mentor to observe the beginning principal in his/her assigned school's setting and vice versa.	0.313
26	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving.	0.300
41	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills for teacher evaluation.	0.242

Table 20 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
33	Effective mentoring support should involve advising the beginning principal on how to handle personnel and human resources matter.	0.205
25	Effective mentoring support helps the new principal be skilled in facilitating difficult conversations.	0.162
34	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal develop skills in creating a strategic vision and plan for his/her school.	0.161
19	Effective mentoring support includes an agreement between the mentor and mentee that outlines goals, expectations, code of ethics, and accountability for the mentoring relationship.	0.058
42	Effective mentoring support requires a beginning principal to be open to receiving constructive feedback.	-0.023
35	Effective mentoring support should help a beginning principal grow in leadership skills necessary for implementing a strategic plan into action.	-0.217
30	Effective mentoring support should help a principal develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and using data for instructional decisions and planning.	-0.221
31	Effective mentoring support should help develop a beginning principal's ability to mentor his/her own staff, thus building capacity in others.	-0.381
27	Effective mentoring support requires that the district's selection of principal mentors be based on skillsets, competencies, and proven leadership, not solely on years of principal experience.	-0.415
36	Effective mentoring support should involve helping a beginning principal develop the capacity and skills to work with school budget and finance.	-0.514

Table 20 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
21	Effective mentoring support should be dedicated to helping the beginning principal develop leadership behaviors and leadership capacity as aligned with the state-adopted school leadership performance standards.	-0.664
11	Effective mentoring support encourages and instills in a new principal a greater sense of confidence to take risks in addressing complex challenges.	-0.725
14	Effective mentoring support assists the beginning principal in the socialization process for transitioning to his/her new role.	-0.782
38	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for the beginning principal to receive “informal” mentoring by others in addition to the support provided by a structured mentor-mentee relationship.	-0.818
15	Effective mentoring support should be flexible and adaptive to the emerging issues that arise for the beginning principal.	-0.991
9	Effective mentoring support should be proactive in developing the beginning principal’s leadership, not reactive in promoting survivorship or help only when needed.	-1.083
6	Effective mentoring support engages the mentor and the beginning principal in a collaborative process of sharing practical insights, ideas, and experiences in working through a specific problem at his/her school.	-1.087
18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.	-1.138
17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.	-1.217
39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.	-1.343

Table 20 (continued)

Card	Statement	Z-Score
20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.	-1.354
12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.	-1.642
3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.	-2.388

Statement 3, “Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.” To illustrate how the individuals who loaded significantly on Factor Four sorted the statements, Table 20 outlines the sequence of statement cards and the corresponding z-scores.

Figure 7 is a model sort for the participants loading significantly on Factor Four, representing what 10% of the study’s participants perceived as effective elements of mentoring support.

Table 21 outlines the highest- and lowest-ranked statements in the distribution matrix for Factor Four. Statements that are placed at the boundaries of the sorting grid continuum are most representative of Factor Four and the subgroup of participants who loaded significantly on the factor. The high-positive statements represent the elements of mentoring support that Factor Four participants perceive as having the greatest impact and influence.

The Factor Four subgroup sorted the Statements 4, 23, 5, 8, 24, and 37 on the +4 and +3 side (“Strongly Agree”) of the distribution grid. The highest-placed statements contained language related to a mentor-mentee relationship based on trust; a safe, risk-free environment for openly sharing thoughts and concerns; mentor-mentee confidentiality; developing instructional leadership skills to impact student achievement; and the availability and responsiveness of the mentor to the mentee.

When seeking insight about the highest ranked statements during the post-sort interview from the participants who loaded significantly on Factor Four, they identified that the elements represented in these specific statements are relationship-oriented and crucially important to the creation of a productive, effective mentor-mentee relationship. Elements of trust, risk-free

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree / Disagree				Strongly Agree	
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
3	17	6	11	19	2	1	5	4
12	18	9	21	25	7	13	8	23
	20	14	27	26	10	16	24	
	39	15	30	33	22	29	37	
		38	31	34	28	40		
			36	35	32			
				41				
				42				

Figure 7. Factor four model sort.

Table 21

Factor Four, High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Score	Card	Statement
+4	4	Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based on trust.
+4	23	Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns.
+3	5	Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal.
+3	8	Effective mentoring support focuses on helping a new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement.
+3	24	Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentee.
+3	37	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal become skilled in communications—communication with staff, parents, and other stakeholder groups.
-3	17	Effective mentoring support is a reciprocal learning process, mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the new principal in promoting professional growth in leadership.
-3	18	Effective mentoring support will cause a beginning principal to shift from relying on the mentor to becoming a more independent decision maker.
-3	20	Effective mentoring support includes mutually agreed upon professional growth goals and learning outcomes based on the beginning principal's identified needs.
-3	39	Effective mentoring support fosters opportunities for mentees to meet together for support.

Table 21 (continued)

Score	Card	Statement
-4	3	Effective mentoring support requires mentors to receive formal, specialized training in the skills and knowledge necessary to mentor new principals.
-4	12	Effective mentoring support helps a beginning principal develop skills as a change agent for leading change.

environment, and confidentiality were viewed by the participants as foundational to any relationship, and were first and foremost necessary to have in place before the relationship could evolve into a meaningful one; these elements were also viewed as necessary for any of the other elements represented across the distribution grid to develop and be discussed at any level of depth and authenticity. The participants felt these elements were the linchpin in the relationship, setting the optimal stage for the professional support and work that could occur between the mentor and mentee. Participant 10 stated:

> It is necessary for the mentor to create an atmosphere of trust and for the mentor to live what that looks like, modeling for the mentee that it is okay to take risks and reveal mistakes. [It] is critical to the growth process for the mentee. (personal communication, October 5, 2015)

When reflecting upon personal experiences in working with an assigned mentor, Participant 14 recalled how the mentor always put relationship and trust first. Consequently, the mentor's continuous focus on the relationship, coupled with their capacity to build and sustain trust, influenced how Participant 14 interacted with the mentor, responded to situations, and freely and openly shared experiences, challenges, and concerns. Participant 14 further added, "The establishment of trust yields a willingness to be vulnerable" (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Conversely, Participant 10 reported having a different experience in which there was no trust at all, and the trustworthiness of the mentor was compromised and in essence severed by the mentor's actions. Participant 10 identified this as an invaluable learning moment in shaping his leadership as a future principal, highlighting how this experience heightened the importance and value of trust in the mentor-mentee relationship. Participant 10 shared, "The

effectiveness of a mentor-mentee relationship boils down to trust and transparency and the real intent behind the experiences shared" (personal communication, October 5, 2015).

The participants stressed in the post-sort interview that trust breeds confidentiality and opens the door to a safe, risk-free environment, which is why they ranked it so high in the sort. Such trust is reinforced by the availability and responsiveness of the mentor. Participant 10 referred to the elements identified in the highest-ranked statements as multidimensional and interconnected in such a way that the absence of one would potentially impact the health and effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship, not to mention the capability to positively influence the mentee's growth in leadership capacity. Participant 14 remarked, "Before one can move forward in addressing any area of focus for growth, it is important that the mentee know that he can share information, frustrations, and concerns without judgment" (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Participant 10 noted that while self-disclosure may not always be easy or sometimes even uncomfortable, the mentor must demonstrate intentionality in the time and structure devoted to nurturing the relationship and in the level of engagement he/she brings to the discussions and conversations with the mentee (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Participant 14 elaborated that the mentor needs to gauge where the mentee falls in regard to trust, noting that for some, trust is immediate and for others, trust must be earned (personal communication, October 5, 2015).

Further reflecting upon trust in the mentor-mentee relationship, Participant 14 recalled the deliberate actions of a previous mentor in demonstrating a safe environment for them both. While visiting the principal mentor's school, the mentor openly and willingly shared all his school's student performance data, and even solicited the participant's thoughts and ideas about

what to do in addressing challenges faced with certain academic achievement levels. In addition, this mentor had Participant 14 accompany him on instructional walkthroughs during the day, assessing instructional practices in the classrooms. Participant 14 noted how powerful this day was in illustrating and reinforcing the trust that had been established in their respective relationship (personal communication, October 5, 2015).

The sharing of such experiences during the post-sort interview prompted the participants to identify behaviors that the mentor can demonstrate in fostering the elements depicted in the highest-ranked statements of the sort. Participants 10 and 14 both emphasized active listening skills. In listening intently and carefully, the participants noted the importance for the mentor to offer options for consideration, rather than immediately jumping to provide an answer or recommendation for addressing a given issue and/or situation. Furthermore, the participants underscored the value of follow-up to determine if and how the options worked, or if there is any further need for additional support (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Participant 10 emphasized:

> The mentor needs to demonstrate consistency in what he/she is saying and doing. It is important for the mentee to see that the mentor is putting into practice what is being discussed with the mentee and if not, it becomes questionable in terms of authenticity and genuineness. (personal communication, October 5, 2015)

The Factor Three participants additionally accentuated the importance of mentoring support having a focus on skills in instructional leadership and communication, especially given the state and national accountability measures, the ever-growing spotlight on increased student achievement, and the need for active parent engagement. In the view of this study's participants

as expressed in the post-sort interview, these two elements were closely ranked with the elements of trust, confidentiality, and a safe, risk-free environment, particularly given the complexity of these two focus areas and the need to have crucial, candid, and transparent conversations concerning instruction and communication within a climate of trust.

Upon reflection on the upper and lower ends of the distribution grid, the participants shared that the sorting of the statements indicated a scaffold process with the higher-ranked statements being first in importance. The participants believed that the elements sorted at the higher end of the distribution grid nurtured the capacity for the other elements identified across the grid. Participant 14 shared the perspective that a number of elements highlighted in statements falling in the middle-to-lower end of the grid are not primary areas of focus for a principal during the first year. Participant 10 highlighted as an example the ability to lead change, explaining, "During the first year, the beginning principal is assessing culture, building relationships, and evaluating systems and structures before making change or even knowing what needs to be changed" (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Participant 14 pointed to the statement highlighting goal-setting and stated, "[There is] the potential for this to limit what is discussed during the mentoring process" (personal communication, October 5, 2015). Participant 10 added, "When elements such as this drive the relationship, the relationship has the potential of becoming one of compliance and a checklist instead of focusing on the 'real' and authentic work at hand" (personal communication, October 5, 2015). In looking at the model sort through a scaffolding perspective, the participants believed that through an evolving process, supported by a strong mentor-mentee relationship grounded in trust and focused on instruction, the other elements depicted on the distribution grid become more naturally operant and

developed, and the conversations between mentor and mentee become more rich, comprehensive, and internalized.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented an analysis of the data compiled for this current study. Data were collected from 40 school principals, ranging across elementary, middle, and high school levels, regarding their perspectives and perceptions about the elements of mentoring support that have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity. In addition, data were collected to gain insight into why the experienced principals in the study believed the identified elements are critical to the mentoring support provided to new principals. In all, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources was used to gain understanding about principals' perceptions and beliefs concerning elements of effective mentoring support. First, Q-sorts were completed, and a factor analysis was used to compute the statistical data from the Q-sorts. Four distinct factors emerged, which were presented and discussed in detail in this chapter; these include Trust as the Prerequisite, A Safe Place to Learn, Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability, and Relationship is Key. Post-sort interviews were conducted with a sample of participants who loaded significantly on each of the four factors to further explore principals' views and opinions about elements of mentoring support.

Chapter 5 highlights the implications of the current study's findings. It begins with a summary of the findings, and identifies connections of the findings to the literature. In addition, the chapter discusses implications of the study for policy, future research, and educational practice.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The current study sought to identify and gain a deep understanding of the elements of mentoring support for new school principals. Data were collected from experienced principals. Their perceptions were analyzed to understand which elements most influence and impact the development of new principals' leadership capacity. The study generated four distinct viewpoints of effective mentoring strategies for new principals. Overall, the viewpoints revealed that the participants view mentoring support as a critical and needed support structure for beginning principals during their transition to the new role. However, the principals notably perceived certain elements of mentoring as more important than others. These viewpoints provide insight into how on-the-ground practitioners like mentoring. The findings also have the potential to impact the development and growth of new, emerging school leaders. Finally, empirical findings allow for a new analysis of the current literature and research.

This chapter provides a summary analysis of the study's findings, coupled with a discussion of the findings as related and connected to the literature. Insight and clarity is offered about what elements of mentoring support the principals viewed as having the most influential impact and why. Following a discussion of the findings, the chapter presents implications for policy, future research studies, and practitioners.

Summary of Findings

Q-methodology was the research method used in this study to identify and examine principals' perceptions and viewpoints about effective mentoring support. Four factors, or perspectives, emerged from the study. In combination, these four factors provide an enlightening

representation of what the principals in the study believed to be the most effective elements of mentoring support instrumental in developing a new principal's leadership capacity. The analysis generated four distinct viewpoints, as well as some shared similarities among the four factor groups.

Factor One, Mentoring: Trust is the Prerequisite, represents the importance that principals place on the element of trust. Recognizing the isolation and loneliness that often accompany the role of principal, the study participants highlighted the need for the mentoring relationship to be established on a solid foundation of trust. The principals perceived trust as so "foundational" to any focused effort to developing capacity that the absence of trust will prevent many, if not all, other aspects critical to an effective mentoring relationship from fully forming, and can potentially inhibit, or at least likely cause unnecessary barriers to, the professional growth process supporting capacity-building. In essence, trust yields the *opportunity* to build capacity in others. In combination with the other elements of a risk-free environment, flexible and adaptive support, mentor responsiveness, and a strong skillset demonstrated by an appropriately selected and matched mentor, trust will lead to fostering authenticity, vulnerability, and a willingness to openly share—all characteristics fundamentally crucial to moving the mentee out of his/her comfort zone, pushing and broadening one's thinking, and stimulating deep self-reflection. Consequently, as derived from the principals' viewpoints, trust nurtures an *organic* development of the mentoring relationship and mentoring support, driven and influenced by the needs of the mentee. The fluid, adaptive structure of support allows the mentor to be responsive to the beginning principal's needs and to differentiate the support provided. Notably

important to fostering and delivering a support system characterized in this way is a mentor who is emotionally committed to growing others as leaders.

Factor Two, Mentoring: A Safe Place to Learn, captures principals' perceptions about the importance of proactive, not reactive, mentoring support, provided in a safe, risk-free environment. The principals in this study believed learning should be the driving purpose of mentoring, and that the mentor-mentee relationship should engage the beginning principal as an active learner discovering and acquiring information, knowledge, and skills that help him/her grow and evolve into their own as a leader. The principals perceived the mentoring support as a journey—a journey characterized by continuous learning and a cycle of thought processes developed as a framework for proactively working through situations. Elements of trust, critical self-reflection, mentor availability and responsiveness, active listening, and non-judgmental behaviors—all of which the principals in this factor group ranked high in importance and value to the mentoring process—are elements that the principals perceived to interplay in a very connected way to create a safe climate for the mentee. The principals viewed the mentor as the catalyst who leverages these elements for learning purposes, drawing thoughts and solutions out of the mentee through careful probing of questions and sharing of experiences. Moreover, the principals viewed the elements related to fostering a safe environment as allowing the beginning principal to "fail forward"—to live it and learn from it. The principal participants in this study agreed that creating such an environment for mentoring support calls for the mentor to demonstrate non-judgmental, trusting behaviors; it also calls for the mentor to be mindful of how to ask questions, respond, and give feedback in order to maintain open lines of communication and prevent the mentee from choosing to shut down, so that, instead, the mentor and mentee

travel the journey together. The principals maintained that using a safe, risk-free approach to frame the context of mentoring support fosters a safe zone that prompts a beginning principal to more readily and willingly show vulnerability, display raw emotion, and work through situations in an honest, less guarded, way. In the end, the principals asserted that the elements in this factor group are key to establishing a supportive climate for mentoring that results in a greater likelihood of the beginning principal operating outside of a crisis or survival mode. Furthermore, the principals believed that the elements in Factor Two, which attribute to a safe, risk-free environment for mentoring to occur, are instrumental in helping the new principal build sustainability of skillsets over time, sharpen critical thinking skills, gain greater self-esteem, and grow in increased confidence.

Factor Three, Mentoring: Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability, represents the principals' perception that the elements of mentoring support most influential in building a beginning principal's leadership capacity are those that focus on developing instructional leadership skills and strategic leadership. In light of current accountability measures and community expectations, the principals pointed to instructional leadership as the most important competency domain of today's principal. In support of instructional leadership, the highest-ranked statements in this factor group speak to mentoring support that helps develop skillsets for creating and implementing a strategic vision, collecting and analyzing data for instructional planning, and providing a risk-free environment for sharing ideas concerning instructional areas. The principals asserted that these skillsets are interconnected in relationship to instructional leadership, and together represent what is valued and expected of principals today. The urgency to raise student achievement and improve school outcomes underlies

principals' perception of the importance for mentoring support to target instructional leadership. To impact student achievement, the principals in the study voiced the belief that mentoring support should be intentional in structuring discussions about curriculum and instructional practices, as well as in exercising higher-order thinking skills to examine instructional challenges. In the principals' opinion, the elements of mentoring support that were ranked high in this factor group reflect a shift from mentoring support having a "management" focus to mentoring support that focuses on instructional improvement and student results.

Factor Four, Mentoring: Relationship is Key, accounts for the strong value and importance that the Factor Four group placed on the mentor-mentee relationship itself. The principals viewed the elements of mentoring support that fall in this factor group to be relationship-oriented and crucially important to the creation of a productive, meaningful mentor-mentee relationship. They believed the elements of trust, confidentiality, openness, and risk-free environment are foundational to any relationship and must therefore be first and foremost in place if a relationship is to form. Without these elements, the principals felt that it would be challenging, if not impossible, to address the other elements represented across the distribution grid in any depth or authenticity. The principals asserted that the elements clustered in the higher-ranked statements for this factor group serve as the linchpin in a relationship, crucial to setting the framework and optimal stage for the mentor-mentee relationship to be grounded in professional support. Furthermore, the participants believed that the relationship—the manner in which it is structured, developed, and continuously evolves—is essential in influencing whether the work between mentor and mentee remains on a superficial level in the context of compliance and checklists, or if it is the "real" true work and challenges that the beginning principal faces in

his/her role. In accordance to the value they attached to such elements as mentor responsiveness and availability, the principals stressed the importance of the mentor being deliberate and intentional in attending to and nurturing the mentor-mentee relationship; in this regard, they highlighted such factors as the commitment and time dedicated as well as the level of engagement demonstrated. As gleaned from the principals' viewpoints, when the relationship is characterized by honesty, self-disclosure, trust, and genuineness, the door is more willingly opened to engage in discussions and problem-solving for complex issues such as curriculum, instructional practices, and student achievement.

Consensus Statements

Consensus statements are those statements that do not distinguish between any pair of factors (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This means that on each one of the four factors for this study, the consensus statements ranked in a very similar way. Identifying the consensus statements assisted the researcher in determining the principals' shared beliefs about the elements of mentoring support. Table 22 outlines consensus statements that were statistically significant.

As Table 22 indicates, there were two consensus statements identified by the PQMethod program as statistically significant. The two statements included Statement 23, "Effective mentoring support should provide a safe, risk-free environment in which the mentor and mentee openly share thoughts, feelings, frustrations, and concerns," and Statement 26, "Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving." For each of the four factors, the two statements were found to be consensus statements that ranked comparably, suggesting that all of the principals participating in the study felt similarly or the same about them. Statement 23 was placed at the upper end of the distribution grid in the +3 and

Table 22

Statistically Significant Consensus Statements

Statement	Factor One Value	Factor Two Value	Factor Three Value	Factor Four Value
23	4	3	3	4
26	0	0	0	0

+4 columns, indicating that the participants were in strong agreement about this particular statement and the element of mentoring support it represented. The principals' viewpoint about this particular statement was also apparent in the post-sort interviews, given how interwoven the element of a safe, risk-free environment was in their discussions of the factors related to trust, a focus on learning, and the mentor-mentee relationship. Statement 26 was universally placed in the 0 column for all four factors, falling across the middle of the grid. This suggests that either the participants were indifferent or neutral to this statement and the element of support it represented, or that they were uncertain about what to do with the element of problem-solving in terms of ranking its overall value to mentoring support and impact on building leadership capacity. Possibly, the principals perceived problem-solving as an embedded, inherent component within the elements of self-reflection, critical review of one's practices, acting in a non-judgmental way to help the mentee find solutions, and openly sharing ideas that were ranked with high values on the distribution grid. It can also be posited that the participants did not feel it necessary to tease out the element of problem-solving as one single or separate element for emphasis.

While Statements 23 and 26 were statistically significant as consensus statements, there are other consensus statements that were not statistically significant but yet worthy to note. Table 23 captures these additional consensus statements

The three consensus statements presented in Table 23 were additional statements that the principals ranked similarly among the four factors. All three statements fell on the positive side of the distribution grid with an "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" rating assigned by the participants. Statement 4, "Effective mentoring support requires that the mentor-mentee relationship be based

Table 23

Additional Consensus Statements

Statement	Factor One Value	Factor Two Value	Factor Three Value	Factor Four Value
4	4	4	2	4
5	2	2	1	3
24	3	3	1	3

on trust," was ranked in the +4, +4, +2, and +4 columns of the distribution grid. This ranking reflects and captures the importance the participants attached to trust as an element of effective mentoring support. In fact, trust represented a common, unified thread running through the principals' discussion of the factors and the insights they offered. While on the positive side of the continuum and mildly agreed with by the participants, Statement 5, "Effective mentoring support requires confidentiality between the mentor and the beginning principal," closely links with the arena in which the principals viewed trust and a safe, risk-free environment. Statement 24, "Effective mentoring support requires the mentor to be approachable, available, and responsive to the mentor," was placed in the +3, +3, +1, and +3 columns of the continuum, indicating a solid assertion among the participants that this element is important to the mentoring process. As reflected in the post-sort interviews and surveys, this statement undergirds the behavioral characteristics the principals detailed about an individual serving in a mentor role and the critical responsiveness and flexibility that must be exercised in meeting their mentee's needs.

Study Findings and Literature Review

This section presents a connection of the study's findings to the literature on mentoring support as reviewed in Chapter 2. The comparative discussion specifically highlights findings that are consistent with the literature. The discussion draws upon the analysis of the findings and information gathered from the Q-sorts, emerging factors, post-sort surveys, and post-sort interviews. The findings in the current study were consistent with many of the claims presented in the literature, with principals identifying many similar elements of mentoring support as important and critical to the effectiveness of mentoring in building leadership capacity. In

addition to drawing connections and similarities, this section will also speak to the findings that are inconsistent with the literature.

Response to Leadership Challenges in a High-Stakes Accountability Era

In an environment of educational reform initiatives and increasingly growing expectations and accountability for student achievement, the literature casts a spotlight on school leadership; it calls for the need to reshape the principal's role and, accordingly, retool and expand the leadership skillsets and competencies necessary for effectively leading today's schools. Just one example illustrating the evolving complex and multifaceted aspects of the principal's role is the increased attention placed on the principal's capacity to demonstrate strong, focused instructional leadership. The attention directed to why school leadership is important is seemingly shifting to a discussion in which the topic is elevated to talent development—how to train, retain, and support high-quality leadership. The literature captures the need to provide principals, especially novice principals, with layers of support. This need for focused and intensive support is especially true for beginning principals as they transition to their new role for the first time and, as such, the literature review highlights the value and merit of mentoring (DeVita et al, 2007; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Mitgang, 2013; Villani, 2006). Over and over, through the post-sort surveys and interviews, the principals participating in the current study voiced this same position and need. Their views about the need for mentoring support were targeted on leadership development for beginning principals, and the principals repeatedly and emphatically used descriptive words and/or phrases such as "critical," "vital," "essential," "priority," "so very needed," "should be mandatory," and "an absolute for a new principal stepping into the role today." Without question, the principals were in agreement about how the

principal's role has changed and continues to evolve in light of community, district, and state expectations, as well as high-stakes accountability measures. They asserted that there is a critical need for and significant value to providing mentoring support for beginning principals. For instance, Participant 6 stated, "The absence of such support means we leave the development of leadership to chance."

As stated earlier, to meet the expectations and demands for increased student achievement and school outcomes, the literature places a notable emphasis on the need for the principal to be a skilled instructional leader. School effectiveness research promotes that school leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). In the context of raising student achievement results and leading any necessary reform initiatives, the principal has emerged as the key person instrumental in these efforts. Literature points to the principal's leadership as one of the most critical, pivotal elements essential for impacting teaching and learning, thereby improving school success. The literature notes that the principal should be viewed and positioned as the chief learning officer, responsible for creating the conditions, structures, and environment supportive of and focused on teacher effectiveness, high-quality teaching and learning, and increased student achievement results (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005; Murphy & Orr, 2009; Peterson, 2002) A report by Educational Research Services (2000) claims, "Without the principal's leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed" (p. 1).

This strong focus on instructional leadership found in the literature is consistent with the viewpoints and perceptions contributed from the participants in the Factor Three group,

Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability. During the post-sort interview, all of the Factor Three participants unanimously stressed the critical need for the principal to be an effective instructional leader. In fact, they cited instructional leadership as the most important competency area for principals and as such, believed that mentoring support should be tailored to helping beginning principals develop and grow in instructional leadership skills and capacity. Collectively, the principals pointed to community expectations and the urgency to move a school forward in raising student achievement as the driving influence for ranking instructional leadership skills so highly in the Q-sort. As reflected in the viewpoints offered by Participant 9, attention must be devoted to instructional leadership in response to current accountability measures and what is expected of principals today; therefore, the importance of mentoring support having a focus on this domain of leadership cannot be underemphasized. Participant 7 stated, "Student achievement is why we do what we do and therefore, mentoring support must have a focus on instructional leadership" Participant 38 expressed a similar viewpoint, stating, "The principal's role is to increase student achievement and effective mentoring support should focus on helping the new principal develop instructional leadership skills and practices to impact student achievement." Likewise, Participant 35 stated, "Mentorship should be focused on the task at hand which is to develop strong instructional leaders."

The perceptions concerning instructional leadership as a crucial and necessary element of mentoring support are also seen captured in the views of the Factor Four group, Mentoring: Relationship is Key. Out of the purposeful relationship that is developed and continuously nurtured between mentor and mentee, the two are in a position where they can naturally engage in candid, transparent, and in-depth discussions about instruction and student achievement.

These strong viewpoints of mentoring support in terms of its focus and elements regarding instructional leadership, as offered by the principals in the Factor Three group as well as the Factor Four group, mirror themes represented throughout the literature. Like the principals in the study who capitalized upon the opportunity that mentoring support affords the mentor and mentee to openly and critically examine such areas as instructional programming, instructional strategies, assessments, and teacher performance, the literature also identifies the need for mentoring support to focus on developing a principal's capacity to lead as an instructional leader, one who is knowledgeable of instructional practices and the organizational structures and systems that support high student achievement (Davis et al., 2005). Based on mentees' identified needs and outcomes gleaned through their experiences as reflected in the literature, mentoring support is viewed as helping to equip new principals with the skills and knowledge necessary for focusing on instructional improvement and leading organizational change in addressing critical teaching and learning issues. The principals in the current study and the literature similarly assert that, in contrast to focusing on managerial tasks, mentoring needs to rise to a new level of focus on instructional leadership. In essence, a mentoring program can play a significant role in fostering leaders of change that can transform the instructional focus and environment of a school (Barry & Kaneko, 2002; Davis et al., 2005; Gray et al., 2007; Mitgang, 2007). The literature further highlights that mentoring programs should be designed and structured based on standards for fostering instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning (Villani, 2006; Wallace Foundation, 2006).

Both the Factor Three and Factor Four groups highlighted the interconnectedness of instructional leadership and strategic leadership. Participant 6 stated, "Mentoring support

challenges the conventional thinking of the mentee and assists the mentee in strategic planning that will enhance teaching and learning." Participant 11 emphasized this idea of interconnectedness by stating, "Instructional leadership and strategic leadership go hand in hand and as such, the skillsets in these two areas compliment and support each other in yielding school results" (personal communication, October 2, 2015). Elaborating further, Participant 11 pointed to the alignment of structures and strategic leadership practices as a way to provide the conditions for moving a school forward. The literature notably reveals similar themes that speak to strategic leadership as it relates to and supports effective instructional leadership. Comparably, just as Participant 11 referenced "the conditions" the principal must structure and foster, the literature also highlights the principal as having the instrumental role in strategically creating conditions such as instructional focus, culture, and a learning environment that support and impact student achievement (Crow, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005). Looking further at the connection that the literature makes between instructional and strategic leadership, Leithwood et al. (2009) identified four categories of essential strategic practices in support of instructional leadership: (1) setting direction, (2) developing people, (3) redesigning the organization, and (4) managing the instructional program through strategic allocation of resources and support.

These practices, as identified above by Leithwood et al. (2009), correspond with many items that this study's principals touched upon when sharing their perspectives concerning the Factor Three sort; these include, but are not limited to, setting vision for academic achievement, developing teachers' capacity, data analysis, school culture, and professional learning communities. In terms of instructional leadership, Participant 13 stated, "Mentoring support

helps the new principal see the importance of having a vision so that [the] staff knows the direction you are going—instructionally and academically for achievement" (personal communication, October 2, 2015). Participant 6 echoed this idea, stating, "Having a strategic vision for instruction sets the foundation for direction and the health of the school. Without it, [the] direction is uncertain and student achievement is left to happen accidentally."

In speaking to mentoring and its need as a support system for beginning principals, the literature quite often references a shift in the focus of school leadership that must occur from a management focus to a much needed instructional focus. While teaching and learning have always been among the areas attended to by a principal in his/her leadership in some scope or fashion, the average-to-flattened student achievement results across school districts and the high-stakes accountability arena in which schools now operate have arguably elevated the need to demonstrate the capacity for strong instructional leadership with depth as an essential competence in the principal's role. This theme is interwoven throughout the viewpoints expressed by principals in all four factor groups when describing and discussing their respective factor Q-sorts. As Participant 13 stated, "Years ago, mentor support would have fallen at the lower end in the managerial realm, whereas now it should be much more focused on instruction" (personal communication, October 2, 2015). The participants in the Factor Three group, Mentoring: Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability, when processing the outcome of their respective Factor Q-Sort and offering their related viewpoints, described that the impact of change on student achievement is greater as you move from the left to the right of the grid in terms of the elements reflected. The elements captured at the higher end of the distribution grid for the Factor Three group speak to instructional leadership skills that impact achievement and

teacher evaluation, skills for developing and implementing a strategic plan, and skills for analyzing data for instructional planning. The Factor Three group agreed that the elements at the upper end of the sort represent a higher, complex set of skills that mentoring support needs in order to help a new principal develop.

Similarly, the Factor Four group, Mentoring: Relationship is Key, described their respective sort as representing a scaffold process with managerial-related elements falling at the lower end of the grid, and then building to the higher end to depict much more complex elements that nurture and support the capacity for other skillsets to develop. The Factor Two group viewed their respective factor sort as a continuum reflecting movement from fundamental, textbook-oriented skillsets at the lower end, to higher levels of learning and competencies at the upper end.

"Learning" as the Driving Focus of Mentoring

As mentoring experiences and mentoring support are described in the literature, it highlights how learning should be a primary purpose and fundamental focus of mentoring. The literature captures the critical need for mentoring to have a learner-oriented approach, and for the relationship to be a dynamic, ongoing process that supports the mentor and mentee going through different stages of learning and growth (Daresh, 2001; Zachary, 2000, 2005). Similar themes are seen reflected in the viewpoints and perceptions expressed by participants in the Factor Two group, Mentoring: A Safe Place to Learn. The Factor Two group participants described the mentoring process as a journey of continuous learning that helps the new principal grow into his/her own as a leader. The participants placed a priority on learning and, given their personal experiences, they identified critical elements that support and contribute to the learning process; these include, but are not limited to, elements such as safe, trusting environment; self-

reflection, confidentiality; processes of inquiry and problem-solving; and mentor approachability.

Concurrent with the literature, a benefit often identified by a mentee from his/her mentoring support received is the opportunity to self-reflect and gain insight into one's own values, style, and actions. As Participant 17 stated, "When a positive, nurturing support system is in place that includes such components as relationship, trust, commitment, and confidentiality, all of the 'learning' about leadership and leadership standards will be more easily supported and developed." Participant 27 similarly stressed, "It [mentoring] is not about giving textbook answers. It is about helping the mentee learn and develop skillsets necessary for reflective thinking and problem-solving" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Participant 2 proclaimed a similar sentiment by discouraging the mentoring support from simply trying to create a carbon copy of the mentor but instead, allowing the mentoring support to engage the beginning principal in a learning process to think critically, discover new knowledge, and develop skillsets. Furthermore, Participant 27 referenced the learning afforded through the mentoring process as an opportunity for safe harbor to fail forward and to learn from it. Collectively, there was much energy from the Factor Three group during the post-sort interview in emphasizing the need for mentoring support to be fluid in nature, responsive to the learning needs of the new principal. This characterization of mentoring aligns with the literature that, as stated earlier, describes mentoring as a dynamic process, and which draws attention to the importance of mentoring being a self-directed relationship driven by the learning needs of the mentee (Zachary, 2005).

When learning is the driving focus that shapes how mentoring support is approached and delivered, the principals in this study claimed that the mentoring relationship encourages and fosters active collaboration and sharing. In turn, they maintained, this leads to reciprocal learning for both the mentor and mentee, a powerful value-added benefit of the mentoring process. The literature also points to this reciprocal support, as captured from studies of mentors' and mentees' experiences, by describing the mentoring arrangement as a two-way process for learning and professional development. When committed to and actively engaged in discussions related to professional issues, peer-to-peer, both the mentor and mentee grow in new ideas and perspectives, enhance teaching and coaching skills, improve problem analysis, and gain richer insight into professional practices (Daresh, 2001, 2004; Mitgang, 2007).

Fostering the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

The literature indicates that, to foster the necessary support for a beginning principal, the mentor should be one who listens, acts non-judgmental, offers confidentiality, demonstrates trust and respect, and exhibits open and enthusiastic behavior (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Walker & Stott, 1994). Parallel themes are notably reflected in the statements sorted and the viewpoints expressed by principals in the Factor One group, Mentoring: Trust is The Prerequisite. The elements of trust and a safe, risk-free environment surfaced as the highest-ranked statements in the Factor One sort. During the post-sort interview conducted with the Factor One subgroup, each principal echoed the isolation and loneliness of the job and emphasized the importance and value of having a mentor-mentee relationship established on a solid foundation of trust. Participant 4 remarked, "It is a lonely job to a large degree and where you can find that trust, you

cling to it and it is the mentor with whom you can find that trust" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Participant 26 further added,

> Trust ranks high as a critical element because in our position we do not often have that person at a level that falls beneath the principal's position who you can turn to at early stages in your career and have the trust you may need to discuss critical issues. (personal communication, September 10, 2015).

Participant 39 stated, "Trust and a safe relationship must be established for authentic communication. Trust and care provide avenues for the mentor to support the mentee's growth and any transformative change and development." Reflecting a similar belief, Participant 29 stated:

> The right environment—risk free and confidential—is critical to the growth of the mentee. If there is no trust in the relationship, then the mentee will be guarded and not provide honest input or feedback. For me the elements that are the easiest to assign a high value of importance to the effectiveness of mentoring support are trust, openness, and safe environment.

When examining the research literature that captures feedback from new principals who have received mentoring support, it is apparent that the elements the participants of this study identified as key to effective mentoring share a common thread that runs through the benefits mentees identify from their experiences. Among some of the benefits reported by mentees, as gleaned from the literature, include:

- Reduced isolation and loneliness as a beginning principal
- Support, counsel, guidance, and empathy from a principal mentor

- Opportunity to learn from the mentor in an environment and relationship characterized by trust, confidentiality, encouragement, and without fear of judgment (Daresh, 2001; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Lester et al., 2011)

Notably, the findings of the current study revealed that the principals stand on common ground in how they perceive the element of trust and its importance to the effectiveness of mentoring support. In all four factor groups, the element of trust was ranked among the higher-valued statements of the factor sorts, and was identified in post-sort interviews and surveys as a critical component to mentoring support. The consensus that binds the principals around this element illustrates how the element of trust resonates with principals as they described the effectiveness, health, and productivity of the mentoring relationship. Across the factor groups, regardless of the overarching theme that emerged, the principals described trust within that factor as a fundamental building block for the mentoring relationship, an inherent ingredient to the mentoring support provided. This perception of the principals in the current study correlates with the literature that characterizes the mentoring relationship and/or identifies benefits of the mentoring support provided.

As principals discussed the elements of mentoring they perceived to be most influential in developing a new principal's leadership capacity, the discussion often naturally led them to speak to the characteristics and traits they viewed important for a mentor to possess and demonstrate in a mentoring relationship. The insights offered by the principal participants as related to mentor selection and its importance to the mentoring relationship are supported in the literature. The literature highlights the care that needs to be exercised in selecting principals to

serve as mentors, noting that it takes a special set of skills to serve in a mentor role. A careful match between mentor and mentee is critical to a developmental relationship; just as it is false to assume that years of experience automatically equates to one's effectiveness in a mentor role, lack of an appropriate personality match and lack of professional expertise can result in problematic areas that negatively impact the ability to support a beginning principal's leadership growth (Daresh, 2001; Ehrich et al., 2004; Hall, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). In addition to demonstrating trust, non-judgmental behaviors, and active listening, the mentor should possess the ability to teach and coach, share knowledge and practices, encourage reflection, and provide constructive feedback (Cohn & Sweeney, 1992; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). Furthermore, when selecting an individual to serve in the role of a mentor, a school district should look to an experienced principal's proven leadership effectiveness in impacting student achievement (Gray et al., 2007). This point, in particular, aligns with the Factor Two group, Mentoring: A Safe Place to Learn, in which principals asserted that mentors need to be deeply grounded in curriculum, instructional strategies, and teaching practices.

Findings Inconsistent with the Literature

While there are many similarities between the literature and the principals' perceptions reflected in the findings of this study, there are some differences to note. Based on the experiences reported by mentees and captured through mentoring effectiveness studies, the literature occasionally points to the need for the mentoring relationship to be structured with defined expectations, delineated responsibilities, identification of specific learning goals and outcomes, a system of accountability, and agreed-upon number of times for the mentor and mentee to meet face-to-face. Principals in the current study, however, did not identify these

elements of the mentoring relationship as critical or essential to the effectiveness of mentoring. In fact, this study's participants identified quite the opposite. While they frequently touched upon the importance of regular, open communication coupled with a mentor's availability and responsiveness as important, the principals in the current study described the relationship as needing to be fluid, almost organic in nature, and responsive to and driven by the needs of the beginning principals.

Interestingly, the principals indicated that an established agreement outlining formally written goals, timelines, and other such factors would not be a positive thing; they felt this would foster a climate in which the relationship is potentially viewed as one of compliance, based more on checklists as opposed to evolving and taking shape as differentiated support in accordance with the needs of the mentee. As described by Participant 4, the relationship needs to be "tight and loose" (personal communication, September 10, 2015), tight on the front end with the match of the mentor and mentee and understanding of the overall purpose and framework for the mentoring support, but loose enough to grow to what it needs to be for the mentee. Participant 26 stated, "[Mentoring] does not have to follow a rigid meeting schedule and protocol to be effective. The mentoring support should be flexible, adaptive, and needs-based" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Similarly, Participant 25 indicated that the mentoring should not be such a structured program that it does not respect the strengths in skillsets the mentee already possesses; it should be flexible and based on the needs of the beginning principal. Echoing similar themes, both Participants 5 and 22 reported that any statements in the Q-sort referencing structure and regularly scheduled meetings were elements that they ranked in the "Most Strongly Disagree" column of the distribution grid. Participant 5 noted, "While it is

important to meet regularly, it is important that the structure often imposed upon these programs not dictate the direction of the meetings. The [mentoring] relationship should work because it is meeting the needs of the new principal." Participant 22 comparably stated, "I do not feel that a highly structured and regimented program is essential for the mentoring program to be effective. There needs to be more fluidity. Both flexibility and responsiveness are necessary."

Akin to the structural aspects of the mentoring relationship and support is the length of time during which mentoring support is provided to a new principal. Some literature highlights the value in having mentoring support provided for one to possibly two years. Mitgang (2007) states that, as a guideline for strengthening and sustaining mentoring programs, "Mentoring should be provided for at least a year, and ideally two or more years, in order to give new leaders the necessary support as they develop from novices to self-assured leaders of change." During the post-sort interviews, it was interesting to hear this study's principals expressing viewpoints that addressed providing mentoring support to a principal candidate prior to the formal appointment to the role. Within the context of succession planning, the principals proposed the notion of providing a "high flier" assistant principal who is viewed as a likely soon-to-be principal candidate mentoring support up to a year before an official appointment. Of the factor groups, the Factor Three group, Mentoring: Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability, particularly emphasized this idea, given the importance they placed on using mentoring support to build instructional leadership capacity. The participants leveraged this early support system as an avenue for having an experienced mentor work closely with the assistant principal in facilitating conversations about instruction as well as examining instructional practices, teacher performance, and teacher feedback.

Aside from the strong value placed on instructional leadership, the principals did not respond in a similar manner in how they ranked other skillsets that they felt mentoring support should address in building leadership capacity. Other skillsets represented in the Q-sort statements as gleaned from the literature included, but were not limited to, areas such as human resources, budget, teacher evaluation and feedback, problem-solving, and leading change. As the study principals discussed the sorts for their respective factor groups and reflected upon why they ranked these skillsets with a lower value, they often referred to the skillsets identified above as foundational, ones already expected to be inherent in a school-based leadership position prior to becoming a principal. Participant 9 claimed:

> The attributes and skillssets at the lower end of the grid are ones that should already have been cultivated and in place as assistant principals. If you are not already performing some of these skillsets well, the challenge of being a principal is going to be even greater. (personal communication, October 2, 2015)

Principals across the factor groups described these skillsets as falling more into the managerial realm. Participant 7 stated simplistically, “These skillsets are basics,” while Participant 2 stated:

> The elements and skillsets at the mid- to lower end of the grid will always be present throughout the tenure of the principal and can be reinforced by the mentor along the way, but the more complex elements are at the upper end and where the energy and priority in the mentoring support should be placed. The elements reflected in the upper, higher-ranked end are the ones that will sustain you. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Emerging Themes from the Factors

The four factors identified in the study paved the path for a broader set of themes to emerge. The themes capture the essence of the elements of mentoring support that principals deem critical to helping new principals grow professionally. This section presents and discusses these emerging themes.

Trust

One theme from this research and its findings is that trust is essential to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship and mentoring support. As a common thread running through all four factors that emerged, trust held a prominent place in the principals' discussions during post-sort interviews as they shared their viewpoints and perceptions about elements key to mentoring support and its impact on building leadership capacity. It was common to hear principals describe trust as "the essential ingredient," "the building block," "the foundation," and "the linchpin" for the mentoring relationship.

The principals expressed a strong conviction that trust opens and sets the pathway for the mentoring relationship to develop, allowing any element of mentoring support to authentically take hold and fall into place. In essence, trust sets the trajectory for the type and level of support mentoring services will provide. In listening to the principals' viewpoints, trust is the variable that influences and drives the climate within which the mentor and mentee work; the authenticity, genuineness, and transparency of the issues discussed; the openness and willingness to share concerns, thoughts, ideas, and strategies; the vulnerability for discussing challenges and expressing emotions; the depth in which topics are examined; and in the end, the opportunity to truly support and yield professional growth and capacity building for the mentee. Conceptually,

trust can be seen perceived by the principals as the lever that takes mentoring from remaining on the surface delivered in a superficial manner to an in-depth, rich, impactful level that proves to be transformative to the beginning principal's professional growth. The principals held no reservations in declaring that without trust, little can be expected in terms of growth, positive change, or beneficial outcomes for the mentee's leadership capacity.

In examining the element of trust deeper and why principals report it as so critical to mentoring support, it is noteworthy to highlight how Tschannen-Moran (2014) speaks to trust in the context of school leadership and schools, writing:

> We live in an era in which all of our social institutions and their leaders have come under unprecedented scrutiny. As a result, trust has become increasingly difficult for leaders to earn and maintain in our complex and rapidly changing world. This trend away from trust poses a special challenge for school leaders because trust is so vital for schools in fulfilling their fundamental mission of teaching students to be engaged and productive citizens. Understanding the nature and meaning of trust in schools has, therefore, taken on added urgency and importance. School leaders need to appreciate and cultivate the dynamics of trust to reap its benefits for greater student achievement as well as improved organizational adaptability and productivity. Without trust, schools are unlikely to be successful in their efforts to improve and to realize their core purpose (p. x).

In reading the passage above, one can draw a parallel to why principals in this study tended to lean toward trust as one of the most essential and influential elements of mentoring support. The focus on trust transcends beyond the mentoring support to the scope of long-term work the new principal (or any veteran principal) will face in leading his/her school and school community.

Tschannen-Moran (2014) defines trust as “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (p. 19). A description of the five facets of trust as outlined in the definition is summarized in Table 24. Interestingly, a number of behaviors, actions, and/or characteristics that the principals in this study cited when discussing trust in the mentoring relationship are reflected in the descriptions outlined for the five facets of trust.

Safe, Risk-Free Environment

Closely connected to the theme of trust that encompasses all of the factors emerging from the study is the theme of a safe, risk-free environment. In fact, this theme of a safe environment was an integrated and interlocked component of the discussion focused on trust, almost viewed as going hand-in-hand. Describing it as a sequential flow, the principals noted that trust established in the mentor-mentee relationship leads to a safe climate and environment; this then creates a willingness to take risks and, in turn, leads to authentic learning and growth. It is a cyclical process with each element playing its role of importance in the support provided to a beginning principal, the health and productiveness of the mentoring relationship, and the growth experienced. A safe zone to take risks in exposing emotions, sharing challenges, disclosing skill deficiencies, offering constructive, honest feedback, and simply asking for help sets the framework for learning and promotes a growth mindset.

Commitment to Grow Others as Leaders

A third broad and encompassing theme generated from the findings of the current study is the emotional commitment and passion that the mentor brings to helping develop and grow other leaders through the mentoring process. Across the factor groups, principals stressed the

Table 24

Five Facets of Trust

Facet	Description
Benevolence	Caring, extending goodwill, demonstrating positive intentions, supporting teachers, expressing appreciation for faculty and staff efforts, being fair, guarding confidential information
Honesty	Showing integrity, telling the truth, keeping promises, honoring agreements, being authentic, accepting responsibility, avoiding manipulation, being real, being true to oneself
Openness	Maintaining open communication, sharing important information, delegating, sharing decision-making, sharing power
Reliability	Being consistent, being dependable, showing commitment, expressing dedication, exercising diligence
Competence	Buffering teachers from outside disruptions, handling difficult situations, setting standards, pressing for results, working hard, setting an example, problem-solving, resolving conflict, being flexible

Note. (Tschannen-Moran. 2014).

importance for the mentor to be “present” and actively engaged in the relationship, demonstrating behaviors and actions that reflect both mental and emotional commitment to helping build capacity in the new leader. As principals shared insights and viewpoints about mentoring support, this notion of commitment surfaced as such an important and powerful criterion that influences many aspects of the mentoring process and support. Based on the findings and the principals’ discussions, it became apparent that there is almost a causal relationship between the mentor’s level of commitment to how the other components of mentoring will take shape and how the mentee will engage in and respond to the mentoring support. For example, a commitment to grow leadership capacity will lead to a greater certainty that the mentoring support will be grounded in a learner-oriented approach, with learning as the fundamental process and purpose as opposed to a structure limited in scope strictly focused on checklists. There will be greater probability that the learning process and related support will be responsive to and driven by the needs of the beginning principal.

In addition to structuring this fluid process and exercising flexibility that is responsive to the mentee’s learning needs, this theme of mentor commitment directly affects so many of the other elements that principals in the study perceived to be influential to effective mentoring support. Such elements of mentoring support impacted by a mentor’s commitment include, but are not limited to, the relationship itself and its evolution; trust; risk-free, non-judgmental behaviors; self-reflection; inquiry-based processes; mentee empowerment; and the opportunity to dig deep into complex, challenging issues such as instruction and student achievement, in contrast to managerial-focused areas that can be part of any onboarding support program.

Research Questions Revisited

The journey for this current study started by first seeking to investigate the research question: What do educational researchers and practitioners consider as the most important elements of mentoring support for developing a new principal's leadership capacity? To answer this question, an extensive literature review was conducted that captured the best thinking to date as related to the essential elements of mentoring support. The literature pointed to the importance and value of mentoring support for new principals as they transition to the leadership role, especially given the growing challenges and complexities facing school leadership today. To add to the scholarly literature review and the examination of previous studies, input was collected from current practitioners. Elements of mentoring support, as identified and gleaned from these sources, served as a central component of the research conducted to answer the second research question.

The second research question asked: What elements of mentoring support do experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity? To answer this query, the current study sought to gain insight and an understanding of principals' perceptions, beliefs, and opinions about the elements critical to effective mentoring support. The mixed-methods research approach of Q-methodology was the research design used to answer the question by scientifically examining and quantifying human subjectivity (Militello & Benham, 2010). As such, it was an appropriate research method for the current study. A set of 42 statements, representing elements of mentoring support, was culled from the literature review and the practitioners' input. Participants in the study were asked to sort the statements in a forced distribution, based on their perceptions and views about mentoring support for new principals.

The sorts were factor-analyzed, and findings revealed four interesting and distinct viewpoints of how experienced principals believe new principals can be best supported through mentoring. These four perspectives offered invaluable insight in how important and essential the principals considered trust, a learning-oriented approach, a focus on developing instructional leadership capacity, and the relational aspects of the mentor-mentee support.

The third research question focused on gaining insight into why the experienced principals identify these elements as most effective. The research question was answered by facilitating in-depth qualitative work with the participants who loaded significantly on each of the four factors. Through post-sort interviews with the participants and an examination of post-sort surveys, a rich, contextualized understanding of the forces that nurture and obstruct this important work of mentoring was obtained.

Implications

Based on the findings and information derived from the current study, there are implications for policy, research, and educational practice. This section first presents suggestions for policy development and/or changes as related to mentoring support. Second, suggestions for further research on mentoring support for beginning principals are discussed. Finally, the section devotes attention to the implications for practitioners in the field, including district and school-based leaders.

Implications for Policy

As discussed, the environment of high-stakes accountability and the increased focus on raising student achievement have attributed to the growing complexities of school leadership. Consequently, heighted attention needs to be directed to providing meaningful and targeted

support to beginning principals as they transition to the role of leading today's schools. While the skillsets and competencies have expanded and broadened across many facets of school leadership, there is a marked need for there to be a driving focus on helping new principals grow in instructional leadership capacity, as gleaned both from the literature and the findings of this study. The literature points to the value of mentoring, and likewise all of the principals in the current study voiced strong agreement about the critical need for mentoring support. Across all factor groups, principals were unified in their beliefs that mentoring could no longer be sporadic or random in its delivery and approach; instead, mentoring needs to be an expected, unquestioned level of support provided to any beginning principal. As such, this topic is ripe for policy at both the district and state levels.

The highlighted need for mentoring support provides districts as well as states with the opportunity to develop and adopt policy that clearly outlines the expectation that mentoring support will be structured and delivered to early career principals if policy is not already in place. Policy can be the vehicle for fostering a cultural norm within school districts that speaks to the recognized need for and value of mentoring support. The findings from this study can be used to shape the language of policy, focusing on mentoring as a learning process driven by the beginning principals' learning needs—all targeted and differentiated in support of building, growing, and enhancing a new principal's leadership capacity. Having a policy that directly addresses mentoring support for beginning principals will validate the need and purpose for mentoring while also promoting the development of true leadership versus mere survivorship. Without policy calling for the implementation of mentoring support, mentoring is left to chance and inconsistency, resulting in an increased likelihood that the new principal will operate more

out of a crisis, survival mode rather than receiving the opportunity for professional growth that mentoring could offer and support.

Policy may ebb and flow, and district leaders are typically in the role to present recommended policy to the governing board of elected officials for adoption; this is why it is important for these leaders to be cognizant of the themes related to effective mentoring that surfaced in this study. To be attentive to and supportive of development for school-based leadership within one's respective school district, as well as to set the stage for policy adoption, it is important for district leaders to increase policymakers' understanding of the need for mentoring support, as well as to share how the themes, as generated in this study, can inform and drive policy development to address mentoring. The themes presented can be influential in how policy is shaped in terms of expectations outlined, components to address, and language to include.

Policy can influence and direct funding. In turn, funding can impact resources secured to support high-quality mentoring as well as training for principals to serve in the capacity of mentors. Funding can add a level of accountability to the implementation of mentoring support. Within policy, a district can implement language that speaks to measuring the efficacy of mentoring support and its impact on leadership behaviors and leadership capacity. Consequently, it can serve as a basis for ensuring fidelity in the support provided, along with a basis for continuous improvement focused on consistently strengthening the mentoring support provided.

Implications for Research

By using Q-methodology as the research method for the current study, emerging perspectives were identified in relationship to mentoring support. Participating in a Q-

methodological study was a new learning experience for the majority, if not all, of the principals involved in the study. A significant number of the principals shared how much they enjoyed completing the Q-sort, stating that the activity challenged them to exercise much reflective thinking and think deeply about mentoring support. Through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher was able to capture the experienced principals' perceptions and beliefs about the elements of effective mentoring support. The analysis of the findings prompted additional ideas to surface for research and exploration. While these ideas fell outside of the scope of this study, they have implications for future research. The following areas are potential opportunities for further research that can continue to add to this body of knowledge and increase understanding of effective mentoring support.

- The current study was limited to experienced principals within one single North Carolina school district. Researchers can build upon and expand this study by including principals throughout other districts of North Carolina and even the United States.
- Instead of having a P-sample that includes principals who are representative of all grade levels and varied in years of experience as in the sample for the current study, researchers could conduct the same study with a specific, more narrowed subgroup of principals. For example, a study could be conducted with elementary school, middle school, or high school principals only to determine any differences that potentially exist for leaders serving at the elementary level or leading at the secondary level.
- The current study captured the perceptions of experienced principals. Future research could focus on studying the perceptions and views of new, first-year principals only.

- With the emphasis principals placed on the element of trust, both through the Q-sorts and the post-sort interviews, a research study could be conducted solely on the topic of trust to gain greater understanding and insight into this element within the context of school leadership.
- Researchers could conduct a study that focuses on the statements falling in the middle of the Q-sort distribution in an effort to gain deeper insight in this specific set of elements.
- While attention was given to having very clear, precise statements for the Q-sort, Statement 26, "Effective mentoring support helps the new principal become skilled in critical problem-solving," could be further unpacked and researched. The statement fell in the middle across the board for all four factors, indicating the likelihood of it falling into a vacuum of uncertainty for the principals in terms of its value to the mentoring process.
- While there were statements reflective of other elements related to and supportive of instructional leadership within the total group of Q-statements for this study, additional research could be conducted that directly centers on instructional leadership, unpacking and researching further the components of this leadership domain as it is tied to mentoring support.
- Although this study focused on the perceptions of school-based leaders currently serving as principals, there is opportunity to conduct further research examining the perceptions and viewpoints of individuals involved in university programs designed

to prepare a future generation of school leaders for one day assuming the principal's role.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the current study and the viewpoints expressed by the principals reinforce the need for and the importance of mentoring support for beginning principals. The current study can help district leaders and other practitioners realize and more readily accept that mentoring is a valid and valuable support system. Repeatedly, in the post-sort surveys and post-sort interviews, principals asserted that mentoring support is essential and necessary given the growing leadership challenges and complexities. The principals stated with conviction that leadership development, especially for new, beginning principals, should not be left to chance. Instead, purposeful and intentional work should be dedicated to ensuring that mentoring support is offered. Once practitioners recognize, accept, and internalize the value of mentoring, they are more likely to step forth with a commitment to this important work. The findings can be very affirming for practitioners in seeing that this is the "right work" in supporting beginning principals; therefore, the findings have the potential to motivate and energize practitioners to take action within their districts in deploying a program of mentoring support. There is additional opportunity for the findings to help support practitioners' advocacy for strong mentoring programs.

All too often, however, as pointed out in the literature, mentoring support is haphazard, fragmented, or sporadic in its delivery. The value of mentoring will not be realized if little consideration is given to the planning of what mentoring should look like in a school district. While the current study helps districts see the value in mentoring, its findings can also help

practitioners address the program focus of mentoring. As the findings support, school districts need to view mentoring as a form of instruction with both the mentor and mentee proactively engaged in the learning process. The mentoring support is targeted at developing true leadership, not survivorship or rescue from operating in crisis mode. Practitioners can glean from the findings that mentoring needs to be flexible and responsive to the mentee's needs. Leveraging the viewpoints shared by the principals, the practitioners can use the findings to avoid the pitfalls of allowing mentoring to become overly structured and regimented, filled with timelines, due dates, and checklists. While outlining expectations for the mentoring support from the outset can be of value, the findings of this study caution practitioners from employing such a highly structured approach to mentoring; such a too-structured approach is likely to include tightly-defined learning goals, tasks, and performance benchmarks that result in one losing sight of the need for fluidity in the process and the ability to adapt to the needs of the mentee. As the principals highlighted, one must strike a balance between tight and loose structure to personalize and tailor the mentoring support for the respective mentee.

Just as the findings can cement for practitioners the value of mentoring, the findings also captured practitioners' attention on instructional leadership as a primary focus of the mentoring support for beginning principals. Such a focus on this specific leadership domain cannot be overemphasized in light of the community expectations, accountability measures, and pressure for higher student achievement facing school leaders. In addition, instructional leadership often presents more complex issues and challenges, especially for a first-year principal. Practitioners can learn from the findings that instructional leadership falls much higher on the continuum of skillsets and competencies addressed through mentoring than skillsets of a managerial nature.

While managerial leadership certainly has its place in the total picture of school leadership and cannot just simply be overlooked, the need for strong instructional leadership is an important distinction for practitioners to capitalize upon in shaping the focus of mentoring and identifying desired outcomes.

The findings also have implications for practitioners to consider in regard to mentor selection. A resounding theme from the study that practitioners can use as a compass in guiding their work in this area is the need to secure individuals who have a passion and intrinsic desire to help others grow as leaders. As the principals in the study emphasized, the mentor must be committed both emotionally and mentally to the mentee whom they support, as well as to the overall mentoring relationship. In addition, the findings provide practitioners wtih insight into skillsets and characteristics that mentors must be able to demonstrate and utilize in providing meaningful and effective levels of support. Awareness and understanding of these skillsets can inform practitioners in how they approach the mentor selection process and any training that may be structured for individuals who serve in mentoring roles. Based on the findings of this study, practitioners may want to consider providing opportunities for mentor training in such areas as coaching skills, active listening, facilitative leadership, relationship building, and/or inquiry-based learning. Other critical skillsets calling for professional support for mentors include, but are not limited to, how to ask questions, support self-reflective practices, and provide constructive feedback with a growth mindset.

As learned from the study's findings, deliberate attention must be directed to helping mentors grow in their capacity to build and sustain trust. Practitioners will learn from the study that trust surfaced as a major theme; as such, trust presents significant implications for

practitioners as they support mentoring efforts. This study's findings demonstrate that trust is at the heart of the mentoring relationship and, without it, the mentoring relationship is likely to flounder in its efforts and potential to support beginning principals in their professional growth. Trust was viewed by the principals as the fundamental element that paves the way for authentic learning and professional growth.

Practitioners can additionally glean from the findings that the element of trust coupled with the host of other skillsets identified above are critical to the mentor's ability to establish the safe, risk-free environment and relationship that the principals characterized as crucial for supporting the mentoring process. It is important, though, for practitioners to first be keenly aware of the impact of these elements; in moving forward, they should remain ever-mindful of and attentive to the elements of effective mentoring support that can positively impact the development of a new principal's leadership capacity.

Lessons learned from the findings that can guide practice influential to the effectiveness of mentoring include the following outlined below.

- School districts need to recognize the importance and value of mentoring as a critical layer of support for beginning principals and, accordingly, adopt and implement strong, focused mentoring programs to support beginning principals, as opposed to leaving leadership development and support to chance and circumstance.
- Mentoring should have a focus on learning and be grounded in a learner-center paradigm.
- Mentoring support needs to be flexible, adaptive, and responsive to the mentee's learning needs.

- Mentoring should support building capacity in instructional leadership to positively impact instructional practices, student achievement, and teacher performance.
- Experienced principals who are considered by a school district to serve in a mentor role should possess and demonstrate a passionate commitment to grow others as leaders.
- Trust is essential to the effectiveness of mentoring and therefore, the mentor must demonstrate trustworthy leadership and be consistently mindful of the variables that attribute to a relationship of trust.
- A mentor must exercise intentionality in building and nurturing the mentor-mentee relationship itself in order to set the optimal stage for professional growth and support.
- The elements of trust, safe and risk-free environment, and relationships are critically important to the mentoring process, and therefore should influence the nature of training provided to those individuals selected to serve as mentors. Training support for mentors should address such skillsets as coaching, facilitating, active listening, inquiry-based learning, developing trust, and relationship-building.

Chapter Summary

This study was designed to identify the elements of mentoring support that principals perceive to be the most effective for helping beginning principals develop in their leadership capacity. In addition, the study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of why principals view these elements as so important to the mentoring process. Chapter 5 provided a summary of the study's findings and presented a discussion of the findings as related to the literature. The

chapter also presented implications for policy, future research, and educational practice that can be used to drive and shape mentoring support provided to beginning principals transitioning to their new role.

To answer the research questions for the study, Q-methodology was the method used to capture experienced principals' beliefs and perceptions about mentoring new principals. Through the collection of both quantitative data and qualitative data, Q-methodology allowed the researcher to investigate the subjective opinions of the principals. The principals participated in a Q-sort activity, sorting statements addressing elements of mentoring support. The participants sorted the statements in a forced distribution from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," based on their viewpoints and perceptions about mentoring for beginning principals. The data from the Q-sorts were entered in the statistical software program PQMethod, and the findings revealed four emerging factors for mentoring support. From the data analysis, a name was assigned to each of the four factors, including Trust is the Prerequisite (Factor One), A Safe Place to Learn (Factor Two), Instructional Leadership in an Era of Accountability (Factor Three), and Relationship is Key (Factor Four). For each one of the four factor groups, post-sort interviews were conducted with participants to clarify the statistical findings and further deepen the understanding of the principals' perceptions of the elements of mentoring support.

The findings in the current study were consistent with many elements of mentoring support identified in the literature. The principals were unified in their agreement about the importance of mentoring support, and valued it as an unquestionable and essential layer of support necessary for beginning principals. This conviction stemmed from their recognition of the increasing complexities and challenges faced in leading schools today. The principals viewed

mentoring as a channel of support for reducing isolation and preventing beginning principals from feeling that they are often operating out of mere survival mode. The study's findings indicated that principals perceive mentoring as support effective when it is learning-focused; responsive and adaptive to the mentee's needs; focused on developing instructional leadership capacity; grounded in trust; offers a safe, risk-free environment; and supported by a relationship characterized as authentic, transparent, and confidential. The principals emphasized that the individual serving in the mentor role is intrinsically tied to these elements that make mentoring support effective. As reflected in the views and experiences shared by the principals in this study, the mentor must have the commitment and passionate drive to grow others as leaders.

With the exception of instructional leadership, it is interesting to note that the principals in the study gave minimal priority to specific topic-oriented or skills-based areas such as finance, budget, personnel, or communications. Instead, principals leaned more toward the manner in which the mentor-mentee relationship is structured, approached, and delivered. The principals placed a high value on elements that are foundational and fundamental to the relationship and that, in their belief, are influential to even creating the opportunity and environment for learning, sharing of ideas, a willingness to demonstrate vulnerability and, in turn, professional growth. During a post-sort interview, one principal's remark in particular offered resounding insight when he referred to the elements as attributing to a safe harbor for a new principal to fail forward and to learn from it.

Notably, trust surfaced as an element critical to the effectiveness of mentoring support. This particular finding holds significant implications for how the mentor-mentee relationship is first approached, developed, and continuously nurtured. In addition, the importance of this

element in the mentoring process presents implications for mentor training and the necessary skillsets for serving in a mentoring capacity. Lessons learned and experienced from the mentor-mentee relationship as related to trust can transfer to the beginning principal's work in his/her own school when addressing school culture, leading change, and interacting with teachers, students, and parents within the school community. Trust, within the context of school leadership, presents an exciting and worthwhile field for future study.

Throughout my career, I have had a keen interest in leadership and leadership development. In my current role as Area Superintendent, I work directly with principals, providing them support, guidance, and focused professional learning as they lead their respective school and school community. I have the opportunity to witness firsthand the many challenges that beginning principals face and, as a result, the crucial support they need during the transitional stages to their new role. It is this reason that drives my passion and interest in learning more about high-quality mentoring support for beginning principals. This study has afforded me the opportunity to understand at a deeper level the elements of mentoring support that experienced principals in the field identify as influencing the effectiveness of mentoring, and thus having the most impact on developing a beginning principal's leadership capacity. The study's findings offered invaluable insight into the elements of mentoring support that warrant devoted attention and focus when structuring mentoring support on an individual basis or on an expanded district-level scale. The elements present areas for focus when equipping mentors with skillsets and/or providing training. Furthermore, the elements offer direction and a framework for developing and delivering a mentoring program for beginning principals.

When research reveals that the principal is second only to teaching in impacting student achievement, we cannot be complacent in the attention we direct to the professional development of our principals. There is too much at stake to leave leadership development to chance. As district leaders, we have a responsibility to continuously grow our leaders. In capitalizing upon the elements of mentoring support revealed in the study's findings, there is opportunity to deploy mentoring support framed in a growth mindset—a growth mindset that fosters and promotes a trusting, safe, and encouraging environment and support system for learning. The need for strong, effective leaders equipped with the skills and competencies necessary for the ever-changing educational landscape places the need for beginning principals to receive targeted, relevant mentoring support—front and center. In closing, this study and its findings support the merit of mentoring, identify elements critical to the effectiveness of mentoring support, and call for us to be intentional in addressing this need of support for beginning principals. Most simply put, mentoring matters.

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APPENDIX A: CARD SORT CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

East Carolina University

Consent to Take Part in Research that has Potentially Greater than Minimal Risk

Information You Should Think About Before Agreeing to Take Part in This Research

Title of Research Study: Principal's Perceptions About the Elements of Mentoring Support that Most Impact the Development of a New Principal's Leadership Capacity

Principal Investigator: Lloyd Gardner, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello

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Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand what elements of mentoring support experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity and why principals perceive these elements to be the most effective. As a current principal, you are being invited to take part in this research to seek your perceptions, viewpoints, and insights about mentoring support. You are being asked to take part in the study by participating in a Card Sort Exercise. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in the research is yours to make. You have the right to participate, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. By conducting this research, we hope to obtain findings to the following research questions:

1. What do educational researchers and practitioners consider as the most important elements of mentoring support for developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
2. What elements of mentoring support do experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
3. Why do these experienced principals identify these elements as most effective?

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be one of about 40 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are no known reasons for why you should not participate in this research study. In addition, there are no known risks to participating in the card sorting exercise.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?
You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?
The research will be conducted at Crossroads II Building, Room 1400A, 5625 Dillard Drive, Cary, NC 27518. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately one hour.

What will I be asked to do?
You will be asked to sort 42 cards. These cards have statements about mentoring support printed on them and your task will be to sort them according to your own beliefs and viewpoints. This process should take approximately one hour. After sorting the cards, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the statements and why you placed specific statements in certain areas on the distribution grid. In addition, you will be asked some general demographic data. Your card sort and your responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
We do not know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We do not know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?
ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UNCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?
The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely on a computer and in a location of which only the researcher has access. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?
You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at phone number 919-431-7748 (days, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email lygardner@wcpss.net.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (days, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?
The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

APPENDIX B: Q-SORT INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research study. In this process, you will sort and rank statements on a distribution grid from the statements with which you most agree to those with which you most disagree.

Instructions:

1. Lay out the column headings from -4 to +4 across the top of the table.
2. Please read through all 42 statement cards to become familiar with the statements.
3. Please read through the statements for a second time. As you read the statements, please organize them into three piles:
   - On the right side, place the cards with the statements with which you **most strongly agree**.
   - On the left, place the cards with the statements of which you **most strongly disagree.**
   - In the middle, place the cards that you feel more undecided about or that you are not in agreement with as much as those on the right or not in disagreement with as much as those statements on the left.
4. Beginning with the pile on the right, place the 2 cards that you most strongly agree with in the far right column (+4 marker) in any order.
5. Next, turning to your left side, place the 2 cards that you most strongly disagree with in the far left column (-4 marker) in any order.
6. Returning to the pile on the right, choose 4 cards that represent the next statements with which you agree and place these cards under marker +3, in any order.
7. Do the same with the pile on the left, following this pattern as you work your way to the center pile.
8. You are free to change your mind during the sorting process and switch items around as long as you maintain the requested number of items under each marker.
   - You should have 2 cards under markers +4 and -4.
   - You should have 4 cards under markers +3 and -3.
   - You should have 5 cards under markers +2 and -2.
   - You should have 6 cards under markers +1 and -1.
   - You should have 8 cards under marker 0.

9. Your sorted cards should match the diagram on the Q-Sort Distribution Grid handout. After sorting the cards, please record each card's specific number onto the Q-Sort Distribution Grid in the same order as you sorted the cards.
10. After sorting the cards, complete the Post-Sort Questionnaire and Demographic Information.
11. If you are willing to be interviewed about your card sort, please provide your contact information in the blank spaces for the last question of the Post-Sort Questionnaire.

APPENDIX C: Q-SORT DISTRIBUTION GRID SCORE SHEET

Participant Code _____

Instructions: Lay out the column headings as illustrated below in the distribution grid. For the card sorting activity, follow the Q-Sort instructions as outlined. Upon completion, please record the number printed on each statement card in the appropriate space below.

Strongly Disagree Neither Agree / Disagree Strongly Agree

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4

APPENDIX D: POST-SORT QUESTIONNAIRE AND

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Survey Questions

1. Consider the statement(s) you placed in the "Most Strongly Agree" columns of the distribution grid. Explain what these statements mean to you and why you placed them under "Most Strongly Agree".

2. Consider the statement(s) you placed in the "Most Strongly Disagree" columns of the distribution grid. Explain what these statements mean to you and why you placed them under "Most Strongly Disagree".

3. As you sorted the statement cards, did you feel that any statements that represent your beliefs, opinions, or viewpoints about elements of high-quality mentoring support were missing? If so, what are the statements? Where would you place those statement cards and why?

4. Which statement(s) were the easiest to place? Why?

5. Which statement(s), if any, did you have difficulty placing? Why?

6. What are your beliefs about mentoring support for beginning principals?

7. What are your beliefs and viewpoints about elements of mentoring support that have the most critical impact on developing a beginning principal's leadership capacity?

8. If you are willing to be interviewed about your perceptions and beliefs concerning mentoring support for new principals, please provide your contact information below.

I agree to participate in a follow-up interview.

Name:
_____

Address:
_____

_____

Phone Contacts: Home _____ - _____ - _____
Work _____ - _____ - _____
Cell _____ - _____ - _____

Participant Demographic Information

Please indicate you answer by checking the box in front of your selection.

1. Gender:
   ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Number of years, including this school year, you have served as a principal.
   ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1 – 5 ☐ 6 – 10 ☐ 11 -15 ☐ 16 – 20 ☐ 21 +
3. Grade level at which you currently serve as a principal.
   ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle ☐ High
4. As you transitioned to your role as a new principal, did you receive mentoring support from an assigned mentor?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Have you ever provided a beginning principal mentoring support as a formally assigned mentor?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX E: POST-SORT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

East Carolina University

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in Research That Has No More Than Minimal Risk

Title of Research Study: Principal's Perceptions About the Elements of Mentoring Support that Most Impact the Development of a New Principal's Leadership Capacity

Principal Investigator: Lloyd Gardner, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Militello

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Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related tot society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand what elements of mentoring support experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity and why principals perceive these elements to be the most effective. As a current principal, you are being invited to take part in this research to seek your perceptions, viewpoints, and insights about mentoring support. You are being asked to take part in the study by participating in an interview as a follow-up activity to the previous card sorting exercise. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The decision to take part in the research is yours to make. You have the right to participate, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. By conducting this research, we hope to obtain findings to the following research questions:

1. What do educational researchers and practitioners consider as the most important elements of mentoring support for developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
2. What elements of mentoring support do experienced principals perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity?
3. Why do these experienced principals identify these elements as most effective?

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will be one of about 40 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are no known reasons for why you should not participate in this research study. In addition, there are no known risks to participating in the post-sort interview.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?
The research will be conducted at Crossroads II Building, Room 1400A, 5625 Dillard Drive, Cary, NC 27518. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately one hour.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this stage of the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview as a follow-up activity to the previous card sorting exercise. Interview questions will focus on the findings of the Q-sort and will be used to seek a deeper understanding of your viewpoints and perceptions about the factors that emerged during the sort and its analysis. Reflection questions will be asked to gain understanding of the rank value you assigned certain factors in the rank order. The interview will be recorded and the recording will be transcribed as part of the data analysis of the study.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
We do not know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We do not know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?
ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UNCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?
The information in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Information gathered from the interview will be maintained in a secure, locked location and will be destroyed upon successful completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?
You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at phone number 919-431-7748 (days, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email lygardner@wcpss.net.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (days, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?
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- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

APPENDIX F: POST-SORT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for volunteering to participate in a focus group, the second phase of the data collection process for the study. This interview is a follow up to the Q-sorting activity in which you participated. Your participation in the focus group interview is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop your participation at any time during the interview without penalty. Please know that your identity will remain confidential and the information gathered during the interview will be maintained in a secure, locked location only accessible to the researcher. The interview will be recorded. The digital recording and data collected from the interview will be destroyed upon successful completion of the study.

1. Considering the model factor array in front of you, what important themes about effective mentoring support emerged to you as you completed the factor array?

2. Why are factors +3 and +4 so important to you concerning elements of effective mentoring support?

3. Why are factors -3 and -4 ones that you disagree with as to their importance to effective mentoring support?

4. What elements of mentoring support do you perceive to have the most impact on developing a new principal's leadership capacity?

5. Why do you identify these elements of mentoring support as most crucial and effective?

APPENDIX G: IRB COURSEWORK REQUIREMENT REPORT

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Lloyd Gardner (ID: 2022111)
- **Email:** Gardnerl82@ecu.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** East Carolina University (ID: 316)
- **Institution Unit:** Educational Leadership
- **Phone:** 919-850-1848

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Group 2.Social / Behavorial Research Investigators and Key Personnel
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher Course

- **Report ID:** 11152113
- **Completion Date:** 01/31/2015
- **Expiration Date:** 01/30/2018
- **Minimum Passing:** 70
- **Reported Score*:** 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED
SBE Refresher 1 – Instructions	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Defining Research with Human Subjects	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Privacy and Confidentiality	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Assessing Risk	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Children	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings	01/31/15
SBE Refresher 1 – International Research	01/31/15
Biomed Refresher 1 - Instructions	01/31/15

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

CITI Program
Email: citisupport@miami.edu
Phone: 305-243-7970
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

APPENDIX H: IRB APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Lloyd Gardner
CC:
Matthew Militello
Date: 4/15/2015
Re: UMCIRB 15-000393
Principals' Perceptions of Effective Elements of Mentoring Support

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 4/15/2015 to 4/14/2016. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Dissertation Proposal	Study Protocol or Grant Application
ECU Consent Form Research Study Post-Sort Interview	Consent Forms
ECU Consent Form Research Study Q-Sort	Consent Forms
Focus Group Post-Sort Interview Questions	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Q-Sort Instructions and Questionnaire	Surveys and Questionnaires
Q-Sort Instructions and Questionnaire IRB	Data Collection Sheet

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.