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# Administrator's Perceptions of Mentoring Programs for New Assistant Principals

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ADMINISTRATOR'S PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR NEW

ASSISTANT PRINCPALS

by

TAKILA M. CURRY

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

Assistant principals are now required to serve as instructional and curriculum leaders. Assistant principal mentoring has been deemed as one way to make new assistant principals ready for the challenges that they will face as they begin their careers. The purpose of the qualitative study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The study was carried out in elementary, middle and high schools, and a district office in a Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) that supplied funding to implement a mentoring program that would help mold assistant principals into quality school leaders.

The methodology for this study consisted of semi-structured interviews. The researcher examined the interview responses from five assistant principals, three mentoring principals from elementary, middle and high school and one director of leadership development.

Assistant principal participants and principal mentors alike all agreed that mentoring helped in the development of assistant principals into high performing leaders. Assistant principals and principal mentors all found that building relationships and participating in hands on activities were valuable to the assistant principal mentoring program. The data proved that mentor selection was vital to the growth and development

of assistant principals and it also allowed principal mentors to sharpen their skills as school leaders. Data from the study showed that the assistant principal mentoring program was aligned to Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement's eights roles of leadership.

Assistant principal mentoring programs also have barriers. Limited exposure, time constraints, and lack of support beyond the program were all considered barriers to the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring. It was suggested that assistant principal mentoring is beneficial to assistant principal participants but the barriers must be addressed to enhance the program.

INDEX WORDS: Mentoring, Mentees, mentor selection, relationship building, Georgia
                 Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), Regional
                 Educational Service Agency (RESA)

ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR NEW

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

by

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M.S., Jacksonville State University, 2002

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Sarah N. Meadows. Thank you for your encouragement and constant support. You raised me to be a goal-driven and independent woman who could accomplish anything that I wanted to despite the obstacles. I am proud to be your daughter.

To my husband, Keith, you have been my constant through it all. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for always knowing what to say in my most difficult moments. You have supported me through some challenging situations and for that I thank you. I know that I have sacrificed our time together throughout this journey and I appreciate your patience and understanding.

Finally, to my daughter, Kennedy, I would not have completed this dissertation if you had not come into my life. Your presence motivated me to pick up the pieces and start writing again. I know that you are too young to understand now, but love will and can motivate you to accomplish goals that sometimes seem unobtainable.

Thank you for your unconditional support and love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this era of accountability, where school leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom-line results and use data to drive decisions, the skill and knowledge of principals matter more than ever (Hess & Kelly, 2005). In order to meet these strict accountability standards, educational leaders who are responsible for student learning and teacher development must be provided with ample guidance. Mentoring has been deemed as one way to cultivate and make new administrators ready for the challenges that they will face as they begin their careers (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Mentoring administrators can have a major impact on the success or failure of today's schools (Hopkins-Thompson).Young and Wright (2001) defined mentoring as the establishment of a viable relationship to enhance individual, career, personal and professional growth and development.

A mentoring program can act as a support system for those administrators who are finding it difficult to navigate the sometimes rocky road of managing an educational institution (Young & Wright). The benefits of a mentoring program can be far reaching and can make the difference between educational leaders who succeed and those who do not succeed. According to Bush and Chew (1999) any program with the ability to benefit practicing administrators and those new to the field will positively impact the schools, which will in turn, impact students. Understanding administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals is the focus of this study.

Background of the Study

The accountability movement culminating with the federal No Child Left Behind law in 2001, has put pressure on principals to improve student performance, resulting in school leaders' transitioning from a more administrative role to becoming more heavily involved in assessment, instruction, curriculum and data analysis (Butler, 2008). Traditionally, rookie principals have been left to sink or swim. Having completed a university training program, they are presumed to be prepared, and get little direction beyond bland encouragement or an occasional practical tip. However, that attitude is changing as schools realize that a scarcity of high quality principals means promising leaders should not only be energetically recruited but carefully nurtured once they are new administrators (Lashway, 2003b).

By all accounts, new administrators experience intense, unrelenting stress as they try to adjust their textbook understanding of leadership to the real world of practice (Lashway, 2003b). They have to master technical skills learn to deal with a variety of constituents, and wrestle with doubts about personal adequacy, all in a fast paced environment that leaves little time for reflection and thoughtfulness (Parkay & Rhodes, 1992).

In addition to the task overload, unlike new teachers who can usually find an empathetic colleague just down the hall, principals literally have no peers in their building (Lashway, 2003c). The isolation can be magnified when they receive little feedback from supervisors (Lashway, 2003c). Profound economic, demographic, technological, and global changes have transformed the jobs of school leaders, principals and superintendents. No longer is the school principal position one of school supervisor; rather, it is leading in the redesign of his/her school. It is moving schools from the past into the present. In an outcome based and accountability driven era, it is leading schools to rethink their goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum,

pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology, and use of time and space (Levine, 2005). According to Levine, few of today's 250,000 school leaders are prepared to carry out this agenda. Neither they nor the programs that prepared them should be faulted for this. Put simply, they were appointed to and educated for jobs that do not exist anymore.

Furthermore, principals themselves are among the first to agree that they need to be more effectively prepared for their jobs. All but 4% of practicing principals report that on-the-job experiences or guidance from colleagues has been more helpful in preparing them for their current position than their graduate studies (Hess & Kelly, 2005). In fact, 67% of principals reported that "typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's school districts" (Hess & Kelly).

Mentoring programs must be put in place in school systems to better prepare future administrators for the task of the principalship (Ehrich & Hansrord, 2006). Mentoring programs have been designed to help principals develop new skills and learn to survive in a context fraught with ambiguity and competing demands (Ehrich & Hansrord). A mentoring network of principals as well as a framework of continuous support throughout the career of the principal is of prime importance. Those identified to be future leaders of schools need opportunities to engage in leadership activities that include planning, developing, directing, and implementing school programs for educational change that will make a positive difference in the campus community (Doughty, Gideon, Jinkins, McNamara, & Zellner, 2002).

According to Maggart and James (1999), in this day of accountability, when everyone is searching for ways to improve test scores and assuming the responsibility of administration, mentoring may be the critical missing key to help new leaders. Maggart and James (1999) added

that leadership success in the immediate future will depend on mentoring more than any other process.

Carefully conceived mentoring programs can lead to novice leaders displaying more confidence in their professional competence, more effective translation of educational theory into practice, developing improved communication skills, feeling more comfortable in their new positions, and become more aware of the "tricks of the trade" (Daresh, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Mentoring is vital to the development of new principals. Often principals take on their new roles as school leaders without having any real world experiences of operating schools. Mentoring allows newly appointed administrators an opportunity to work closely with experienced administrators that have mastered the role of school leader.

The literature on mentoring explained the importance of mentoring and how beneficial mentoring is to the growth and development of school leaders as instructional leaders. Preparation programs need to be revamped to meet the needs of aspiring principals. Preparation programs can help future school administrators be more equipped to handle the challenges of increasing student achievement, recruiting, training and retaining quality teachers, and leading quality school programs.

While researching the literature, it was discovered that there was no evidence that a comprehensive policy is in place in Georgia that requires newly appointed assistant principals to participate in a mentoring program. If assistant principals receive mentoring they have a great chance of becoming a more qualified school leader. The purpose of the study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

Research Questions

The following overarching question guided this qualitative study:

What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals?

Throughout this study the following sub-questions guided the investigation:

Sub-question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of

assistant principal mentoring?

Sub-question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the

effectiveness of mentoring programs?

Sub-question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in

the assistant principal mentor program?

Significance of the Study

Raising accountability standards for public schools has become widely popular since the

publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983 (Shumaker, 2004; Donaldson, 2001). The federal No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is but the most recent legislation designed to promote one version

of school improvement: higher student performance on standardized tests. Although the desired

goals of school reform are subject to debate and vary from constituency to constituency, there is

little doubt that as school accountability standards are ratcheted ever higher so too will be the

challenges associated with succeeding in school leadership roles (Schlechty, 2002; Lambert

1998; Schechty, 1997).

Strong administrative leadership is a major component of successful schools. Principals

are now mandated to serve first as instructional and curriculum leaders in schools. New

administrators' will need the help of preparation programs, veteran administrators and experts in

the field of education who can mentor them and provide answers that will make their job of

running schools more successful. Although mentoring programs are meaningful and can have a major impact on administrators' futures, they are not a part of the professional support system in some educational systems.

Researching administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals is an added research that is already available on the subject of mentoring. The professional literature related to administrators' perceptions shows the need for a comprehensive policy mandating mentoring for all new assistant principals.

The principal participants served as mentors in the assistant principal mentoring program. The assistant principals participated in the mentoring program for new assistant principals. The director of leadership development in this study participated in the mentoring program as a developer and coordinator. Administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals and the importance of mentoring programs for new assistant principals was the primary focus of this study.

This study had personal significance to the researcher. The researcher currently serves as an administrator in a school district that does not have a mentoring program in place for new assistant principals. Furthermore, the researcher was seeking information on mentoring programs for new assistant principals, with the intentions of implementing a mentoring program in their school district in the future. The researcher developed a better understanding of administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals and the impact of mentoring on producing high performing assistant principals.

Research Procedures

The researcher's purpose was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring

programs for new assistant principals. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative

techniques lead to rich data that allow the researcher to assess the participants' perspectives of

the program to be evaluated. The researcher collected data on administrators' perceptions of

mentoring programs for new assistant principals. Miles and Huberman (1994) listed the strengths

of the qualitative technique as:

1. It focuses on naturally occurring events in natural settings;

2. The data is collected in close proximity to the specific situation instead of through

   mail or on the telephone;

3. It allows for rich and vivid data;

4. It allows the researcher to assess causality of the data; and

5. It is well suited for indentifying the meanings people place on the events, processes,

   and structures of their lives.

The researcher used a case study approach to carry out the study. According to Lichtman

(2006), a case study is often recognized as one approach to qualitative research. A case study

requires that the researcher explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or

more individuals (Creswell, 2003). A case study is an intensive description and analysis of a

phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community (Merriam,

2002).

The participants' five assistant principals employed in elementary, middle and high

schools in the High Stakes RESA, which has implemented a mentoring program for new

assistant principals. Additional participants were three principals serving as mentors in the same

school district as the assistant principals, and a director of leadership development employed

with High Stakes RESA that helped to develop and coordinate the mentoring program.

The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with the assistant principals

as mentees, principals as mentors and director of leadership development as coordinator of the

assistant principal mentoring program. Wortheb, Sanders and Fitzpatrick (1997) found that

interviews allow for clarification and probing and should be used when greater depth of

information is needed. The researchers used interviews to gain more in-depth and concrete

information on assistant principals and their current mentoring program, mentors and their role in

the mentoring program, as well as much needed data on the program's purpose, benefits, barriers

and structure from the director of leadership development. The researcher worked to find

common themes and patterns from the nine participants' interviews. The researcher transcribed

tape-recorded interviews.

The researcher purposefully selected five assistant principals, three principal mentors

from High Stakes RESA and director of leadership development that would best help the

researcher conduct the study. The researcher used face-to-face interviews to conduct interviews,

collect data and analyze the collected data.

A 60-90 minute semi-structured interview was conducted with each assistant principal,

principal and director of leadership development. The researcher interviewed each assistant

principal, principal and director of leadership development in their natural setting.

The researcher used interviews as the primary method of data collection. The researcher

used a semi-structured interview format to interview each assistant principal, principal and

director of leadership development. The interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The

interviews were audio recorded and the researcher used an interview protocol during the interviews. The researcher transcribed the interviews.

The researcher collected and analyzed data at the completion of each interview and throughout the study. According to Merriam and Associates (2002) data analysis is simultaneous with data collection. One should begin analyzing data with the first interview. The researcher coded and categorized themes that emerged from the interviews.

*Delimitations*

A delimitation identified by the researcher was as follows:

1. The study was delimited to understanding the experience of five newly appointed assistant principals, three principals serving as mentors, and one director of leadership development in High Stakes RESA.

*Limitations*

Some limitations identified by the researcher were as follows:

1. The results from the study were based on individual experiences in a mentor program in one RESA in Georgia and are not reflective of all RESA in Georgia.

Summary

Today, school principals are asked to lead in a new world marked by unprecedented responsibilities, challenges, and managerial opportunities (Hess & Kelly, 2005). O'Neill, Fry, Hill and Bottoms (2003) found mentoring to be an integral component of principal preparation programs designed to improve school and student performance. Getting new principals trained and ready to perform at high levels are the essential functions of university educational leadership programs working in partnership with local school districts. By improving the quality of mentoring and internship experiences, universities and districts can increase the ability of new

school leaders to address real school problems before they leave the starting gate for their first principalship (O'Neill et al. 2003).

Research is available on administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals, benefits of mentoring programs and the impact on student achievement. Nevertheless, there is not a comprehensive policy in place requiring that new assistant principals participate in mentoring programs before taking on a principalship. For that reason, the researcher conducted this qualitative study to understand the administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. Researching the literature on administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals may diminish the gap in the literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

High stakes accountability in education has changed nearly everything in school

leadership (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). In the past, principals were expected to simply hold

school each day with classes running smoothly and in an orderly fashion. Rising expectations

have prompted state legislatures across the United States to implement high states accountability

systems that hold schools responsible for student achievement (Bottoms & O'Neill). The

responsibility for raising student achievement rests with the principal of the school. Research has

shown that effective leadership is a key component in achieving school improvement (Harris,

2002). Mentoring has been deemed as one way to cultivate and make ready new administrators

for the challenges that they will face as they begin their careers (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

*The Benefits of Mentoring Programs for School Leaders*

Mentoring is nothing new. The very word "mentor" comes from Homer's *Odyssey*.

Before departing for Troy, Ulysses entrusted his son, Telemachus, to his wise friend

Mentor, who serves as teacher, guardian, and guide to the prince during Ulysses'

20- Year absence (Riggins-Newbery & Zarlengo, 2003).

Mentoring is defined in the literature in many different ways. Daresh and Playko (1992)

described the mentoring relationship as one in which both the mentor and the protégé gain value.

In this day of accountability, when everyone is searching for a way to improve test scores and so

much responsibility is placed on the administration of the school, mentoring may be the critical

missing key to help new leaders (Maggart & James, 1999). Muse, Thomas and Wasden (1992)

indicated that the best mentoring programs are joint ventures between the school district and the

university personnel in the selection, training, and evaluation of principals to mentor. Maggart and James (1999) concluded that leadership success in the immediate future will depend on mentoring more than any other process.

Mentoring can be a rich and continuing part of a principal's professional life. Principals often feel like isolated links in the chain of command, caught somewhere between students, teachers, parents, and the district office (Zellner, Ward, McNamara, Gideon, Camacho & Doughty, 2002). Though they are surrounded and even overwhelmed by all the people clamoring for their attention, they often feel deeply lonely. They are starved for the opportunity to talk openly about what their life is like. But principals can become allies and guides for each other. Principals can help each other through reflection and dialogue. They can help one another create an exciting and elegant conversation. In that way, they can find their own individual pathway to effective leadership (Zellner, Ward, McNamara, Gideon, Camacho & Edgewood, 2002).

To help new principals succeed, more school districts are capitalizing on the expertise of their senior administrators by adding mentor programs to the mix of practical training programs for beginning principals (Malone, 2001). Furthermore, school boards and district officials recognize that formal preparation for the principalship must include a practical component that can impart real life skills. This part of principal training is usually termed an apprenticeship or an internship. Its success or lack of success resides in a myriad of factors. The effectiveness of this hands-on training has become more important as the growing shortage of school leaders threatens the quality of education in the United States (Malone, 2001).

Thaler (2001) observed that successful people have one thing in common- an influential mentor at some point in their lives. Having a mentor is the single most important reason why certain people tend to rise higher in corporations than others (Wellington, 2001). Mentoring is

important as evidenced in the research in which Malone (2000) noted that when principals were asked to identify a vital component of their preparation, they most often identified other school leaders as their primary source in helping them become school leaders. Malone also pointed out that these mentoring relationships helped the principals throughout their careers. Crow and Matthews (1998) noted that mentoring not only provides administrators with specific ideas and strategies, it encourages them to be more reflective and analytical about their practice.

Geismar, Morris, and Lieberman (2000) indicated that mentoring can move new administrators from a position of dependence to independence. A mentoring relationship in which the mentor "leads instead of manages, who empowers instead of controls, and who is reflective and critical" affords the new principal the opportunity to learn how to lead. Mentoring may also aid new principals in establishing a network of peers and experienced professionals who can provide support and guidance. This support may in turn build the new principal's confidence and competence in his or her new occupation.

Dukess (2001) stressed the fact that good mentors rendered three forms of assistance to new principals:

    (a) They provided instructional support by keeping newcomers' attention focused on learning issues and offering models of successful practice.

    (b) They provided administrative and managerial support not just by giving practice tips but by helping their protégés set priorities.

    (c) They provided emotional support by listening carefully and being present at particularly stressful moments.

Dukess also concluded that good results did not automatically come just by putting a mentor and protégé together. Key steps included careful matching of mentors and protégés, clear

expectations and guidelines for participants, adequate time for the mentor, and selection of mentors who have a record of success and who are "reflective, compassionate, good listeners, good communicators, and able to speak the hard truth."

A mentoring network of principals as well as a framework of continuous support throughout the career of the principal is of prime importance. Those identified to be future leaders of schools need opportunities to engage in leadership activities that include planning, developing, directing and implementing school programs and educational change that will make a positive difference in the campus community (Zellner et al. 2002).

*Principal Preparation Programs*

Our nation's underperforming schools and children are unlikely to succeed until we get serious about leadership. It is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond single classrooms, and that ineffective practices are not simply allowed to fester. Clearly, the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions, and the continuing professional development they get once they are hired and throughout their careers, has to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of these jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

"The job of principal," says Gary Bloom, Associate Director of the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, "has become more difficult, and the expectations of the job have become more ambitious, coupled with the shortage of qualified candidates (Riggins-Newby & Zarlengo, 2003)."

By reputation, principal-preparation programs are not highly effective. A recent Public Agenda survey found that 69 percent of principals and 80 percent of superintendents believed that typical leadership programs "are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's

school districts" (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno & Foley, 2001). Over 85 percent of both

groups believed that overhauling preparation programs would help improve leadership (Farkas et

al. 2001).

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2002), which has undertaken a major

effort to support the improvement of leadership preparation in sixteen states, has identified key

state actions that can reshape leadership preparation. The steps include infusion of performance-

based standards into preparation programs, integration of well planned clinical experiences with

coursework, and tiered certification systems in which the second level of certificate requires

evidence of successful on-the-job performance. School districts can support leadership

development in a variety of ways. Districts can work with university programs to identify

promising candidates, host meaningful internship experiences, and provide advice on program

content and delivery (Keller, 2000).

Hale and Mooran (2003) argue that leadership preparation programs are not providing the

training needed for today's public school leaders. A working knowledge of national standards

and their implications for university preparation programs is critical. Activities should be

designed to increase prospective school leaders' proficiency in meeting national standards, and

provide authentic tasks to reflect activities completed by practitioners on a daily basis (Barnett).

The success of the principal is determined by building the capacity to lead (Doughty, Gideon,

Jinkins, MacNamara & Zellner, 2002).

There is a need for better systems to support the recruitment and development of

principals. SREB's report, *Good Principals Are the Key to Successful Schools (2003)*, exhorts

the states to take "luck" out of the process and to establish a leadership development system that

produces principals who; "Understand which school and classroom practices improve student

achievement; " Know how to work with teachers to bring about positive change;" Support teachers in carrying out instructional practices that help all students succeed; and, "Can prepare accomplished teachers to become better principals (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

Outstanding principals play a profound and pivotal role in creating schools where all students achieve at the highest levels. It has been widely recognized across a number of countries including Australia, Canada, the USA and New Zealand that there is a principal shortage (Malone, 2001). Malone reported that not only is there a shortage of principals to fill current vacancies, but there is also a sizeable portion of current incumbents nearing retirement. According to Malone (2001), school boards and district officials recognize that formal preparation for the principalship must include a practical component that can impart real life skills.

Schools need creative and versatile leaders. High-quality preparation programs can produce high-quality leaders. Leaders in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) recognize this and have taken steps to do something about the school leadership pipeline (Fry, Bottoms & O'Neill, 2005). However, these steps have not yet addressed one of the most serious problems of leadership preparation-the quality of internships for aspiring leaders. In many professions, the internship is the ultimate performance test, the final rite of passage before gaining an initial license to practice. Today, in far too many principal preparation programs, the internship "vessel" is leaky, rudderless or still in dry dock (Fry et al. 2005).

Principalship aspirants acquire, in their preservice preparation programs, a set of skills and knowledge that "experts" in the field have decided they should have, and they are then sent out into schools to apply what they have learned. Subsequent professional development is left up

to the principal-it is assumed that he or she will seek out appropriate training opportunities to acquire additional or more refined tools with which to do the job (Zellner et al. 2002).

Facing new roles and heightened expectations, principals require new forms of training, thus university preparation programs are coming under increased scrutiny. In particular, the demand that principals have a positive impact on student achievement challenges traditional assumptions, practices, and structures in leadership preparation programs (Lashway, 2003c). By reputation, principal preparation programs are not highly effective. Entrance into most leadership programs has been determined by self selection, with half-hearted screening and little outreach to talented individuals (Lashway, 2003c). States and most districts currently do not make efforts to identify people with great promise as future leaders. They rely instead on a "volunteer pool" of people with administrative credentials but insufficient preparation to lead schools (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, Hill, 2003).

States need to stop relying on the questionable pool of "self-selected" people with administrative credential but little inclination or talents for leadership. Instead, they should develop criteria and methods to choose high-quality candidates for leadership preparation. In addition, they should tap those with a demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and instruction as well as a passion for helping students meets high standards (Bottoms et al. 2003). Assistant principals are often perceived as disciplinarians, bus monitors, clerical workers, and other tasks not directly related to; instructional leadership. Only when principals view the assistant principalship as a training ground for future principals will the position mirror the principals' work and allow the apprentice leaders to play a key role in academic achievement (Bottoms et al. 2003).

Azzam (2005) stated that school administrators are increasingly called on to do more than just supervise their schools; they often must lead in redesigning them. According to Azzam, the report, *Educating School Leaders*, is the result of a four year study focusing on the education of principals. The report proposes a nine point template for assessing the quality of school leadership programs:

- The purpose of the program is explicit and relevant

- The curriculum mirrors the program's purposes and is both rigorous and coherent

- The curriculum balances theory with practice

- The faculty includes both academics and practitioners who are intellectually productive and up-to-date in their fields

- Admissions criteria are rigorous

- Degrees are relevant and represent high standards

- Research is high quality and relevant

- The program has adequate funding

- The program engages in continual self-assessment (Azzam, 2005).

Collectively, school leadership programs in the United States failed to meet any of the nine criteria (Azzam, 2005). Levine (2005) suggests that education leadership programs require major redesign. Levine stresses that the quality of most preparation programs in the United States are "inadequate to appalling." According to the report, Educating School Leaders, education schools persistently fail to acknowledge their real problems, which run the gamut from offering irrelevant curriculum to bestowing inappropriate degrees.

Numerous school systems have begun principal preparation programs that produce effective leaders (Malone, 2001). The Albuquerque Public Schools' Extra Support for Principals

(ESP) program originated in 1994 when a group of elementary, middle, and high school principals examined how best to develop a support system for new principals. The resulting program features a coordinator who examines beginning principals' backgrounds, asks them to supply a list of experienced principals with whom they would like to work, and then matches them with veteran leaders. Results indicate that new principals, as well as mentors, benefit significantly from ESP (Weingartner, 2001).

Another program, established by the Southern Regional Education Board's Leadership Academy, focuses on developing effective leadership styles that will have a direct impact on schools. An important component of the academy is the mentoring program, which assigns an external peer coach to each district team. The coach, who is a skilled leader in education, provides technical assistance and collects information from participants to help them develop as leaders (Crews and Weakly, 1996).

According to Bloom and Krovetz (2001) the shortage of qualified candidates for school leadership positions led Santa Cruz County to gather local experts to develop a solution to this problem. These gatherings, entitled "Growing Our Own," arose in part from dissatisfaction of the traditional role played by assistant principals, who were usually assigned a narrow range of responsibilities. Santa Cruz educators decided to reinvent the principal/assistant principal relationship by establishing a mentor-apprentice agreement that committed the parties to shared outcomes. This program emphasized teamwork while pursuing the stated goal of producing future school leaders who have the skills, attitudes, behaviors, and courage to lead public schools (Bloom & Krovetz).

Bradshaw and Buckner (2000) stated that in 1996, North Carolina instituted the Master of School Administration program for the purpose of preparing school administrators. One portion

of this program is an internship, during which the intern is paired with a mentor to gain experience and training. One of the most important aspects of the program is the acquisition of a skilled mentor, who can teach and engage the intern in different types of administrative activities to develop the necessary skills (Bradshaw &Buckner).

The college of Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University restructured its principal education program in 2000 to include a mentoring aspect (Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 2002). The Regional Principal Preparation Program (RP3) combines field-based instruction, active involvement with practicing administrators, and more integration of theory into practice. The RP3 has given principal interns the opportunity to work with a mentor through a variety of administrative duties, as well as develop an "eye for keen observation and the sharpened intuition that come with experience (Gordan & Moles, 1994). The principal interns have mentors from all school levels and from the central office to provide the interns with learning experiences from different educational perspectives (Virginia Polytechnic Institute).

Ohio has developed an entry-year leadership academy built around mentoring and portfolio development. As part of the initiative, the state has produced a curriculum for training mentors and contracted with Educational Testing Service to design reflective questions for the portfolio (Beebe, Hoffman, Lindley & Presley, 2002). Some states have realigned their certification requirements to better support the developmental needs of leaders (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002). Kentucky and Louisiana use two-tier licensure systems in which full certification comes only after successful experience as an administrator. School leaders are provided mentoring and other forms of assistance leading to full-fledged certification after a successful first year.

Three initiatives changed leadership training for the principalship:

1. The School Leadership Initiative Program;

2. The Richardson Mentor Principal Program;

3. The Aspiring Principals Program (Zellner et al. 2002).

The School Leadership Initiative Program (SLI) was a three year pilot mentor program designed primarily for the assistant principal. The pilot mentoring program focused on building 12 leadership laboratories that would support a series of planned leadership activities and experiences to encourage observing, commenting, questioning, and reflection on practice by mentors and mentees alike. Each laboratory (selected public school) consisted of a building principal and an assistant principal. The philosophy governing the program was that leadership laboratories are committed to continuous measurable improvement in the areas of leadership, instruction, and student learning (Zellner et al. 2002). Ultimately, the SLI experiment enabled Texas A&M University to restructure the process of recruitment, training, and mentoring in various careers.

The second initiative, The Richardson Mentor Principal Program, invited seasoned exemplary school leaders to explore ways to improve the condition of the principalship. The goals of this grant supported program were to: foster excellence in leadership development by facilitating the building of partnerships among major stakeholders; promote development of model projects in principal leadership; determine key issues in principal preparation; and disseminate that information to educators (Zellner et al. 2002).

The third initiative, The Aspiring Principals program included professional preparation and growth opportunities that supported a model of leadership other than traditional corporate managerial models. The goal of the program was to give the first cohort skills for developing a spirit of leadership that was best for developing a learning community (Zellner et al. 2002).

State leaders need to bring together all the parties concerned with principal preparation to plan ways to work together to do the following:

- Build the pool of high achieving principal candidates;

- Accelerate the redesign of principal preparation programs;

- Make field based experiences a central focus of principal preparation programs;

- Link principal licensure to performance;

- Move accomplished teachers into principal positions; and

- Sharpen the focus of state leadership academics and cultivate leadership in middle tier schools. (Bottoms et al. 2003).

Leadership preparation can no longer end with a certificate, certification or a degree. It must be on going, continuous, and supportive throughout the career of the principal (Zellner et al. 2002). Preparation programs need to stress: (1) the importance of reflection on leadership practices; (2) the importance of building a mentor network; (3) the importance of linking theory to practice; and (4) the importance of contextual experiences in developing leadership skills prior to assuming an administrative position (Zellner et al. 2002).

Creighton and Jones (2001) reviewed 450 principal certification programs and found that their admission criteria gave the most weight to GRE scores and undergraduate GPA. They also cited data from Educational Testing Service showing that education majors had lower GRE scores than majors in most other fields and that education administration candidates ranked near the bottom of education majors (Creighton & Jones).

Furthermore, an even greater concern was the relative scarcity of requirements linked to the kind of personal qualities such as vision desired in today's principals. Creighton and Jones noted that only 6 percent of programs required personal interviews in which such qualities might

be identified, and only one university in the sample used assessment center activities as part of the process. Surprisingly, considering the emerging focus on instructional leadership, only 40 percent listed teaching experience as a requirement.

According to Brown-Ferrigno and Shoho (2002) current best practice recommendations emphasize the need to connect admission practices with leadership standards. Possible approaches include the use of focused interview protocols, 360-degree evaluations, performance portfolios, writing samples, and assessment center activities. In addition, programs should work collaboratively with practitioners to identify and tap strong candidates. Mentoring aspiring principal academies and formal nomination by principals and superintendents are two of the strategies being used.

A recent four year study by the president of Teachers College at Columbia University, Arthur Levine (2005), raised the stakes in this debate by harshly assessing the quality of educational administration programs. Based on a survey of practicing principals and educational deans, chairs, faculty, and alumni as well as case studies of 25 school leadership programs, Levine concluded that "the majority of educational administration programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities. According to Levine (2005) the study pinpointed six problems in school leadership preparation programs: irrelevant curriculum, low admission and graduation standards, weak faculty, inadequate clinical instruction and poor research.

Educational leadership preparation programs are faced with the challenge of preparing school administrators who can lead in ways that will facilitate improved student achievement. At the same time, schools are facing high turnover in administrative positions and candidate pools for the positions are often inadequate (Flint, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education

Policy Forum on Educational Leadership was conducted in 1999 to address the shortage of

qualified candidates for school leadership positions. In their policy, Forum participants

recommended that schools begin "growing their own leaders by recognizing potential leaders

and giving them structured opportunities to build their expertise (U.S. Department of the

Education Policy Brief, 1999 as cited in Flint, 2005). One way to do this is to provide short-term

"formation" activities to help individuals become better informed about what school leaders do

and more aware of their own interests and abilities.

Barnett (2004) argued that a systematic overhaul must occur in leadership preparation

programs. A formation of stronger ties between public education and universities is necessary to

in the development of high performing leaders. Providing authentic and on-going school based

experiences and less emphasis on management should be a main focus in preparation of new

leaders. More emphasis should be placed on instructional leadership and this will provide much

of the framework around which leadership programs must be built. The Interstate School Leaders

Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed standards for school leaders. Yet, development and

adoption of standards without systematic review of practices yield little significant change

(Barnett, 2004).

According to Lashway (2002a) the ISLLC standards are premised on the centrality of

student learning as the measure of educational success. Each standard begins with the phrase,

"An administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by…" The

expectations themselves focus on nurturing a vision, sustaining a growth-oriented school culture,

managing the organization effectively, collaborating with families and community, acting with

integrity, and participating in the larger social and cultural context. The ISLLC standards are

process-oriented; they describe how effective principals behave. However, evaluators may also

be interested in results. Has parental involvement increased? Have truancy rates gone down? Are test scores up? In the eyes of some, an effective principal is a leader who gets results, not one who shows a particular pattern in behaviors (Lashway, 2003b).

*The Assistant Principal Role as an Aspiring Principal*

The school assistant principalship is the door to principalship. Most assistant principals start their administrative career by working with principals who serve as mentors. Most researchers agree that assistant principals are not properly prepared for the principalship (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1999). Studies by Wright (1994) and May (2001) examined the principals' perceptions of assistant principals' roles and responsibilities. Wright asserted that instructional leadership was the most important training for assistant principals to be principals whereas, in May's study, assistant principals were found not playing their roles as they should. This lack of preparation is largely because of the duties/responsibilities they are assigned as assistant principals (Richard, 2000).

The five most important responsibilities of school principals as perceived by assistant principals were: curriculum development, instructional support, teacher observations/evaluations, maintaining a safe climate, and meeting with parents (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003). The assistant principals indicated the five factors that most hinder their advancement: lack of experience, too outspoken, lack of sponsor in the system, shortage of available principalships and unwillingness to relocate (Chan et al.).

Future leaders who are next in line for the principalship (assistant principals) need to engage in activities that go beyond the four B's (bells, behavior, books, and bats). Engagement in managerial activities does not prepare the novice administrator for the many decisions that today's principal's face (Zellner et al. 2002). Zellner & Collegues (2002) cautioned that the

primary reason for unsuccessful campus leadership includes the principal's: (1) lack of ability to disseminate leadership throughout the campus; (2) inexperience in problem solving; (3) lack of reflection on leadership practice; (4) lack of experience in keeping the campus vision as a target; (5) lack of experience in self initiated leadership activities; and (6) lack of opportunity to be mentored and supported during initial stages of development as a leader.

*First Year Administrators*

New principals face a myriad of unanticipated situations during their initial years (Lashway, 2003b). Often these situations are extremely perplexing and involve difficult and emotionally demanding engagement which they did not face as teachers (Lashway, 2003b). Through mentoring programs, veteran principals may offer new principals valuable information which will make their decisions better and their entry into the profession less stressful (National Association for Schools of Excellence and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999). Veteran principals have a responsibility to assist their inexperienced colleagues through an informal mentor relationship (National Association for Schools of Excellence and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999).

Not surprisingly, words such as "lost," "overwhelmed," and "shell-shocked" pervade the literature on first year principals (Lashway, 2003d). New administrators experience intense, unrelenting stress as they try to adapt, their textbook understanding of leadership to the real world of practice (Lashway, 2003d). First year stress comes not just from task overload, but from the need for quick assimilation into a new culture. Every school is a unique organization, with its own history, environment, and cast of characters. New principals not only have to learn "how things are done," but "how things are done here" (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Many new principals reported a strong sense of isolation (Lashway, 2003d). They must go from "stranger"

to "insider", quickly discerning the unwritten rules and identifying the real movers and shakers (Aiken, 2002).

Normore (2003) cautioned that sociologist's pointed out that the first year is a crucial period in administrators' socialization, the process by which they internalize the skills, values, and dispositions of the profession. While newcomers will enter the job with both informal and formal preparation, they will still face the crucial task of organizational socialization, in which the simple abstractions learned in university classrooms must be adapted to the disheveled realities of real schools. A well designed induction program can help novices articulate such dilemmas and find a way of achieving a balance.

Although direct empirical evidence is scarce, some researchers have speculated that formal induction programs improve retention (Lashway, 2003b). Linda Morford (2002), after interviewing ten new rural principals who had no access to any kind of induction program, found two years later that nine of them had either moved on to other positions or returned to teaching.

*The impact of Mentoring on Increasing Student Achievement*

Effective leadership makes a difference in improving learning. It is revealed that leadership not only matters; it is second only to teaching among school related factors in its impact on student learning (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) pointed out that in these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn. Scratch the surface of an excellent school and you are likely to find an excellent principal. Peer into a failing school and you will find weak leadership (Leithwood & Riehl). Principals must respond to increasing diversity in student characteristics, including

cultural background and immigration status, income disparities, physical and mental disabilities

and variations in learning capacities and learning styles.

*The Principal as the Instructional Leader*

According to the Policy Forum on Education Leadership, only twenty-five percent of

today's principals were prepared to be effective instructional leaders (Black, 2000). Hale and

Moorman (2003) also suggested that leadership preparation programs are not providing the

training needed for today's public school leaders. With the obvious gap between the readiness of

administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability that school

administrator's face; in order to be relevant, university preparation programs must complete a

comprehensive program analyses, identify content gaps, determine instructional implications,

and align the curriculum to national standards (Hale & Moorman, 2003 ).

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium National Standards (ISLLC) is

premised on the centrality of student learning as the measure of success. The six key themes are

as follows:

- Facilitating shared vision

- Sustaining a school culture conducive to student and staff learning

- Managing the organization for a safe, efficient, and effective learning
  environment

- Collaborating with families and community members

- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

- Influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

The standards are now used to guide principal preparation programs in at least thirty-five

states (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).When the school reform movement began

in the 1980s, the first consequence for school leaders was pressure to put student learning at the center of their jobs (Anthes, 2002).Today, instructional leadership remains a dominant theme, but it is taking a much more sophisticated form. Initially, administrators qualified as instructional leaders simply by paying attention to instruction: setting curricular goals, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers. Today, instructional leaders immerse themselves in the core technology of teaching and learning, use data to make decisions, and align staff development with student learning needs (Anthes).

Anthes (2002) notes that The Education Commission of the States, in analyzing how the No Child Left Behind Act will affect leaders, note that they not only need a sophisticated understanding of assessment, they should be master teacher or at least recruit master teachers so assessment data can be used intelligently. A natural way for school leaders to take on the role of instructional leader is to serve as a "chief" coach for teachers by designing and supporting strong classroom level instructional coaching (Steiner & Kowal, 2007)

Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement has organized the work of school leadership around the 8 Roles. The 8 Roles have been identified by GLISI research and validated against other national educational and business standards. They are currently being used for the education and development of educational leaders through GLISI programs.

*Time Constraints*

According to Kilburg (2007) if mentoring is a high priority in a school district, then adequate time must be provided for observations and meetings. Kilburg (2007) study indicated that the single most important factor that caused repeated problems for mentoring programs was lack of time. A majority of the mentoring teams somehow had to gain additional time for mentoring—time that was typically allocated for teaching, planning lessons, meeting with parents, and working with students. If mentoring teams are not given sufficient time to carry out the mentoring conversations that are so important to developing relationships, the mentoring experience may be seen as nothing more than a token gesture. Kilburg (2007) suggests a direct correlation of efficacy in the mentoring process and the amount of time mentoring team members spend together. Conversely, when the time is reduced, the mentoring relationship may be negatively impacted.

*The Reasons for the Principal Shortage*

In an era when confidence is falling, recruitment for school leadership roles is becoming more difficult. The desire to lead and stay in a leadership position is not a position of choice; instead, it has become a position of challenge. Even with emphasis on infusion of leadership throughout school (site-based decision making) and de-emphasis on a more traditional managerial leadership style, school leadership has not become easier or more desirable as an occupation (Zellner, Ward, McNamara, Gideon, Camacho, & Edgewood, 2002).

With the increased pressure from the state and federal level, many educators are choosing not to apply for administrative positions (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001).When coupled with the high number of administrators who are at or near retirement age, an administrator shortage is threatening (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000). Forty two percent of the United States school districts

are experiencing shortages of qualified principal candidates, and the Department of Labor reported that forty percent of the country's principals will soon reach retirement age (Curriculum Review, 2002).

According to Gilman and Lanman-Givens (2001) there are other reasons that people are not applying for administrative positions in schools. The pay differential between teachers and principals has decreased over the last several years. Many educators believe that the financial rewards of being principal are not commensurate with the responsibilities that the job entails. Many aspiring principals are faced with costly degree requirements and courses that do not adequately equip them with the necessary skills for operating a school. They are faced with the difficulty of trying to do everything in the school from community relations to fundraising chairperson to disciplinarian to enforcer of the rules, regulations, and policies. This often leaves little time for the job of instructional supervisor, which is necessary to address the accountability that now faces school districts (Gilman & Lanman-Givens).

Superintendents who reported reasons for principal shortages cited that most often principals were stressed with the demands of the job and felt that the job required too much time (Zellner et. al, 2002).

Principals, in uncommon numbers, are leaving their positions in search of more fulfilling and personally healthful work. Burnout and finding balance are hot topics on professional meeting agendas. Every state now faces a crisis as applicant pools for administrative and formal teacher leadership roles are ceasing to exist (Zellner et al. 2002).

In the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states, school district leaders frequently report that the supply of principals is diminishing rapidly. However, the problem is not a lack of certified principals but rather a lack of qualified principals. Every state has plenty of people with

certificates as school administrators. In the last four years, Texas has certified more that 70,000 school administrators; enough to replace every school principal in the state. Georgia has 3,200 people who are certified as principals but who do not hold that position; there are 1,946 schools in Georgia (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003).

Certification as it exists today is not proof of quality. Many certified administrators are teachers who have earned master's degrees in school administration but who do not intend to become principals. These teachers considered the administration degree the easiest route to master's level pay. Other teachers who earn administrative credentials may want to become school principals but lack leadership programs. Others may have potential to be principals, but their university preparation programs did not provide them with the knowledge and skills required to succeed as leaders in today's high pressure, achievement based accountability environment (Bottoms et al.)

In an April 2001 report, Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It is Time for Action, SREB proposed actions that every state and every school district can take to secure an ample supply of highly qualified principals; The report defined the following six strategies that state and local leaders can use to achieve that result: (1) Single out high performers; (2) Recalibrate preparation programs; (3) Emphasize real-world training; (4) Link principal licensure to performance; (5) Move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions; and (6) Use state academic programs to cultivate leadership teams in middle tier schools (Bottoms et al, 2003).

Conclusion

Mentoring for school leaders is one activity that could assist people who take on the challenges of trying to make a difference in schools. Daresh (2001) noted that if school systems found a way of bringing talented individuals together in order to learn from each other, there would be a noticeable positive effect on leadership in their schools.

Although the principal's effect on student achievement may be indirect, it is crucial. The principal controls the most important factors affecting a school's teaching and instructional quality, including attracting, selecting, and keeping outstanding teachers (Kaplan, Owing & Nunnerry, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to adequately mentor administrators so they can make positive changes in the educational arena that will positively impact student achievement.

Several mentoring programs are described in the literature, but it is not revealed if there is a comprehensive policy that requires mentoring programs for new assistant principals. Researchers agree that mentoring programs are necessary if aspiring principals are going to be ready to lead today's schools (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2001; Malone, 2000; Thaler 2001; Wellington, 2001). On the other hand, researchers agree that preparation programs are not adequately preparing aspiring principals for the major task of leading effective schools (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001; Hale & Mooran).

Despite the differences stated in the research, effective mentoring can change the direction of an aspiring principal to one who becomes a great leader; as opposed to one that does not (Fry, Bottoms &O'Neill, 2005; Maggart &James, 1999). The research focuses on preparation programs and how a major overhaul of colleges and university programs must change to better prepare aspiring administrators. Before state, higher education and district leaders can take action to reform the preparation, licensure and professional development of school leaders, they need to

become aware of the current system's "disconnects" in design and delivery (Bottoms, Fry and O'Neill, (2005).

Preparation programs must be held accountable for matching the field experiences of aspiring principals to the critical factors found among highly accomplished principals (Bottoms et al. 2005). Having a mentor is the single most important reason why certain people tend to rise higher in corporations than others (Wellington, 2001). The concern with mentoring programs is that there is no comprehensive policy in place to mandate that all newly hired assistant principals participate in a mentoring program.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Our nation is simultaneously acknowledging the 20th anniversary of the landmark report,

*A Nation at Risk*, and the widespread and bipartisan acceptance of the need for America's

schools to improve. At the same time, implementing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of

2001 is forcing us to confront the weaknesses of contemporary school leadership and is making

it impossible to ignore the escalating need for higher quality principals — individuals who have

been prepared to provide the instructional leadership necessary to improve student achievement.

In order to meet these strict accountability standards, educational leaders who are responsible for

student learning and teacher development must be provided with ample guidance. Mentoring has

been deemed as one way to cultivate and make ready new administrators for the challenges that

they will face as they begin their careers (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hopkins & Thompson, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring

programs for new assistant principals. Specifically the researcher conducted a qualitative case

study using interviews. This chapter provided background for the qualitative study. Each phase

of the data collection was discussed.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was developed to answer the following overarching question: What

are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals? The study

was guided by three sub-questions:

Sub-Question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of

assistant principal mentoring?

Sub-Question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?

Sub-Question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program?

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

This qualitative study was developed to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals in the High Stakes Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) in Georgia. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative techniques lead to rich data that allow the researcher to assess the participants' perspectives of the program to be evaluated. Miles and Huberman listed the strengths of the qualitative technique as: (1) It focuses on naturally occurring events in natural settings; (2)The data is collected in close proximity to the specific situation instead of through mail or on the telephone; (3) It allows for rich and vivid data; (4) It allows the researcher to assess causality of the data; and (5) It is well suited for locating the meaning people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives. To accomplish the goal of understanding administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals, the researcher used a qualitative case study to conduct the research. A qualitative case study is an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). According to Merriam (2002) case studies are a valuable tool for understanding human behavior in depth.

According to Lichtman (2006), a case study is often recognized as one approach to qualitative research. A case study requires that the researcher explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2003). By using a case study

approach to investigate, the researcher developed a better understanding of administrators'

perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

*Participants*

The participants were five assistant principals employed in elementary, middle and high

schools in the High Stakes RESA (pseudonym), which implemented a mentoring program for

newly hired assistant principals. Additional participants were three principals serving as mentors

in High Stakes RESA for the assistant principals involved in the mentoring program, and a

director of leadership development employed with High Stakes RESA who helped to develop

and coordinate the assistant principal mentoring program. The High Stakes RESA implemented a

mentoring program to help guide assistant principals through their first year in their leadership

role.

High Stakes RESA is located east of Atlanta. The RESA was comprised of fifteen public

school districts: 35 elementary schools; 42 middle schools; 25 high schools; and 15 alternative

schools. In addition, there were 3 charter schools in the RESA. There were more than 50,000

students enrolled in the fifteen High Stakes RESAs' (approximately 45% African American,

50% Caucasian, and 5% Hispanic) and more than 8,000 school and system level instructional

support and administrative staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, media specialist, psychologist,

social workers, counselors, nurses and administrative staff members) employed in the district.

Purposive sampling was used to select the five assistant principals and three principal

mentors and one director of leadership development from the fifteen High Stakes RESAs'.

Purposive sampling was used because of the characteristics that each participant displayed and

the purpose of the study. The participants in the study had to meet the following criteria:

1.         The participants have served a minimum of one year as an assistant principal in the High Stakes RESA.

2.         The participants have participated in the High Stakes RESA assistant principal mentoring program.

3.         The participants have served as principal mentors for a minimum of one year.

4.         The participant has served as Director of Leadership Development in the High Stakes RESA for a minimum of two years.

Five assistant principal mentees and three principals serving as a mentor in High Stakes RESA and a director of leadership development met the set criteria. Assistant Principal Johnson was employed at Rising Stars Elementary. Assistant Principal Cole was employed at Quality Elementary School. Assistant Principal Lee was employed at High Achievers Middle School. Assistant Principal Parker was employed at Success Middle School, and Assistant Principal Carter was employed at Superior High School (all pseudonyms). Each assistant principal were asked to take part in the study. These three principals, Principal Smith, Principal Mills, and Principal Jones (all pseudonyms) and the director of leadership development Director Davis (pseudonym) was asked to participant in the study. Principal Mills served as principal at Success Middle School. Principal Jones served as principal at Superior High School, and Principal Smith served as principal at Rising Stars Elementary School (all pseudonyms). Each assistant principal and principal was housed at the same school throughout the mentoring process.

All five assistant principals who participated in the study have participated in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA. The three principal mentors have mentored at least one assistant principal who participated in the mentoring program. The director of leadership development has developed and coordinated the administrative mentoring program.

The director of leadership development, Director Davis, employed with High Stakes RESA in the county office, communicated the purpose of the mentoring program to each assistant principal prior to their participation and the principals' role as mentors. Direct Davis explained to each assistant principal that they would learn about effective leadership through the eight roles of leadership (data analysis, curriculum, assessment and instruction, performance, operations, relationship, process improvement, change and learning and development leader). Also, it was communicated to assistant principals during their initial meeting the importance of protocol throughout the mentoring program, attendance, active involvement and documentation of activities. The assistant principals first had to complete an application process in addition to being recommended by their current principals. The assistant principals that showed initiative and great leadership abilities in addition to excellent recommendations from their principals were chosen to participant in the mentoring program. The mentoring program would allow the assistant principals to learn how to become high performing instructional leaders; while incorporating the eight roles of leadership.

Director Davis explained to principals that their role as mentors would be to guide assistant principals through the eight roles of leadership. The principals were able to discuss the activities that each assistant principal had to participate in and evidence of understanding and completion of each activity. The principals were required to meet weekly with their mentees. The assistant principals were housed in the same school with their mentors. The director felt that placing the mentee and mentor in the same building would result in a quality mentoring program, because of the proximity and support that would be given to the mentees.

In 2007-2008 school year, High Stakes RESA had their first initial meeting during the month of May 2008 prior to the end of the school year. During the month of July 2008 the mentoring program began with the new assistant principals and principal mentors.

The assistant principal mentoring program was developed to assist new assistant principals their first year as administrators. The mentoring program was developed to support new assistant principals through what has been considered the most difficult year as administrators and that is the first year. The information that was gathered through this study was helpful to the researchers' understanding of administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The information gathered through this study would be useful in helping the researcher implement a mentoring program in her school district.

*Instrumentation*

The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection. A characteristic of all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Other advantages are the researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

The researcher used interviews as the primary methods of data collection. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with assistant principals as mentees, principals as mentors and director of leadership development as coordinator of the assistant principal mentoring program. Wortheb, Sanders and Fitzpatrick (1997) found that interviews allow for clarification and probing and should be used when greater depth of information is needed. The researcher used interviews to gain more in-depth and concrete information on assistant principals and their

current mentoring program, mentors and their role in the mentoring program as well as much needed data on the programs purpose from the director of leadership development. In addition, the researcher's goal was to gain data on the benefits, strengths, weaknesses, and barriers from all three participant groups.

The researcher worked to find common themes and patterns from the nine participants' interviews. The researcher transcribed audio taped-recorded interviews. The researcher developed nine interview questions that were asked of all participants. The researcher used flexibility when interviewing the three groups of participants.

Triangulation was used to gather information from the three different groups of participants. Triangulation refers to the idea that multiple sources bring more credibility and validity to an investigation (Lichtman, 2006). By examining evidence from different sources and using it to build justification for themes, the strategy of triangulation was used to promote trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2003). The trustworthiness of the 9 interview questions was established through the examination of research questions prior to implementation. The researcher analyzed each interview question to make certain that they were aligned with the review of literature and the research questions prior to conducting the interviews.

*Data collection*

The researcher was given permission to carry out a study in High State RESA and gained an informed consent (see Appendix A). A research proposal was prepared and presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval and approval was given (see Appendix B).

Assistant principals' interviews were used as to gather data. The principal interviews were used as a means to collect data, and the director of leadership development interview was used as a means collect data. The researcher formulated interview questions after reviewing the

literature. The researcher used a semi-structured interview format to interview each participant in their natural setting. Each interview was conducted in the assistant principals, principals and director of leaderships' offices. The interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the researcher used an interview protocol (see Appendix D) to take notes during the interview. Before each interview the researcher reminded each participant of the purpose of the study and required each participant to read and sign the informed consent (see Appendix C).

Pseudonyms were used to guard the identity of the RESA, selected elementary, middle and high schools, and participants.

*Data Analysis*

Data analysis and data collection occurred simultaneously (Merriam & Associates, 2002). That is, one begins analyzing data with the first interview, the first observation, and the first document accessed in the study. Many qualitative researchers have found themselves facing hundreds of pages of transcripts or field notes without a clue where to begin (Merriam *&* Associates, 2002).

The researcher looked for common themes while comparing the data collected. The researcher, in looking for the common themes, made certain that the common themes were aligned with the three research questions. The interview gird (see Table 2) below illustrates which interview questions were used to answer the research questions. The interview grid also aligns the research questions and interview questions with the literature.

Table 1

Item Analysis: Principal, Assistant Principal, and Director of Leadership Development Interview Grid

| Research Questions | Participants Interview Questions | Research Literature |
|---|---|---|
| 1,3 | 1. What has been your personal involvement with the assistant principal mentoring program of High Stakes RESA? | Geismar, Morris, & Lieberman, 2000; Dukess, 2001; Zellner; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007 |
| 1,3 | 2. What activities of the mentoring program do you believe are the most helpful to you/assistant principal? | Malone, 2001; Levine, 2005; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Flint, 2005 |
| 1,3 | 3. How has the mentoring program affected your views of what assistant principal's should be doing? | Hess & Kelly, 2005 |
| 1,3 | 4. How have the activities of the mentoring program influenced relationships with the mentors/mentees? | Dukess, 2001;Barnett, 2004; Geismar, Morris and Lieberman, 2000 |
| 1,3 | 5. What are the biggest strengths of the program? | Anthes, 2001;Bush & Chew, 1999 |
| 1,2,3 | 6. What activities of the mentoring program do you believe to be the least helpful? | Malone, 2001; Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Barnett, 2004 |
| 1,2,3 | 7. What has kept the mentoring program from being even more successful? | Geismar, Morris & Leiberman, 2000; Hess & Kelly, 2005 |
| 1,3 | 8. What could be done to strengthen the mentoring program (i.e. how could the program be changed to make it even better)? | Chan, Webb, Bowen, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Ehrich & Hansrord, 2006 |
| 1,3 | 9. How has the mentoring program better prepared you/assistant principal for your job? | Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005; Thaler, 2001; Lashway, 2003; Muse, Thomas & Wasden, 1992; National Association of Schools for Excellence, 1999 |

Summary

Chapter 3 explored a discussion of the methodology that was used to carry out the dissertation study. The methodology has been set apart as a qualitative study created to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The researcher interviewed participants and sought to understand their interpretations of their experiences with directing mentoring programs from the directors' perspective; to participating in the program from the assistant principals' perspectives and mentoring assistant principals from the principals' perspectives. Purposive sampling of five assistant principals, three principals and one director of leadership development was used to carry out the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to complete the study. The goal of the researcher was to develop a full understanding of administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The researcher analyzed the interview responses from five newly hired assistant principals, three mentoring principals from elementary, middle and high school and one director of leadership development about administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs. Common themes were discovered when the data was analyzed.

Research Questions

The researcher designed the qualitative study to answer the following overarching question: What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals? The study was guided by the following sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring?

Sub-question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?

Sub-question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of new assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program?

The researcher used assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and a director of leadership development interview as the means to collect data. The Data collected from the transcribed interviews were reviewed thoroughly by the researcher to increase the understanding of administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

Demographic Profile of the Selected Schools

The study took place in a Georgia RESA that invested funding and other resources to implement a mentoring program to develop assistant principals into quality school leaders. The RESA, High Stakes RESA (pseudonym), is located east of Atlanta. The RESA is comprised of fifteen public school districts. There are 35 elementary schools, 42 middle schools and 25 high schools in High Stakes RESA. Each elementary school served Pre Kindergarten through fifth grade. Each middle school served sixth through eighth grade and each high school served ninth through twelfth grade. Assistant principal participants from two elementary schools (Rising Stars Elementary and Quality Elementary-both pseudonyms) in this RESA participated in the study; assistant principal participants from two middle schools (High Achievers Middle and Success Middle- both pseudonyms) in this RESA participated in the study; assistant principal participant from one high school (Superior High School- pseudonym) in this RESA participated in the study.

Rising Stars Elementary is an average size elementary school with a student enrollment of slightly less than 1000. The school has a diverse student population (approximately 40% African America, 34% Caucasian, 22% Hispanic and 4% Multi-racial) that is 42% free and reduced lunch. A large portion of the student population at Rising Stars Elementary is economically disadvantaged. There are 80 certified teachers. The staff attrition is low, and this, according to the staff, was the basis for the high student achievement, staff moral and community involvement. In 2008-2009, the school had no teachers transfer to another school due to a downsizing in staff. The school made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years.

Quality Elementary School is an average size school located in the rural part of High Stakes RESA with an enrollment of more than 750. The school has a diverse population (approximately 32% African America, 57% Caucasian, and 5% Hispanic, and 7% Multiracial) that is 81% free and reduced lunch. There are 65 certified teachers. Quality Elementary is a community school. The community involvement is high, and the students benefit. In 2008-2009, five teachers (3%) left the profession or resigned from their positions. Quality Elementary consistently made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) each year for five consecutive years.

High Achiever's Middle School is located in the rural part of the school system with a student enrollment of 1400. The school has a diverse population (approximately 34% African America, 48 % Caucasian, 14% Hispanic and 4% Multi-Racial) that is 33% free and reduced lunch. There are 130 certified teachers. In 2008-2009, no teachers (0%) left the profession or transferred to another school. The High Achiever's Middle School advocates for parent involvement to increase and because of the involvement the school made Adequate Yearly Progress for four consecutive years.

Success Middle School is located in the eastern part of the High Stakes RESA with an enrollment of 1500. The school has a diverse population (approximately 22% African America, 41% Caucasian, 16% Hispanic, and 21% Multi-Racial) that is 42% free and reduced lunch. There are 145 certified teachers. In 2008-2009 only 8 teachers (12%) left the profession or transferred to another school. The Success Middle School community involvement is low but the students still perform well despite the lack of parental support. Success Middle School achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years.

Superior High School is located in the eastern part of the High Stakes RESA with an enrollment of 1800. The school has a diverse population (approximately 30% African America,

55% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, and 3% Multi-Racial) that is 35% free and reduced lunch. There are 160 certified teachers. In 2008-2009, 4 teachers (6%) left the profession or transferred to another school. The school is located in a highly involved community that contributes to the school success. Superior High School made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for six consecutive years.

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Participants in the study worked in elementary, middle, high schools and a district office in a Georgia RESA that provided resources to develop assistant principals into high performing school leaders by implementing a mentoring program. The five assistant principals, three principals and one director of leadership development each played a key role in the mentoring program developed by the RESA. Every assistant principal, principal and director of leadership development; who participated in the mentoring program took part in the first meeting held in May 2008 to discuss the purpose of the mentoring program and the goal for each participant. The initial training held during the month of May 2008 was conducted by Director Davis (pseudonym), Director of Leadership Development for High Stakes RESA. Director Davis had 28 years of educational experience and 22 of those years were on-the-job training as a building level principal. He also had 3 years of experience as director of leadership development with the High Stakes RESA.

Director Davis was instrumental in the development and implementation of the assistant principal mentoring program. Director Davis explained that the program would take place during the span of one school year. Director Davis communicated with each participate the vision behind the mentoring program; which was to start a program that supported assistant principals because in the past there was a gap between knowing and doing. He stated that, "a lot of people

believe they know what to do when it comes to administration but when you look at performance that is not always true." The program consisted of hands on experiences and practical exposure so that each assistant principal could see how the job is done well. During the initial meeting, Director Davis discussed the training modules that the assistant principals would become acquainted with in relation to High Stakes RESA; such as, finance, public relations, student support, master scheduling, decision making, effective use of time, standards based classrooms, instructional supervision, discipline and school improvement planning.

Director Davis explained in great detail the importance of mentor and mentee relationships. He explained that each assistant principal would be matched with a principal mentor that was currently serving as a principal with High Stakes RESA. He explained to every assistant principal and principal that the goal of the program was to produce high performing leaders and that being a mentor was a great responsibility. Each assistant principal and principal were paired together during the initial meeting and worked together throughout the year long program. The program official started in July 2008 at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

*Elementary Assistant Principal Participants*

*Assistant Principal Johnson*

Assistant Principal Johnson (pseudonym), a black female, the assistant principal at Rising Stars Elementary School. She had 12 years of educational experience. Assistant Principal Johnson was serving her first year as an assistant principal at Rising Stars Elementary, an average size school with 75 certified teachers and less than a 1000 students. Her elementary school had been named a Title I distinguished school for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years. Assistant Principal Johnson had an Educational Specialist

Degree. She participated in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA

during the 2008-2009 school year. When questioned as to why she decided to become an

assistant principal she declared,

> I wanted to be in a position in leadership where I could make a major impact on the
>
> lives of teachers and students. I knew my first year as a teacher that I wanted to go into
>
> administration. I was given the opportunities during my time as a teacher to serve in
>
> different leadership roles and each experience drew me closer to my calling.

Assistant Principal Johnson described her key role as an assistant principal with the

following comments.

> I feel that my major role as an assistant principal is to help develop teachers into better
>
> teachers. I enjoy training and educating teachers on the latest trends in education. It really
>
> does my heart good to see teachers' implementing something I have trained them on and
>
> student achievement skyrockets. This is what I was born to do: train others to be the best
>
> teachers they can be.

*Assistant Principal Cole*

Assistant Principal Cole (pseudonym), a black male, with 18 years of educational

experience, was the assistant principal at Quality Elementary School. Assistant Principal Cole

was serving his first year as an assistant principal at Quality Elementary School, located in the

rural part of High Stakes RESA with an enrollment of more than 750 and 65 certified teachers.

Her elementary school had been named a Title I distinguished school for making Adequate

Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years. Assistant Principal Cole had an Educational

Specialist Degree. He participated in the assistant principal mentoring program with the High

Stakes RESA during the 2008-2009 school year. He was pursuing a doctorate degree in Administration. When asked why he decided to become an assistant principal, he commented,

When I worked as a classroom teacher in a high school, I served on several different committees and helped to lead staff development sessions on standards-based classrooms, performance based instructions and Pyramid of Interventions just to name a few. These trainings gave me the confidence I needed to lead people. I said to myself if I can be effective with my peers; I know I can be effective with others as well. I had been told on many occasions by Principal Mr. Jones (pseudonym), that I had a passion for leading people to do the right work. I took his advice and the confidence I had gained and began working on developing myself into a leader through my graduate courses. Once I completed my Specialist in leadership, I obtained this position and qualified for the assistant principal mentoring program.

Assistant Principal Cole acknowledged that his main role as an assistant principal is to work on changing the mindset of teachers from most children can learn to all children can learn.

*Middle School Assistant Principal Participants*
*Assistant Principal Lee*

Assistant Principal Lee (pseudonym), a black female, was the assistant principal at High Achievers Middle School. She had 11 years of educational experience. She is the assistant principal at High Achievers Middle that had 130 certified teachers and 1400 students. Her middle school had made Adequate Yearly Progress for four consecutive years. She is serving her first year as an assistant principal. Assistant Principal Lee was the only assistant principal in the study with a doctorate degree in administration. She participated in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA during the 2008-2009 school year. When asked

what her major role as an assistant principal was, she replied, "to make a profound difference in the lives of teachers and students and to impact the community in a positive way."

*Assistant Principal Parker*

Assistant Principal Parker (pseudonym), a black female, with 9 years of educational experience is the assistant principal at Success Middle School. Assistant Principal Parker is serving her first year as an assistant principal. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, she served as a classroom teacher for eight years in the same district. She has a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. She was in the process of researching different leadership program so that she could begin work on her Educational Specialist Degree. She worked at Success Middle School that had an enrollment of 1500 and 145 certified teachers. She participated in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA. When asked what her major role was an assistant principal, she replied, "to make certain that students are afforded every opportunity possible to learn despite where they come from."

*Assistant Principal Carter*

Assistant Principal Carter (pseudonym), a white male, with 7 years of educational experience is the assistant principal at Superior High School, with 1800 students and 160 certified teachers. Assistant Principal Carter had the least amount of experience in education among all the assistant principals. He has a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. Superior was named a Title I distinguished school because of their six consecutive years of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Assistant Principal Carter discussed his major role as an assistant principal by saying, "I consider myself an instructional leader in the school. I know that I am responsible for curriculum being taught with fidelity, rigor and relevance. I know it is

my job to monitor, train, prepare and support each teacher in the full implementation of this key

responsibility."

*Elementary, Middle and High Principal Participants*

Three elementary, middle and high principals participated in the study. One principal

from each level was selected to participate in the study. Each selected principal had served a

minimum of one year as a principal mentor. The total years of administrative experience ranged

from 12-30 years. The principal participants' degree level ranged from specialist to doctorate

degree.

*Principal Smith*

Principal Smith (pseudonym), a black male, was the Principal at Rising Stars Elementary

School. He was the only principal with a doctorate degree in administration that participated in

the study. Prior to becoming a principal, Principal Smith served as a teacher, counselor and

assistant principal for the High Stakes RESA. Principal Smith had 16 years of educational

experience and 6 years as a building level principal. Principal Smith served on several

committees and participated in meaningful professional learning activities within the High

Stakes RESA; for example, district representative for the Georgia Association of Educational

Leaders (GAEL) and training on the eight roles of leadership. Principal Smith served as a

principal mentor in the assistant principal mentoring program. When asked what motivated him

to become a principal, he replied,

My mentors throughout my educational experiences all saw something in me that at first I

did not see and that was the capacity to lead. I am motivated to lead and make a

difference because I serve the community in which I was educated and I want to see each

student reach their full potential in life. I want to support each parent to be the best parent

they can be. I know that if I make a difference in my community that is the first step in making a difference in the world.

*Principal Mills*

Principal Mills (pseudonym), a black male, was the principal at Success Middle School. He had twelve years of educational experience and four of those years had been dedicated to being a successful principal. Prior to becoming a principal, Principal Mills served as a classroom teacher and assistant principal. Principal Mills served as a principal mentor in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA. Principal Mills had a specialist degree but currently had no plans to pursue a doctorate degree in administration. Principal Mills was a big component of professional development and had participated in numerous trainings on the impact of mentoring, instructional leadership and eight roles of leadership. When asked what motivated Principal Mills to become a principal, he replied, "Since education is the key that unlocks doors of opportunity, I wanted to be a part of the process of providing students with the most qualified teacher to educate them so that they would be prepared to unlock the many doors of opportunity to have a brighter future."

*Principal Jones*

Principal Jones (pseudonym), a white female, was the principal of Superior High School. She was the principal with the most years of educational experience in the study. She had served 12 years as a building level principal and worked at a successful school. Principal Jones held a Specialist Degree in Educational Administration. She had no desire to pursue a doctorate degree because she was so close to retirement. Principal Jones served as a principal mentor in the assistant principal mentoring program with High Stakes RESA. Throughout her educational experiences she had been a classroom teacher, district office curriculum director and assistant

principal. When asked what motivated her to become a principal, she replied, "I believe that the most important job of a principal is to hire the right people and retain them and I knew what to look for in a potential teacher and I knew what students needed; therefore, I put myself in a position as principal and made a major impact on the hiring practices in my district.

## Findings

To present the findings, the researcher collected and analyzed data from the assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership development interview. The researcher looked at administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. Data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously. The researcher looked for common patterns while reviewing the data. The recurring patterns/themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were categorized and analyzed in relation to the three research sub-questions. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data in relationship to the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) roles and responsibility of educational leaders since the mentoring program was designed around the eight roles. The overarching question of the study was this: What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for assistant principals. The Findings in this chapter were highlighted by the following sub-questions that guided the study:

Sub-question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring?

Sub-question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?

Sub-question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program?

Response to Research Questions

*Sub-question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring?*

The purpose of this research question was to understand what newly hired assistant principals perceived as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring. This research question was answered by participants' responses to nine interview research questions (See Table 1, p.54). It was brought out in the study that the assistant principal mentoring program was effective. Assistant Principal Johnson confirmed that, "Exposure, Exposure, the opportunity to grow and development as a new leader has been extremely rewarding for me." The other assistant principals also mentioned that the assistant principal mentoring program was helpful to them because of the exposure, hands-on experiences, building relationships and support. The assistant principals also discussed how their school district had implemented the mentoring program that new assistant principals had the privilege of being a part of to cultivate their skills as new school leaders. Further data analysis revealed that assistant principals' participation in the mentoring program provided them experiences as a relationship leader and performance leader according to the Georgia Leadership Institute of School Improvement (GLISI) and the eight roles of leadership. Two themes, relationship building and hands on experiences, surfaced from the data.

*Relationship Building*

After careful examination of the assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership development interview it was discovered that the assistant principal mentoring program supported assistant principals in learning the different aspects of being a new school leader. The assistant principal mentoring program was a year long program that new assistant principals had an opportunity to participate in their first year as assistant principals. The

mentoring program basically set the stage for new leaders by giving them clear expectations as

new assistant principals and experiences that would help develop their skills as new assistant

principals. Assistant principals, principals and the director of leadership development agreed that

relationship building was an important aspect of the assistant principal mentoring program.

Assistant principals and principals discussed their experiences in the mentoring program;

it was obvious that relationship building was critical to their growth and development as new

assistant principals. Assistant principal Cole declared, "I believe this mentoring program has

allowed for professional relationships and trust to be built between the mentor and the mentee

being given the opportunity to interact with peers and receive information from principals that I

would not have gotten if I did not go through this program has been unbelievable." All assistant

principals decided that relationship building during their first year as assistant principals gave

them confidence because they had someone to call and depend on throughout the tedious

process. Principal Mills commented, "I think that we have built positive relationships. It goes

back to that open communication and being able to give the new assistant principals the

opportunity to be themselves, give them the opportunity to be free and creating that non-risk type

of environment." Assistant Principal Carter stated, "I was given honest feedback from my

mentor, but at the same time my mentor stayed encouraging." Assistant Principal Carter went on

to add, "We communicated about everything." The responses showed that the assistant principal

mentoring program was helpful to assistant principals because of the relationship building. The

assistant principals and principals participants believed that  assistant principal mentoring

programs provided an opportunity for quality relationships to be built between mentor and

mentee; therefore, increasing the effectiveness of the program. According to assistant principals

and principals, being a relationship leader is a major responsibility of a school leader and it was

important that assistant principals learned this "at the beginning stages of their development as leaders."

*Hands-On Experiences*

An examination of data from the assistant principal interviews, principals' interviews and director of leadership development interview discovered assistant principal mentoring was effective, because of relationship building as well as hands-on experiences in which each assistant principal had the opportunity to participate. Assistant Principals and Principals worked with each other as mentor and mentee. It was obvious from the responses that the assistant principal mentoring program was helpful to assistant principals because of the hands on experiences.

Assistant Principal Parker acknowledged that, "People can tell you certain things they've gone through, but until you've actually done it you really can't have that understanding or appreciation for it." According to Assistant Principal Cole, "every experience we had we had to log it and discuss with our mentor, in this log you had to document your different experiences with the eight roles of leadership. Now, different weeks brought different experiences and my mentor understood that. My mentor expected me to have experience in six of the eight roles of leadership every week; for example, change leader, what did I learn to change? and What resources did I use as a change leader and the tasks I did as a change leader." As stated by Principal Lee, "hands on experiences were great; it is actually the walking through it, day to day, filling out reports, going to meetings, talking to teachers, talking to parents that taught me the most. We actually had a gas leak and had to evacuate the building. My mentor walked me through the entire experience. It's with this type of hands on experience that you actually learn how to deal with on the spot decisions and handle yourself in the midst of a crisis." Assistant

principal participants' spoke about the importance of learning to be a performance leader and dealing with hands on experiences through the assistant mentoring program and how it has helped develop them into more effective leaders.

Director Davis stated, "Having veteran principals speak about their experiences as school leaders and give detailed information and advice about the day to day job of a school leader, I thought was an invaluable experience for the assistant principals." Principal Jones stated, "I believe interactions with peers discussing situations and hearing how others would handle those situations is very beneficial." Assistant principals discussed how they were each given an opportunity to participate in mock interviews as interviewee and as interviewers. They stated that the purpose of this process was to learn how to interview effectively and to know what to look for in a resume and in a potential candidate.

The assistant principals all agreed that because of the many supervised hands on experiences they had as new assistant principals participating in the mentoring programs, it made them better assistant principals because they know what to expect in different situations and they are well versed in the eight roles of leadership.

*Summary*

The researcher recognized two key reasons as to what assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring. The data proved that assistant principals perceived assistant principal mentoring programs to be effective because of building relationships and hands on experiences.

*Sub-question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?*

Sub-question two was developed to understand the barriers that assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs. This particular question was answered by the participants' responses to nine the interview questions (See Table 1). Data analysis suggested that assistant principal mentoring program did have barriers according to the assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership interview. Even though there were barriers brought out through the data analysis, the participants in the study still had exposure as Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction Leaders, Data analysis Leaders and Learning and Development Leaders; according to Georgia Leadership Institute for school improvement (GLISI). Themes that emerged from the data included limited exposure, time constraints, and lack of support beyond the mentoring program.

*Limited Exposure*

Assistant principals, principals and the director of leadership development all discussed limited exposure as a barrier to the effectiveness of the assistant principal mentoring program. When the participants discussed limited exposure as it related to assistant principals; they were referring to assistant principals that are only exposed to one aspect of the assistant principalship, for example, discipline or testing. Data analysis revealed that assistant principals believe it is vital for them to have exposure to all aspects of the assistant principalship, because it better prepares them for their future roles as principals. Assistant Principal Parker stated, "One of the dilemmas that I face as an Assistant Principal at my school is that the Assistant Principals are categorized into certain roles. I feel that the Assistant Principal should get experiences in all the components of the job." Principal Mills stated, "I feel an assistant principal must play an active role in the decision making. Limiting an assistant principal to two or three specific duties does not promote leadership growth in your school." The Assistant Principal Participants' all agreed

that they would like to have exposure in more than one school setting as a first year assistant principal.

The assistant principals all felt that the different exposure would bring different experience that would enhance their role as assistant principals. According to Assistant Principal Parker, "I would have liked the opportunity to work in two different school settings in a different part of the district as a new assistant principal so that I could see different learning styles." The assistant principals, principals and Director of Leadership Development all agreed that limited exposure was a barrier to the effectiveness of the mentoring program; in order to grow as a leader one needs the opportunity to be involved in all eight roles of leadership.

*Time Constraints*

The participant responses revealed that time constraints was a barrier for the mentoring program. Time constraints were referred to as a barrier because according to Principal Smith, there was never enough time to give assistant principals full exposure to every aspect of the job, because so much goes into the role as assistant principal that it cannot be taught in just one school term. Assistant principal participants' reported that time was a concern for them as well because as soon as they would get involved in one aspect of the job it was time to switch gears and learn a different component. The participants' all felt that the program would have been more beneficial if it spanned two consecutive years as opposed to only one. Assistant Principal Carter stated, "There was never enough time for me to learn every single aspect of the job because something changed every week and it was always necessary to switch gears; even though what I did learn helped mold me into a better assistant principal." Further data analysis revealed that time constraints were considered a barrier but did not prevent the assistant principal participants' from taking full advantage of the opportunities they did have to learn. According to

the assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership development interview, time will always be considered a barrier in education.

Principal Jones stated, "On a day to day basis, we would plan to address certain aspects of the role as assistant principal, but something would always come up. A parent may call to complain about a teacher. A student might get into a fight. A county office meeting may be called at the last minute. So, we did not always get to address every item on our agenda for that day or week." Data analysis revealed that all assistant principals, principals and director of leadership developed were faced with the challenge of having enough time to address the important aspects of the mentoring program while attending to many other tasks. Principal Smith and Principal Mills both addressed the need for assistant principals to learn to juggle different tasks. Principal Smith and Principal Mills referred to time as a "balancing act."

*Lack of Support beyond the Mentoring Program*

The data revealed from each participants interview that support beyond the mentoring program was a barrier to the effectiveness of the program. The assistant principal participants' all agreed that once the year long program was complete, there was no follow up the following school year to check the progress of the assistant principal participants'. The assistant principals felt that they had great support as new assistant principals being supported their first year, but after the first year they were considered to be knowledgeable enough about their roles as assistant principals and the support was not needed. They believed they needed follow up beyond the one year mentoring program.

Principal Jones stated, "It would have been helpful to the assistant principals to continue the process…but there were not enough trained mentors to be involved in the assistant principal mentoring program for the new assistant principals, and for the assistant principal who have

completed the mentoring program." Principal Jones went on to say that the district needed to

invest more resources into developing more high performing mentors to allow the support to

carry over into the second year with the assistant principals.

Assistant Principal Carter stated, "the mentoring program was such a success that I hate

to focus on the negative; so much is changing in education that a second year of support could

only help me grow into a more effective leader." The data gathered revealed that the mentoring

program was successful but had room to improve for future participants.

*Summary*

The researcher acknowledged barriers of the Assistant Principal mentoring program that

would hinder the program's effectiveness. The barriers affected the mentoring program in the

following ways. The assistant principals had limited exposure to more than one component of the

job; for example, one assistant principal may be responsible for curriculum and instruction but

have no exposure to discipline or custodial responsibilities. Next, time constraints were

considered a barrier to the mentoring programs effectiveness because according to the

participants there was never enough time to focus in-depth on the eight roles of leadership.

Finally, lack of support beyond the program was considered a barrier because new assistant

principals have support the first year on the job but the support ends after the first year.

*Sub-question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in*

*the assistant principal mentor program?*

The third research question was developed to understand the benefits and barriers of the

program that mentoring principal's saw. The comments made in reference to the nine interview

questions answered the third research question (See Table 1, p.54).

Mentoring principals viewed the mentoring program through different lenses. Two major themes emerged. First, they believed that the mentoring program had a large success primarily because of selection; that is pairing the right mentor with the right mentee. However, the mentoring principals believed that a weakness of the program is that there is no formal and on-going honest evaluation of the mentees by the mentors. The mentees were not evaluated until the program ended. The mentees felt that if they were evaluated over a period of time they could correct areas of weakness and have time to improve. The mentors saw the need for evaluation, but the program was created so that mentees would be evaluated at the end of the program.

*Mentor Selection*

The three principal mentors acknowledged mentor selection as a benefit or strength to the assistant principal mentoring program. Mentor selection according to the principal participants' is the single most important component of any mentoring program for new assistant principals for the following reasons: their knowledge base of the eight roles of leadership, their willingness to share important information, their capacity to lead, their attitude and personality, their comfort level with someone being as knowledgeable as they are in the eight roles of leadership, their character, their level of confidentiality and the time they are willing to put into the program.

Principal Smith stated, "It is important that mentor selection is taken seriously. In order for us to develop assistant principals into future principals they must be exposed to mentors that don't mind sharing valuable information and mentors that are dedicated to helping develop high performing leaders." Principal Mills stated, "I think that it is a privilege and an honor to be in a position to help someone, and I take it very serious because I would like to think that I would have a positive impact on a person and their development into a high performing leader."

Principal Mills went on to add that he looks at mentoring assistant principals in the same regards as he does with working with students, "I give them honest feedback and boost their confidence." Principal Jones stated, "Mentoring helps me to grow as well. It helps me to stay on top of my game because at that time I'm in a role model position so it reminds me that someone is looking at me and I have to be sure that I exhibit professionalism and positive leadership as I serve as role for the new assistant principal and hopefully aspiring principal." The principal participants all agreed that they had been given a high charge that they each took seriously.

When pairing mentors and mentees it is imperative that much thought and consideration is put into the process. Research revealed that a mentoring program can not be successful without careful planning and preparation in the pairing phase of the program. Personalities, strengths, weaknesses, respect and motivation needs to be taken into consideration on both sides. There must be a level of mutual respect in the mentor and mentee relationship in order for there to be success.

The data revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program had a huge benefit and that was mentor selection, but a barrier to the program was revealed as well and that was the evaluation component. The evaluation component according to the principal participants and the director of leadership development was not as effective as it needed to be for such a valuable program. Director Davis stated, "In order for this program to be more effective the evaluation process needs to be on going. Currently we are only evaluating the assistant principals at the end of the program." Director Davis went on to add that in order to make the program more effective we need to evaluate on a weekly or bi-weekly basis so that the assistant principals can make adjustments or changes as necessary. Principal Mills stated, "We should treat this mentoring program just like we treat teacher evaluations; we evaluate teachers on-going, why would we not

evaluate this program the same way?" Principal Jones and Principal Smith both agreed that a barrier to the program was not looking at the process more frequently to determine if changes need to be made. Principal Jones stated, "I would hate for us to have a person in this year long process that is not effective and we not find until the program has ended."

*Summary*

It was discovered through data collection and analysis that the assistant principal mentoring program was valuable to all assistant principal participants. The mentoring program provided assistant principals an opportunity to develop into high performing leaders because of the hands on learning opportunities and building relationships.

*Overarching question: What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals?*

In response to the overarching question, all data were gathered from the three sub-questions to report the findings. The following research findings are reported to answer the overarching question.

- Assistant principals perceived the assistant principal mentoring program as an effective tool that enhanced their skills as new leaders.

- Assistant principal perceived exposure to on the job experiences as rewarding and helpful in the development as new leaders.

- Assistant principals and principals perceived the assistant principal mentoring to be helpful because of the positive relationships that are built between mentor and mentee.

- The data revealed assistant principals gained knowledge about effective leadership.

- Assistant principals gained a support system from their mentors and built a level of trust.

- The assistant principal mentoring program allowed mentor and mentee relationships to foster great lines of communication.

- The mentoring program created a non-risk environment for assistant principals to express themselves.

- The mentoring program gave assistant principals the opportunity to gain hands on experiences learning the eight roles of leadership.

- The data revealed that assistant learned what to do and what not to do on the job from principal mentors.

- Data analysis revealed that it is vital that assistant principals have exposure to all aspects of the assistant principalship because it better prepares them for their future roles as principals.

- Assistant principal participants' all agreed that they would like to have exposure in more than one school setting as a first year assistant principal.

- Data revealed that assistant principals, principals and director of leadership development agreed that limited exposure was a barrier to the effectiveness of the mentoring program; in order to grow as a leader you need the opportunity to be involved in all eight roles of leadership.

- Data revealed that principal mentors considered time constraints a barrier to the effectiveness of the program, because there was never enough time to focus in-depth on the eight roles of leadership.

- All participants according to the data agreed that assistant principals need support beyond the mentoring program.

- Data also revealed that mentor selection was vital to the success of the mentoring program.

- Data revealed that the evaluation process needs to be enhanced to better serve the participants in the mentoring program.

## Summary

Chapter 4 discussed the findings of the study. Three sub-questions guided the study. Within the data collection and analysis of the assistant principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership interview, several themes emerged. Elementary, middle and high assistant principals, principals and director of leadership development saw the need for an assistant principal mentoring program for new assistant principals. It was brought out through the data that the assistant principal mentoring program was a necessity despite some barriers. The assistant principals, principals and director of leadership development decided that the assistant principal mentoring program should continue within their district and should be open to all new assistant principals.

Chapter 5 will focus on a review of the findings related to the literature, implications for educational leaders, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section one provides a discussion of the data presented in chapter 4. Section two discusses the implications. Section three offers recommendations for further study and section four provides concluding thoughts as they relate the research.

Summary

In the era of accountability where school leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom-line results and use data to drive decisions, the skill and knowledge of principals matter more than ever (Hess & Kelly, 2005). In order to meet these strict accountability standards, educational leaders who are responsible for student learning and teacher development must be provided with ample guidance. Mentoring has been deemed as one way to cultivate and make new administrators ready for the challenges that they will face as they begin their careers (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). The researcher's purpose of this study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The researcher developed the qualitative study to answer the following overarching question: What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals? The study was guided by the following sub-questions:

Sub-Question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring?

Sub-Question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?

Sub-Question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program?

Participants in this study were from elementary, middle, and high schools and a district office in a Georgia RESA that provided funding and other resources to implement a mentoring program for the development of assistant principals into quality school leaders. High Stakes RESA (pseudonym) is located east of Atlanta. Purposive sampling was used to select five participating assistant principals, three principal mentors and one director of leadership development within High Stakes RESA.

This qualitative study was carried out by interviewing five participating assistant principals, three mentoring principals from elementary, middle and high schools, and one director of leadership development in High Stakes RESA (pseudonym). Interviews were used as the primary means to collect data.

The Interviews were face to face with each participant. The interviews included open ended questions that were few in number. The researcher used the same interview questions and protocol with each participant. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants and schools that participated in the study. The researcher analyzed the data from each interview as it was related to the research questions.

The researcher used the transcribed data and analyzed the interviews in relation to the three research questions. This study uncovered administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Findings

The findings were presented in Chapter 4. The purpose of the chapter was to discuss the

major findings from the study as they relate to the literature. The program was designed in part

around the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement eight roles of leadership and

participants believed that the focus helped keep the program on track.

*Sub-question 1: What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of*

*assistant principal mentoring?*

Mentoring administrators can have a major impact on the success or failure of today's

schools (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).Young and Wright (2001) defined mentoring as the

establishment of a viable relationship to enhance individual, career, personal and professional

growth and development. The assistant principals in this study were required to participant in the

assistant principal mentoring program.

Thaler (2001) observed that successful people have one thing in common- an influential

mentor at some point in their lives. Having a mentor is the single most important reason why

certain people tend to rise higher in corporations than others (Wellington, 2001). Mentoring is

important as evidenced in the research in which Malone (2000) noted that when principals were

asked to identify a vital component of their preparation, they most often identified other school

leaders as their primary source in helping them become successful school leaders. Malone also

pointed out that these mentoring relationships helped the principals throughout their careers. The

data revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program allowed assistant principals to

develop their skills as a relationship leader and performance leader; by building relationships

with mentors and gaining hands-on experiences as new leaders. The analysis of the assistant

principal interviews, principal interviews and director of leadership development interview

revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program supported assistant principals in learning the different aspects of being a new school leader.

To help new assistant principals succeed, more school districts are capitalizing on the expertise of their senior administrators by adding mentor programs to the mix of practical training programs for beginning assistant principals (Malone, 2001) Assistant principals also revealed that relationship building during their first year as assistant principals gave them confidence because they had someone to call and depend on throughout the tedious process.

Crow and Matthews (1998) noted that mentoring not only provides administrators with specific ideas and strategies, it encourages them to be more reflective and analytical about their practice. The principal mentors and director of leadership development in the study revealed that mentor selection was a benefit to the mentoring program. They believed that an effective mentor could have lasting positive effects on new assistant principal's growth and development. An analysis of the data from assistant principal interviews revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program was instrumental in the development because of the strong mentor that they were matched with and the opportunity to not only discuss leadership issues but to actually get involved in making administrative decisions.

Data revealed that assistant principals and principals, assistant principal mentoring programs provided an opportunity for quality relationships to be built between mentor and mentee; therefore, increasing the effectiveness of the program. Geismar, Morris, and Lieberman (2000) indicated that mentoring can move new administrators from a position of dependence to independence. A mentoring relationship in which the mentor "leads instead of manages, who empowers instead of controls, and who is reflective and critical" affords the new principal the opportunity to learn how to lead. Mentoring may also aid new principals in establishing a

network of peers and experienced professionals who can provide support and guidance. This support may in turn build the new assistant principal's confidence and competence in his or her new occupation. The success of the principal is determined by building the capacity to lead (Doughty, Gideon, Jinkins, MacNamara & Zellner, 2002).

According to assistant principals and principals, being a relationship leader is a major responsibility of a school leader and it was important that assistant principals learned this "at the beginning stages of their development as leaders." The assistant principals all agreed that because of the many hands on experiences they had as new assistant principal participating in the mentoring programs, it made them better assistant principals because they know what to expect in different situations and they are well versed in the eight roles of leadership.

*Sub-Question 2: What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?*

Through data analysis it was discovered that the assistant principal mentoring program did have barriers that undermined the effectiveness of the program. Limited exposure, time restraints, and lack of support beyond the program emerged as barriers to the assistant principal mentoring program.

Limited exposure was identified as the first barrier. According to Hartzell, Williams and Nelson (1999), the school assistant principalship is the door to the principalship. Most assistant principals start their administrative career by working with principals who serve as mentors. Most researchers agree that assistant principals are not properly prepared for the principalship. Studies by Wright (1994) and May (2001) examined the principals' perceptions of assistant principals' roles and responsibilities. Wright asserted that instructional leadership was the most important training for assistant principals to be principals whereas, in May's study, assistant

principals were found not playing their roles as they should. This lack of preparation is largely because of the duties/responsibilities they are assigned as assistant principals (Richard, 2000).

Data was used to determine that assistant principals in the mentoring program wanted exposure in all areas of the assistant principalship. Data revealed assistant principals were only exposed to one aspects of the assistant principalship position, for example, disciplinarian or testing coordinator. Data analysis revealed that it is vital that assistant principals have exposure to all aspects of the assistant principalship because it better prepares them for their future roles as principals. According to the participants in the study, limiting an assistant principal to two or three specific duties does not promote leadership growth in schools.

Future leaders who are next in line for the principalship (assistant principals) need to engage in activities that go beyond the four B's (bells, behavior, books, and bats). Engagement in managerial activities does not prepare the novice administrator for the many decisions that today's principal's face (Zellner et al. 2002). Zellner & Colleagues (2002) cautioned that the primary reason for unsuccessful campus leadership includes the principal's: (1) lack of ability to disseminate leadership throughout the campus; (2) inexperience in problem solving; (3) lack of reflection on leadership practice; (4) lack of experience in keeping the campus vision as a target; (5) lack of experience in self initiated leadership activities; and (6) lack of opportunity to be mentored and supported during initial stages of development as a leader. This finding supports the literature.

The second barrier revealed was time constraints.  According to participants in the study there was never enough time to address all aspects of the assistant principal responsibilities or the eight roles of leadership. Participants felt that certain aspects of the mentoring program were not beneficial; for example, the responses from the assistant principals and principals revealed

that organizing the portfolio was considered a waste of valuable time. The assistant principals

and principals revealed that time could have been spent learning more about the eight roles of

leadership and more important aspects of the assistant principalship. The participants all felt that

more meaningful activities should have replaced the portfolio. One assistant principal revealed

that just compiling information for a portfolio was not helpful. Participants believed that not

enough time was taken for dialogue and honest reflections; for example, what happened? And

what could have been done differently?

According to Kilburg (2007) if mentoring is a high priority in a school district, then

adequate time must be provided for observations and meetings. Kilburg (2007) noted if

mentoring teams are not given sufficient time to carry out the mentoring conversations that are

so important to developing relationships, the mentoring experience may be seen as nothing more

than a token gesture.

According to Barnett (2004), activities should be designed to increase prospective school

leaders' proficiency in meeting national standards, and provide authentic tasks to reflect

activities completed by practitioners on a daily basis (Barnett, 2004). The success of the principal

is determined by building the capacity to lead (Doughty, Gideon, Jinkins, MacNamara & Zellner,

2002). High-quality preparation programs and mentoring programs can produce high-quality

leaders. All assistant principal participants revealed that they wanted to participate in activities

that would help grow them as leaders, but they all felt that lack of time prevented meaningful

participation often.

The final barrier revealed was lack of support beyond the program. According to the

Policy Forum on Education Leadership, only twenty-five percent of today's principals were

prepared to be effective instructional leaders (Black, 2000). Hale and Moorman (2003) also

suggested that leadership preparation programs are not providing the training needed for today's public school leaders. With the obvious gap between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability that school administrator's face; in order to be relevant, university preparation programs must complete a comprehensive program analyses, identify content gaps, determine instructional implications, and align the curriculum to national standards (Hale & Moorman, 2003 ). All assistant principal participants revealed that once they completed the assistant principal mentoring program there was little or no support provided their second year on the job. The principal participants revealed that the district needed to provide more resources to train high performing mentors so that the program could continue through the second year with assistant principals.

According to Zellner et al. (2002), the quality of training principals receive has everything to do with whether they will be successful and meet expectations of the job. It is important that before assistant principals assume their positions quality preparation should take place. Continuing professional development should be a priority for assistant principals once they are hired and throughout their careers. Proper training and support has to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of these jobs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). The data gathered revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program was successful but had room to improve for future participants.

*Sub-Question 3: What benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program?*

Through data analysis it was that principal mentors viewed mentor selection as a benefit of the assistant principal mentoring program and lack of frequent and honest evaluation as a barrier to the effectiveness of the assistant principal mentoring program. The researcher analyzed

the themes that emerged from the data and found this: the three principal mentors revealed

mentor selection as the single most important component of any mentoring program for new

assistant principals for numerous reasons. Principal mentors revealed that it is important that

mentors are selected that do not mind sharing valuable information with their mentees. Principal

mentors also revealed that mentoring assistant principals helped them grow as principals. Pairing

assistant principals with the right mentoring principal is critical to the success or failure of an

assistant principal. Assistant principals should be paired with a mentoring principal that does not

mind sharing their wealth of knowledge and experiences. A good match of mentee and mentor

will always result in positive outcomes for the assistant principal and the mentoring principal.

According to Dukess (2001), good mentors render three forms of assistance to new

assistant principals: (a) they provided instructional support by keeping newcomers' attention

focused on learning issues and offering models of successful practice. (b) They provided

administrative and managerial support not just by giving practice tips but by helping their

protégés set priorities. (c) They provided emotional support by listening carefully and being

present at particularly stressful moments. Dukess also concluded that good results did not

automatically come just by putting a mentor and protégé together. Key steps included careful

matching of mentors and protégés, clear expectations and guidelines for participants, adequate

time for the mentor, and selection of mentors who have a record of success and who are

"reflective, compassionate, good listeners, good communicators, and able to speak the hard

truth."

According to Zellner et al. (2002), a mentoring network of principals as well as a

framework of continuous support throughout the career of the principal is of prime importance.

Those identified to be future leaders of schools need opportunities to engage in leadership

activities that include planning, developing, directing and implementing school programs and educational change that will make a positive difference in our nation's underperforming schools and children are unlikely to succeed until we get serious about leadership.

It was discovered that principal mentors determined that evaluation of the assistant principal mentoring program was considered a barrier to the effectiveness of the program. The data revealed that principal mentors believed that the evaluation process was not effective because the participants were not evaluated over a period of time, and only at the completion of the program were the participants evaluated. The participants all felt that there was a need for honest and frequent feedback to be given to the mentees. In order for mentees to grow, it is essential that feedback is constant and honest. The data revealed that principal mentors felt that the participants should be evaluated on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to determine if the participants were being effective.

## Conclusion

The accountability movement culminating with the federal No Child Left Behind law in 2001, has put pressure on principals to improve student performance, resulting in school leaders' transitioning from a more administrative role to becoming more heavily involved in assessment, instruction, curriculum and data analysis (Butler, 2008). Research has shown that effective leadership is a key component in achieving school improvement (Harris, 2002). Mentoring has been deemed as one way to cultivate and make ready new administrators for the challenges that they will face as they begin their careers (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). The findings in the study correlated with the research sub-questions and were used to answer the overarching question, "What are administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals? Findings revealed that the assistant principal mentoring program was aligned to the eight roles of

leadership identified by the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), and had both benefits and barriers for participants.

The findings for the first research sub-question, What do newly hired assistant principals perceive as the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring?, discovered that assistant principals' perceptions of effective assistant principal mentoring aligned with the purposes of mentoring in the literature. The RESAs' purpose of the mentoring program was for assistant principals to learn to function effectively in the eight roles of leadership. Data revealed that the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring was determined by relationship building and hands-on experiences, and these practices aligned with two of GLISI's (2006) eight roles of leadership for relationship leader and performance leader. The district purpose was for assistant principals to learn to function in the eight roles of leadership.

The findings for research sub-question two, What barriers do newly hired assistant principals identify that undermine the effectiveness of mentoring programs?, brought to light barriers of assistant principal mentoring aligned with the GLISI's (2006) function of curriculum, instruction, and assessment leader, data analysis leader and learning and development leader. The three out of eight roles of leadership were revealed through the data. Although, there were barriers to the programs, the barriers did not outweigh the benefits of the assistant principals learning to be curriculum, instruction and assessment leaders, data analysis leaders and learning and development leaders. First, data gathered from assistant principal mentoring revealed limited exposure as a barrier of the mentoring program. The assistant principals, principals and director of leadership developed in the study discussed how limiting assistant principal's skills to one or two areas would hinder them from becoming high performing leaders. Second, the data revealed that time constraints was determined to be a barrier of the assistant principal mentoring program.

Third, the data revealed that lack of support beyond the program was a barrier for the effectiveness of the assistant principal mentoring program. The participants in the study all agreed that assistant principals needed support beyond their first year as assistant principals. The mentoring program revealed that assistant principals benefited from their exposure to different aspects of the job, for example, interviewing, training teachers on the latest trends in education, conducting observations, dealing with student discipline and dealing with irate parents just to name a few areas brought out in the research. The assistant principals, principals and the director of leadership development all cited the mentoring program as a benefit because assistant principals were given the opportunity to learn valuable information from mentors, communicate with mentors, shadow mentors, gain support for mentors, operate in the eight roles of leadership, and learn by doing.

Findings from research sub-question three, what benefits and barriers do mentors of newly hired assistant principals see in the assistant principal mentor program? Principal mentor participants revealed mentor selection as a benefit to the effectiveness of the assistant principal mentoring program and evaluation has a barrier to the effectiveness of the mentoring program. The principal mentors and director of leadership development all identified mentor selection as one of the most important aspects of assistant principal mentoring. Principal mentors and director of leadership development also revealed evaluation of the program as a barrier. The data revealed that the program was only evaluated at the completion of the program and not throughout the program. The participants believed that the program could be even better if the evaluation process took place over a period of time because it would be easier to identify programs and make immediate corrections and increase the program's effectiveness.

Assistant principal mentoring programs allowed assistant principals to see firsthand what it meant to be a school leader and how to address problems and concerns as they arise on a daily basis. The program provided assistant principals with a great support system throughout the program. Data also revealed that assistant principals were allowed to work hands on throughout the program and to learn by doing. The data revealed that the assistant principals learned the eight roles of leadership and how to function in each role. Through data collect and analysis, the following conclusions were established:

1. Relationship building and hands on experiences are things that cannot be taught. Participants realize that building good relationships was not something that they could learn in a book, but working closely with a mentor they understand the value of relationships. The participants quickly realized that day to day exposure is what taught them the most.

2. The goal of the program was to give exposure to the assistant principals to the eight roles of leadership but assistant principals did not have an opportunity to function in all eight roles.

3. Despite their dedication and commitment assistant principals and principal mentors often feel frustration with lack of time for meaningful engagement.

4. Assistant principals are saddened by the fact that the program expected them to be experts after one year but that was not the reality.

5. While assistant principals did not see it as a value the mentoring principal and director of leadership development thought there should be more evaluation, but by all admission it seems to be very difficult to have a nurturing relationship that is extremely honest.

Mentors are put in awkward positions to have that honest conversation. Evaluation runs almost counter to the very nature of nurturing.

6. Clearly, prior to mentors being appointed careful consideration was given by the director of leadership development. A great job was done and lots of work put into the pairing of mentee and mentor but thought had to go into pairing according to personalities, strengths and weaknesses of both the mentor and mentee.

7. The director of leadership development placed assistant principal mentees in the same building as their principal mentors to ensure that quality mentoring would take place.

8. Assistant programs were not evaluated by principal mentors until the end of the program.

## Implications

Assistant principal mentoring gives assistant principals the knowledge and skills needed to become well rounded high performing school leaders. There are several assistant principal mentoring programs that have been developed to enhance the skills of school leaders. This study proposes that the assistant principal mentoring is beneficial to assistant principal participants but the barriers must be addressed to enhance to the program. The practical implications for professional practice of this study speak to assistant principals who participate in assistant principal mentoring programs. Although assistant principals, principals and a director of leadership development found assistant principal mentoring to be beneficial overall, there were areas of concern and areas that could be improved.

The findings of this study add to the body of existing literature on mentoring for new assistant principals. Information was not located in the literature explaining the evaluation process and how it affects assistant principal mentoring. It was discovered that assistant principal mentoring programs gave assistant principals training in that area of relationship leaders,

performance leaders, curriculum, instruction, and assessment leader, data analysis leader and learning and development leader. Findings give a better understanding on what assistant principals should be learning as they go through their mentoring program and the importance of applying the skills in all aspects of the job.

The study is important to High Stakes RESA because it provides insight from the assistant principals' point of view, principals' point of view and a director of leadership development point of view regarding the effectiveness of assistant principal mentoring programs. Assistant principals stated that they want more time to develop their skills in the eight roles, and that they value the relationships that they built with their mentors. The data gathered in the study can be helpful to High Stakes RESA in the development of their mentoring program. According to the data, it would be vital for assistant principals in elementary, middle and high schools to participate in the assistant mentoring program.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Study</div>

The purpose of this study was to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals. The following recommendations for further study materialized from the study:

1. Conduct a study to examine the effectiveness of the assistant principal mentoring program in year two of implementation and its impact on the leadership performance of assistant principals.

2. Conduct a study to examine the impact of mentoring on the same assistant principals that went through the assistant principal mentoring program and are now serving as first year principals. How did mentoring impact their role as first year principals?

3. Conduct a case study of one mentor/mentee relationship throughout one year.

Concluding Thoughts

Assistant principals are now working as school leaders in a time when accountability standards have increased and expectations on the local state level are increasing every year. School leaders must be prepared for the enormous task of leading a school. Assistant principal mentoring programs provide assistant principals with firsthand exposure to the ins and outs of school leadership.

This study added value to the need for administrator mentoring. This study brought to light detailed information into the need for assistant principals participating in mentoring programs to enhance their skills and develop them into high performing leaders.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM


August 12, 2009


Dear Associate Superintendent for Curriculum:

I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am requesting permission to conduct a dissertation study in the **XXXXXX** School District for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. The purpose of the study is to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.

This will be a qualitative study in which principal interviews, assistant interviews and a director of leadership development interview will be used as the means to collect data. Purposive sampling will be used to select elementary, middle and high school assistant principals, principal mentors and a director leadership development within the XXXXX School District. Participation in the study will be voluntary. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the school district, selected elementary, middle and high schools, and all participants. All information collected will be kept secure and confidential.

I would like to begin my process in September 2009. If you have questions regarding this research project, please contact me at 404-680-2731 or curry.takila@newton.k12.ga.us. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Linda M. Arthur, at 912-478-0697 or larthur@georgiasouthern.edu.

If you are willing to permit elementary, middle and high school principals and assistant principals and a director of leadership development employed by XXXXX School District to participate in the study, please provide the researcher an approval letter. The results of this study should be helpful in understanding administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.  Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Takila Meadows-Curry, Ed. D Candidate
Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

| Georgia Southern University | |
|---|---|
| Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs | |
| **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** | |
| Phone: 912-478-0843 | Veazey Hall 2021 |
| | P.O. Box 8005 |
| Fax: 912-478-0719          IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu | Statesboro, GA 30460 |

**To:**       Takila Meadows-Curry
110 Trelawney Lane
Covington, GA 30016

**CC:**       Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:**    Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:**     August 31, 2009

**Subject:**  Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H10032** and titled **"Perceptions of Administrative Mentoring Programs for Newly Hired Assistant Principals",** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter**. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, HIGH PRINCIPALS, ASSISTANT

PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PRINCIPALS, ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTOR
OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Dear Elementary, Middle and High School Principals, Assistant Principals and Director of
Leadership Development:

I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am requesting permission to conduct a
dissertation study in the XXXXX School District for partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Educational Administration at Georgia Southern University. The purpose
of the study is to understand administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant
principals.

The purpose of this letter is to request your help in gathering data for this study. This will be a
qualitative study in which principal interviews, assistant interviews and director of leadership
development interview will be used as the means to collect data.  There is no penalty should you
decide not to participate in the study. However, your participation in this study would provide an
understanding of administrators' perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals.
Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

If you agree to participate, you will assist the researcher by agreeing to be interviewed.
Participation in this aspect of the study will be voluntary. Pseudonyms will be used to protect
your identity and the identity of the XXXXX School District. All information collected will be
kept confidential and in a secure location. The audio taped interviews and notes will be kept in a
secure location throughout the study. The information collected including notes and audio taped
interviews will be kept in a secure location for three years and then destroyed.

I would like to begin my process in September 2009. If you have questions regarding this
research project, please contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Linda Arthur. The contact
information is located at the end of the informed consent.  For questions concerning your rights
as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and
Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

If you are willing to participate, please sign and return this consent form to me. Thank you in
advance for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,


Takila Meadows-Curry, Ed. D Candidate
Georgia Southern University
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

**Title of Project**: Administrators' Perceptions of Mentoring Programs for New Assistant

Principals

**Principal Investigator**: Takila Meadows-Curry, 404-680-2731, curry.takila@newton.k12.ga.us

**Faculty Advisor**: Dr. Linda M. Arthur, 912-478-0697, larthur@georgiasouthern.edu

_____          _____

**Participants Signature**                                    **Date**

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____          _____

**Investigator Signature**                                    **Date**

APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AND DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Time of Interview:                    Date:                    Place:

Interviewer: Takila Meadows-Curry      Interviewee:

Principal, Assistant Principal and Director of Leadership Development Interview Questions:

1. What has been your personal involvement with the assistant principal mentoring program of High Stakes RESA?
2. What activities of the mentoring program do you believe are the most helpful to you/assistant principal?
3. How has the mentoring program affected your views of what assistant principal's should be doing?
4. How have the activities of the mentoring program influenced relationships with the mentors/mentees?
5. What are the biggest strengths of the program?
6. What activities of the mentoring program do you believe to be the least helpful?
7. What has kept the mentoring program from being even more successful?
8. What could be done to strengthen the mentoring program (i.e. how could the program be changed to make it even better)?
9. How has the mentoring program better prepared you/assistant principal for their job?