

RETAINING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS: A CASE STUDY OF  
PRINCIPALS IN A HIGH NEEDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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## ABSTRACT

### RETAINING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS: A CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS IN A HIGH NEEDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to determine the influence of a district leadership development program on first, second, 3<sup>rd</sup> and, 4<sup>th</sup> year principals. A purposeful sample of first, second, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals in a large urban school district in the southwest region of the United States (U.S.) was solicited to provide responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* to assess the influence cohort support, instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations had on principal effectiveness as school leaders. The survey data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while the interview data was analyzed using an inductive coding process. Findings obtained from participant responses to the *Principals Effectiveness Survey* indicated that overall, principals perceived the activities and experiences related to *Cohort Support, Instructional Leadership, Human Capital, Executive Leadership, School Culture* and *Strategic Operations* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Participants had the opportunity to speak openly

about district trainings and support through the Aspiring Principals leadership development program (LDP) along with principal cohort experiences influenced their effectiveness and self-efficacy as school leaders. Four overarching themes related to how leadership development influenced principal's effectiveness emerged from the interview data; which were assigned to four categories, that often overlapped across all seven research questions: (a) program structure (b) self-efficacy, (c) district and peer support, and (d) retention.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The role of principal has taken on wide-ranging expectations to meet state and federal performance standards. Cardno and Youngs (2013) noted educational organizations require principals to have the objective perspectives that management provides as well as the visionary aspects of leadership. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2011) assert that school leaders are capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes. Additionally, research suggested the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions, and the continuing professional development they get once hired and throughout their careers, informs whether school leaders can meet the increasingly tough expectations of their roles (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson Orr, & Cohen, 2007). The roles can be demanding and pose extensive responsibility; however, administrators often lack the preparation or leadership skills necessary to be a change agent and effective leader who improves academic growth while keeping a rein on school business management (Pernick, 2001).

Versland (2013) maintained that "grow your own" principal support programs have become a popular method for recruiting and selecting administrator candidates. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) school districts are investing resources and funds into strategically improving leadership development through preparation programs for both new and experienced school leaders. According to Federici and Skaalvik (2011) principals are supposed to monitor and enhance activities in schools. The researchers also affirmed that principals are responsible for all aspects of school management as well as

for future development. These responsibilities require well-developed social and leadership skills, mercantile skills, and instructional and administrative skills (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011). Federici and Skaalvik also indicated that principals have to problem-solve and relate to internal and external expectations that arise, such as interests of parents, teachers, students, unions, politicians, and the media. Federici and Skaalvik (2011) further suggested the work of the principal has changed tremendously over the past decades. The implications of this change have included new tasks and greater areas of responsibility.

Research substantiated the idea that school leadership does not make its impact directly; its indirect workings have a statistically significant effect on student achievement (Mendels, 2012). Mendels (2012) found, prior to recent educational reform over the past two decades, the theory about school administrators was overlooked. However, new findings have revealed a principal's abilities are central to promoting teaching and learning in schools. In West's (2011) study, he identified tough accountability mandates as the reason for the rigorous curriculum standards and assessment across schools in America. These variables have precipitated high student achievement as a focal point for every administrator. Protheroe (2011) maintained that an effective principal demonstrates a blend of behaviors into two realms—instructional leadership and management. Research additionally implied that self-efficacy is a key cognitive variable that regulates how a leader functions and that effective leadership is linked to positive efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; McCormick, 2001). These beliefs are

vital to a leaders' success because it determines their effort and persistence (Bandura, 1997; McCormick, 2001).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Principal retention is a growing concern across the country and school districts are faced with a shortage or pending shortage of school principals and individuals desiring to be a school principal (Fuller & Young, 2010; Walker & Quian, 2006). Building leadership capacity, especially for the role of school principal, must become a priority for school and district leaders (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011).

The demands on principals and their need for advanced training—particularly training in instructional leadership—are growing and have made the job much more challenging. Not only is it becoming increasingly difficult to attract prospective candidates to the principalship, but also, just as troubling, it is harder to keep effective and experienced administrators on the job. We need to offer these valuable school leaders an incentive to enter and then remain in the profession” (Aguerreberre, Houston & Tirozzi, 2007).

Walker and Quian (2006) affirmed that new principals often express considerable frustration over the fact that they do not understand the nature of their leadership responsibilities before they get to “the hot seat” and that new principal induction often consists of “the practice of sink-or-swim socialization”, leaving novice principals feeling anxiety, frustration, and professional isolation. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) asserted that a principals' self-efficacy and beliefs impact the level of effort and persistence that is expended in their daily work, as well as their resilience in the face of

setbacks. Concurrently, studies specify that in order to retain the most capable principals, those hired in the role must believe that they can successfully meet the challenges of the tasks at hand (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005, p. 24).

Additional research suggested notable contributing factors that influence whether principals retain their roles in the principalship. The results of Fuller and Young's (2009) study indicates the following:

1. Student demographics of a school may impact the length of tenure of a principal. Tenure was substantially greater in the higher performing schools as compared to the lower performing schools at the elementary and middle school level. Evidence from their study also indicates that principals of the highest-performing schools often take positions as associate superintendents or other central office positions. By contrast, principals from the lowest performing schools often returned to the assistant principalship or left the field of education altogether.
2. Principal retention rates are heavily influenced by the level of student achievement in the principal's first year of employment, with the lowest achieving schools having the shortest tenure and lowest retention rates and the high achieving schools having the longest tenure and highest retention rates.
3. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a school also has a strong influence on principal tenure and retention rates, with high-poverty schools having shorter tenure and lower retention rates than low-poverty schools. Principal retention is somewhat lower in schools in rural and small-town districts and somewhat greater in suburban districts whose students tend to be White and not economically disadvantaged.

4. The personal characteristics of principals such as age, race, and gender appear to have only a small impact on principal retention rates.

Carr, Chenwith, and Ruhl (2003) cited a number of common factors that characterize effective principal development programs through the use of the cohort model, performance-based standards, individualized learning opportunities, opportunities for reflection, and continual review of program effectiveness. The researchers further emphasized that leadership development activities should be characterized by mentoring and coaching that is based on the individual needs of participants. Searby and Shaddix (2008) posited that growing leaders needs to be an “intentional act in our nation’s school systems” because it ensures that there is a pool of qualified individuals waiting to assume leadership positions. As a result, many school districts are seeking ways to develop leadership development training programs that will prepare principals for their job responsibilities as a school leader (Searby & Shaddix, 2008).

According to Versland (2013), the current era of principal shortages and low retention rates are creating a need for districts to implement some type of Leadership Development Programs (LDP) and support systems to provide experiential training to principals. Rhodes and Brundrett (2012) recognized that, “chance and serendipity in achieving the recruitment and retention of talented leaders may no longer be sufficient” (p. 32). Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) indicated school-level leadership is most productive when couched within a supportive and consistent district-level leadership that sets the vision and expectations but is willing to step back and take the risk of allowing the principal of the school to lead with some autonomy. Most LDPs have a component of experiential learning to them, as will be explored later in the literature review. Hall (2008) suggested that this type of on-the-job apprenticeship is not a new concept for the field of education; student teaching has long been an accepted, and expected, practice;

however, this practice, used extensively to train novice teachers, is not consistently implemented when developing school administrators.

Studies indicated that in addition to improving concerns caused by shortages of principals, LDPs can help prevent implementation dips and improve the continuity of a district's mission and vision when a new principal takes over leadership (Pernick, 2001; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Whenever there is a new leader, there is a period of decreased productivity while staff attempts to determine the direction of the new campus leadership (Pernick, 2001; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Pernick (2001) also noted that the speed of overcoming the implementation dip is increased when the new leader has been trained by the organization through a structured LDP. If the new leader has been groomed by the district in an LDP, the campus can be reasonably assured that he/she understands the direction and focus (i.e. mission and vision) of the district and campus; this improves stability and these efforts should be part of the district's large scale strategic plan (Pernick, 2001).

Researchers implied that purposeful experiences embedded within interactions and internships that combine skills, knowledge and self- efficacy development must occur if educational leaders are going to be prepared for the challenges inherent in today's school. It is in this within this context that principal self-efficacy is purposefully developed within LDPs that this study finds its importance (Tschannen, Moran, & Gareis, 2014). Mascall and Leithwood (2010) maintain that there are three practices that districts should employ to increase principal retention and reduce turnover. The practices include the following:

1. Aim to keep most principals in their schools for a minimum of four years, preferably five to seven.



2. Under conditions of rapid principal turnover, districts need to encourage incoming principals to understand and respect the school-improvement work so that incoming principals will have a smoother transition if they see their job as continuing and refining that work.
3. Incoming principals should not have the sole responsibility to encourage distributed leadership in schools that have previously experienced rapid principal turnover. Districts need to directly encourage and support fully aligned forms of leadership distribution, providing training and support to staff members in carrying out shared leadership functions.

According to research a school leader's self-efficacy can have a positive influence on the attitudes and motivations of teachers as well as student achievement (Versaland, 2013). The impact of societal demands for effective schools and enhanced student performance has also placed growing attention on the vital role that principals play within school communities (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). Researchers Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) suggested school leaders were capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes.

Self-efficacy is defined as people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997, 2006). The sense of self-efficacy the individual possesses influences decisions of behavior in which cognitive, motivational, affective and selective processes work to transform the individual's self-efficacy into action. Self-efficacy influences self-regulatory processes in which efficacy beliefs determine how environmental opportunities and impediments are perceived. In turn, these beliefs influence choices of action, how much effort is expended on an activity and how long people will persevere when confronted with obstacles. Bandura (1997) assures that higher levels of self-

efficacy produce greater effort and persistence. Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs also influence the experience of stress and anxiety when engaging in activities (Bandura 1997; Pajares 1997).

### **Significance of the Study**

The link between leadership and student achievement is evident in empirical research (Federici, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004, Leithwood et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2012; Mendels, 2012.) Federici (2012) pointed out that the quality of teaching and learning is influenced by the principals' self-efficacy. With the increasing changes in the principal leadership responsibilities and the pressure to increase student achievement, selecting and developing principals with the right set of leadership skills is important (Marzano et al., 2005; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). According to Cain, Clawson, and Martin (2001), "Effective leaders are essential for high - achieving schools; it is the understanding that one does not occur without the other" (p. 2). McEwan (2003) states, "Policymakers have discovered that teachers, tests, and textbooks cannot produce results without highly effective principals to facilitate, model and lead" (p. xxi). Reeves' (2006) study coincides with McEwan's research and determined there are particular leadership actions that show demonstrable links to improved student achievement and educational equity.

According to Marzano and DuFour (2011), effective principal leadership is essential to school success. They point out that no single person has all the knowledge, skills, and talent to lead a district, improve a school, or meet all the needs of every child in his or her classroom. Instead, they must use a collaborative effort and widely dispersed leadership to meet the challenges confronting schools. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found leadership is second only to classroom

instruction among school related factors that influence student outcomes. In recent studies, researchers have found effective skills for leadership are mostly learned from experience and strong learning cultures within an organization that supports leadership development (Davis et al., 2005; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Mendels, 2012; Protheroe, 2011; Rhodes & Bundrett, 2009; Versland, 2013). The foundation of this research is supported by evidence-based bodies of work that propose effective school leaders influence their staff and organization performance. Concurrently, this suggests districts must put intentional effort into implementing leadership development practices to positively impact student achievement. “Strong leaders are not born, they are continually developed through iterative professional learning opportunities” (Sanzo, 2016, p. 1).

This study serves to add research to what extent LDP practices and support experiences aid in retaining principals in high needs schools and districts. Based on data collected from principals, this study can support the current school district and others to identify the benefits and effectiveness, if any, of principal support systems and their impact on principal’s success.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

This investigation explored the influence of educational leadership development practices and the influence those experiences have on leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and retention. Darling-Hammond, La Pointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) identified the need for principal preparation programs to address self-efficacy; they state, “Those who are prepared in innovative, high quality programs are more likely to become instructional leaders who are committed to the job and efficacious in their work” (Darling- Hammond et al., 2007, p. 6.). The goal of this study was to identify the benefits and effectiveness, if any of such support systems and their impact on a principal’s success. Results may provide information on how to design programs,

practices, and policies to help retain principals. Data collected from principal interview responses alongside their surveys may help to identify viable practices for districts looking to grow successful leaders and retain them in their positions.

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and retention. The study identified effective principal support systems that impact self-efficacy and leadership abilities as well as the impact associated with LDPs, mentoring, leadership cohorts, and professional development on principal retention. This research is an investigation and case study of one high-needs school district in which principal turnover and attrition percentages are low. In particular, this study used surveys and interviews to focus on elementary principals in one to four years of service. According to research, high self-efficacy promotes positive perceptions of one's own capabilities and individuals with high self-efficacy usually set challenging goals for themselves and strive to achieve them (Bandura 1994, 1997, 2006). Research has recognized that when an organization utilizes effective leadership the organization will be more likely to have sustained measurable gains (Mendels 2012). The research questions guiding this study were:

1. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to cohort support?
2. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership?

3. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to human capital?
4. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to executive leadership?
5. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to school culture?
6. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to strategic operations?
7. What influence, if any, did principal's experiences in the district leadership development program along with practices have on their perceptions of self-efficacy and effectiveness as school leaders?

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

*Cohort* - Collin and Obrien define a cohort as a group of people who start and progress through a degree program together (Collins & Obrien, 2011). For the purposes of this study a cohort represents a group of Principals who progress through support and mentoring practices together in order to share their experiences of the program.

*Culture* - Collin and Obrien (2011) define culture as the symbolic meaning expressed through language, gesture, dress and so forth, by which the members of a given society communicate with and understand themselves, each other and the world around them.

*Effectiveness* – The concept of effectiveness is achieving explicit goals or objectives; involves the use of multiple measures or indicators (Collins & Obrien, 2011).

*Executive Leadership* - According to the Texas Education Code (2016) the principal is responsible for modeling a consistent focus on and commitment to improving student learning and the success of the school by the following: motivating the school community, modeling a relentless pursuit of excellence, being reflective in their practice and strive to continually improve, learn, and grow.

*High Needs Campus/District* - The campuses and district involved in the study will be referred to as high-needs. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) defines a campus with a majority of students from minority populations and with of 75% or more of those students qualifying as economically disadvantaged as high-needs.

*Human Capital* - The stock of productive skills of an individual (Hanushek, 2009)

*Instructional Leader* – Defines someone who realizes that the strategies and instructional practices teachers use are the primary mover of student achievement (Mendels, 2012).

*Instructional Leadership* - This form of leadership can take many forms and is a complex process that differs across settings based on individual style, school context and constituents. (Costello, 2015).

*Leadership Abilities* - Bandura (1997) implies that leadership abilities are a set of skills that can build capacity at the school building level and influence student achievement through the combination of effective school management and instruction.

*Leadership Development Program (LDP)* - a program designed with deliberate and systematic leadership development strategies that provide a way to improve the skills of supervisors, managers and executives (Pernick, 2001).

*Mentor* - An experienced guide who offers knowledge, insight, support and wisdom that is useful to a protégé' over an extended period of time in order to teach necessary knowledge, skill, and abilities the protégé needs to achieve life or career goals (Collins & Obrien, 2011).

*Mentoring* – A relationship between two individuals; each helps the other perform at a higher level on the job (Peters, 2011).

*Retention* – Fuller and Young (2009) indicate that retention is the actual length of tenure in which a person stays in their leadership position.

*Principal Effectiveness Survey (PES)* - The 48-item survey instrument used in the study to determine the extent to which the district support and leadership program influenced a principal's effectiveness as a school leader as it relates to cohort support, instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations.

*School Leader* - A traditional building level leadership position like a principal or assistant principal (Sanzo, 2016). For the purposes of this research, school leaders represent principals only and were referred to as “administrators”, “educational leaders” or “instructional leader” interchangeably in the text.

*Self-Efficacy* - Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). It is the individual’s belief about what he or she can achieve in a given context, and influences choices of action, how much effort is expended on an activity, and how long people will persevere when confronted with obstacles (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2008).

*Strategic Operations* - The state of Texas indicates that the principal is responsible for assessing the current needs of their campus, through regular monitoring of multiple data points, developing and maintaining yearlong calendar, aligning resources for school priorities and partnering with central office staff to achieve campus goals (Texas Education Code, 2016)

*Succession Planning* - Succession planning is a process whereby an organization plans for the replacement of key positions. Succession planning includes multiple steps with the goal of establishing a talent pipeline (Geroy, Caleb, & Wright, 2005; Wallin, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

The principal's role has shifted from managing and evaluating teachers to creating and maintaining a data-driven collaborative school culture (Bossi, 2007). The principal is both the instructional and learning leader, focused on the achievement of all students. This focus requires a new skill set. The principal must now be able to engage in systems thinking and demonstrate the ability to understand and guide the complex processes of evaluation, change, and group development (Bossi, 2007). According to Federici and Skaalvik (2012), principals are responsible for all aspects of school management and principals should experience high levels of self-efficacy with leadership skills, instructional skills and administrative skills in order to deal efficiently with their daily tasks. Federici and Skaalvik (2012) also noted that "researchers find that self-efficacy influences the effort of principals and their work persistence as well as resilience in the face of setbacks" (p. 296).

The reasons for the shift in principal leadership are clear. The push for unprecedented levels of improvement in student performance, epitomized by federal education policy requires a different kind of leadership: focused on instruction and achievement; supporting that recognition is a growing body of research on what good leaders do (Olson, 2007). This study sought to identify the relationship between administrator experiences, participation in LDPs designed to grow campus leadership and their perceived impact on the self-efficacy and practices of current principals.



Public school systems have the opportunity to develop quality principal candidates by committing to provide the support and preparation necessary to keep people in leadership positions. Supporting principal's preparation and building self-efficacy could aid in developing the skills and experiences that will help them successfully lead schools in this era of accountability. The implications of the research findings lend insight into specific administrator needs and defined tasks that assist with succession planning, building the leadership bench and potential for school districts to better prepare administrators for the demands of campus leadership. Chapter II presents current and relevant literature related to principal retention, succession planning, leadership development programs, leader self-efficacy, principal effectiveness, student learning, climate, culture, adult learners, cohorts, mentors and leadership abilities.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role and expectations of the principalship has changed since the late 1980s, and the profession has become increasingly demanding with greater responsibilities to the school community. Educational leaders must now have the ability to task with well-developed social, leadership, business, instruction and administrative skills. (Cardno & Youngs, 2013; Frederici & Skaalvik, 2011; Mendels, 2012; Pernick, 2001; Protheroe, 2011). Parallel to the heightened professional responsibilities of principals, school districts across the country are finding it difficult to attract and retain high quality principals, and there is a documented principal shortage (Fuller, Orr, & Young, 2008; Fuller & Young, 2010; Walker & Qian, 2006).

Concurrently, in recent years, researchers have identified promising implementation practices of Leadership Development Programs (LDPs) for principal preparation that allow districts to put into practice “grow your own” training programs and practices that support succession planning and retention of school leaders (Geroy et al., 2005; Joseph, 2009; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2012; Pernick, 2001; Versland, 2013; Wallin, 2005). This review of literature explores district-level research on educational leadership preparation and training in order to establish relevant experiences that influence effective development of principals in a multitude of roles through the context of self-efficacy, dispositions and leadership abilities. The literature review encompasses sources that cite current principal retention trends and factors that contribute to the principal shortage.

## **Principal Retention**

Principal turnover is receiving increasing attention in research literature (Fink & Brayman, 2006). According to Mascall and Leithwood (2010), this attention is due to a reduced supply of principals to fill positions and the shortage has been linked to large numbers of principals approaching retirement age, increasing accountability and reform intensifying the role of principal and the narrowing of the job to make it more managerial. They also implied that these factors have made the principalship less attractive. It is projected that the demand for new principals will increase over the next decade, and the frequency with which job turnover is experienced will also increase (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Schools experiencing rapid principal turnover often report a lack of shared purpose, cynicism among staff about principal commitment, and an inability to maintain a school-improvement focus long enough to actually accomplish any meaningful change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Their research further suggested that principals need to be in their schools for at least five years in order to have a positive impact; after five years, the principal's work may continue. Therefore, districts should aim to keep most principals in their schools for a minimum of four years, and preferably five to seven years.

Growing evidence has substantiated the influence of the principal role on student achievement and school improvement (Fuller & Young, 2010; Hickman, 2011; Leithwood 2010; Mendels, 2012; Protheroe, 2011). Fuller and Young (2009) maintain that principal longevity is needed for leadership to positively impact a campus. Personal characteristics of principals such as age, race, and gender appear to have only a small impact on principal retention rates (Fuller & Young, 2009). Given that this study takes place in the state of Texas, Table 2.1 shows the percentages of Texas principals and the

percentage of time that they spend in the principalship over durations of 3, 5, and 10 years (Fuller & Young, 2010).

Table 2.1

*Texas Hired Principal Longevity Data*

		Elementary	Middle School	High School
1.	Three Years	70	61	50
2.	Five Years	46	37	30
3.	10 Years	15	11	9

High needs campuses that serve economically disadvantaged populations display a higher rate of principal attrition at every level and the impact remains higher for the secondary level schools (Fuller & Young, 2010). Table 2.2 displays detailed statistics for the average percentage of principal retention based on school level and their percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The lowest retention rates most often correspond with the lowest achieving schools (Fuller & Young, 2010); they also noted these schools often have the greatest need of leadership continuity.

Table 2.2

*Average Principal Retention Data*

		School Level		
	% Economically Disadvantaged	Elementary	Middle School	High School
1.	0-25	5.75	4.75	4.25
2.	25 - 50	4.80	4.25	3.75
3.	50 – 75	4.75	3.80	3.40
4.	75 - 100	5.00	4.00	3.25

**Succession Planning**

Research maintained that an organization's future depends on the competence within the organization and that succession planning is crucial for the replacement of key positions. Succession planning is comprised of compounded steps with the goal of establishing a talent pipeline (Geroy et al., 2005; Wallin, 2005). The district examined in this study practices succession planning and provides opportunities for candidate administrators to participate in deliberate leadership preparation courses and tasks designed to build leadership capacity. Gaudreau, Kufel, and Park (2006) indicated that it is important for leaders to have a background in the theories that drive decision making in the principalship role. However, they also specify it is equally imperative to put the application of these theories to practice. Further, the researchers designated job-embedded training, coaching and mentoring as essential for potential principal candidates and principals. According to Fuller, Orr, and Young (2008) the shortage and scarcity of principals can be attributed to three factors: (a) high turnover rate, (b) attrition due to

principals reaching retirement age, and (c) a shrinking pool of candidates with the desire to become principals.

### **Leadership Development**

According to Fuller et al. (2008), school reform efforts cannot be successful unless high-quality principals remain at the same school for extended periods of time. Furthermore, they suggested new and early career principals need support and development in order to remain over time. Additionally, principals of schools with predominantly low-income students may need extra district support and compensation to maintain school site tenure that is so critical for school reform (Fuller et al., 2008). With a better understanding of the problems that impact principal retention, school districts can address programs and practices that will increase principal retention and effectiveness. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences cognitions, emotions, and how environmental opportunities and impediments are perceived by the individual. Principals' self-efficacy may therefore have significant impact on their professional adaptability and well-being. "Effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do – it's knowing when, how and why to do it" (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 2). Rammer (2007) theorized that, "if principals are the linchpins of effective schools, then superintendents must select ideal candidates to fill these important roles" (p. 69). The results of his study concluded that the hiring process needed to be revised to assess those characteristics that correlated in principal applicants to improved achievement.

Districts that hire from within and implement principal mentoring and preparation programs help to build capacity for principal leadership (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Versland, 2013). West (2011), indicated that to improve student achievement, schools need the leadership of knowledgeable, highly skilled and visionary principals and superintendents. Mendels (2012) pointed out that principals need professional

development in the performance areas and indicators that represent effective leadership to be able to exhibit the knowledge and understanding necessary to guide schools toward improvement. Mangin (2007) implied that if districts actively work toward building principals' knowledge they may be able to counteract variations in individual principals' prior knowledge, have control over their communication with leadership and be likely positively influence the knowledge base of their candidate pool.

### **Effective Principals**

Bandura (1997) suggests that self-efficacy is vital to school leader success because efficacious leaders set higher goals, are more able to adapt to changing contexts and are more persistent in overcoming obstacles. His works also imply that principals' self-efficacy and leadership abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote strong instructional practices and learning for all students. Additionally, the intent to identify innovative practices and development programs may also offer opportunities for growth. Leithwood et al.'s (2010) quantitative study presented evidence that effective leadership qualities are a necessity for principals to meet the leadership challenges they face. Their findings were the result of testing the conception of how leaders influence student learning through the "The Four Paths" of leadership: emotional, rational, organizational and family.

### **Experiences**

Fuller and Young (2010) substantiated that the experiences that new principals bring to the table are essential when matching them to a school in which they had the potential for success. Versland (2013) stated that "grow your own" principal preparation programs have become a popular method for recruiting and selecting administrator candidates for hard to fill positions in both urban and rural schools. Versland (2015) suggested ways to design leadership development program experiences that promote self-

efficacy and the results of the research indicated that those practices should create opportunities for relationship building, authentic leadership experiences, and persevering to build self-efficacy in future school administrators. Pernick (2001) identified major disadvantages for an organization that does not develop from within; stating that there will “likely be a decrease in morale for those bypassed and a temporary dip in productivity while the new leader learns the ropes” (p. 429).

There is growing intensity toward identifying the range of skills principals need to perform successfully along with revealing its link to student performance and school effectiveness. “Public education is facing significant scrutiny coupled with demands for accountability and increased student achievement” (Rammer, 2007, p. 67). The principal’s primary role is vast and all encompassing; however, the one item that soars to the top of the list is improving student achievement. Recent research found that the effective principal is a guide on the path to better instruction and understands that teachers are the primary movers of student achievement (Mendels, 2012). Leithwood et al., (2004) conducted qualitative research on principal effectiveness and identifying the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. Their findings suggest that although the impact is not direct, the indirect workings of these leaders have statistically significant effects nonetheless (Leithwood et al., 2004). The researcher also maintained that principal effectiveness plays a “highly significant” and “frequently underestimated” role in improving student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Schools where principals are strong educators who focus on central issues of learning, teaching and school improvement set the foundation for positive results. Protheroe (2011) concluded that a principal’s influence on teacher’s motivation and working conditions has more impact on student success than their influence on teacher’s knowledge and skills. The data and findings presented in the study also affirmed that a



principals' effectiveness is related to actions that impact teachers and the school environment to support teaching and learning.

### **Student Learning**

The impact of a principal can be wide-ranging. Effective leadership behaviors are imperative in contributing to student performance and success. Current literature maintains that there are critical leadership skills that a principal must demonstrate to effectively lead a school in improving student achievement. Stiggins and Duke (2008), found “principals are pivotal in the improvement of student learning by helping teachers develop and use sound classroom assessments to strengthen instruction and student learning” (p. 90). Effective school leaders work to create and sustain change which requires the development of an environment where teachers and staff are willing to function as change agents (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). Research also determined that a collaborative environment is one of the most important factors of school improvement initiatives and that student achievement is likely to be the greatest in schools where teachers and administrators work together to identify sources for school improvement (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). Liethwood et al., (2004) noted that if there is any chance of school reform and improving student learning; school leaders must agree with its purpose and appreciate what it takes to make it work. They further implied that “effective” or “successful” leadership is critical to school reform; therefore, if we want it to improve, we must recognize what it looks like and comprehend a great deal about how it works (Liethwood et al., 2004).

### **Leadership Abilities**

According to research, principal leadership styles and practices that promote collaborative teaming, data analysis, purposeful planning and clearly focused goals are central to effective school leadership (West, 2011). Common threads found in the

articles reviewed revealed synonymous viewpoints and ways of thinking that underline a principal's effectiveness in the process of improving student achievement (Protheroe, 2011; West, 2011). Common concepts and frameworks focused on effective leadership styles were grounded in systems thinking, managerial skills, efficient communication, and cultivating leadership. Protheroe's (2011) study identified an effective principal as one who demonstrates a blend of behaviors and abilities within two realms – instructional leadership and management. Positive performance behaviors were centered on these two overarching realms that encompass specific tasks for success. Leithwood (2013) reported that leadership abilities, both direct and indirect affect 25% of the total school effects on student learning. Researchers agreed that leadership is about improving and growing an organization; the focus of practices should not only be about “what” people do, but also “how” and “why” they do it (Casey, 2016; Leithwood, 2010; Spillane, 2015). “The *what* of leadership is informed by district, state, and federal policies. The *how* requires principals to know *how* to ensure learning is achieved while attending to the management of schooling. The *why* is student learning” (Casey, 2016, p. 67).

### **Instructional Leaders**

Principals are responsible for both instructional leadership that rests on a firm foundation of positive climate and culture complimented with business-like management of school resources and data (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Protheroe, 2011; West, 2011). Researchers Odhiambo and Hii (2012) defined instructional leadership as a representation of the set of tasks in which principals engage in order to promote, support and improve teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the management role is defined as functions centered around data analysis and the use of it as the tool in which to base informed decisions. Mendels (2012) maintains that effective leaders focus laser-like on the quality of instruction in their schools. Her research findings suggested that principals are

visionaries who initiate action for positive change, because they understand the need to recognize what the data tells about how their school is performing.

### **Cultivating Climate and Culture**

Research suggests the ways people think, believe, and feel create guidelines for behavior (Bandura, 2008). Recent literature upholds the theory that effective principals encourage their vision and ensure that it translates to reality through meaningful teamwork, group problem solving and open communication with staff (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Additionally, transformational leaders cultivate a sense of community and implement strategies and opportunities for collaborating with all stakeholders of the school; these effective principals imbed the practice of identifying staff needs and providing the appropriate support into school culture and cultivate professional development to build capacity of their staff. In a qualitative study based on interviews with teachers and administrators, Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) found that changes in culture have the potential to impact the way that adults work together to improve practices in the learning environment and that cultural relationships have strong connections to instructional effectiveness. Protheroe (2011) identified that climate and culture play a paramount role in student achievement, noting that a principals' influence on teacher motivation and working conditions have far more of an impact on student achievement than their effect on teachers' knowledge and skills.

Researchers Leithwood and Louis (2011) began their study with a focus on investigating the importance of leaders in shaping a school's culture and climate. They implored multiple theoretical and methodological approaches to their study, and utilized a wide-ranging sources of leadership as they took a critical look at the following: (s) variables on which principals can have some direct effect, such as principal-teacher relations, trust, and shared leadership; (b) variables on which principals may have less

influence, such as teacher-to-teacher relations in professional communities, and collective responsibility; and (c) variables over which the principal has indirect control, such as teachers' sense of personal efficacy and the quality of instruction (Leithwood & Louis, 2011). District leadership can support principals by providing opportunities to improve student achievement through support and experiences that potentially help to shape strong climate and culture.

### **Leadership Development Programs**

School districts have recently begun to undertake succession planning practices through LDPs to develop their own teacher leaders without the connection to a local university. According to Joseph (2009), this has been particularly true of larger districts, because they have greater access to resources or because the need for leadership is greater. Rhodes and Brundrett (2012) state that, “incumbent school leaders [must] seek local solutions aimed at growing the available leadership talent pool” (p. 20). LDPs are a crucial factor in leadership planning and succession since their intended outcomes are focused on honing skills for the workplace and developing the whole person (Pernick, 2001). The implementation of an LDP is to serve as an intentional and systematic plan that is focused on investing in the future of an organization by providing an opportunity to build available talent to begin the process of leadership succession (Pernick, 2001; Searby & Shaddix, 2008).

### **Historical Perspectives of LDPs**

According to Hall (2008), on-the-job apprenticeship is not a new concept for the field of education; student teaching has long been an accepted and expected practice; however, this practice, widely used to train novice teachers, is not consistently implemented when developing school administrators. Additionally, the overall concept of an LDP is not new either; in fact, many private organizations and corporations have

some type of LDP for supervisors or executives to hone leadership skills (Pernick, 2001; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2012; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Given the challenging principal shortages mentioned previously, districts can no longer evade offering some level of LDP to put forward experiential training for potential administrators from the available pool of teacher leaders. Although LDPs can be a large undertaking and become a costly venture, the benefit to an organization can be worth the return on investment. “Growing teacher leaders needs to be an intentional act in our nation’s school systems” (Searby & Shaddix, 2008, p. 35).

It is common for an LDP to have a component of experiential training structure as well as incorporating unique characteristics that are specific to the nature of the organization. Pernick (2001, p. 429) suggests, however, that there are nine questions that all LDPs must answer in order to be effective:

1. What kind of candidates is the organization looking for?
2. What does it take to be a good leader in the organization?
3. How does one become a program participant?
4. How does the participant stack up as a leader right now?
5. What specific actions should the participant take to become a better leader?
6. In what ways is the LDP reinforced by other HR systems?
7. How can the participant’s work group be a part of the developmental process?
8. Is there a leadership succession plan?
9. Is the LDP giving a satisfactory return on investment?

Pernick (2001) specified that in addition to being able to answer these questions, leaders and designers of LDPs need to consider the following set of criteria: (a) selection process of candidates, (b) curriculum of the LDP, (c) delivery/structure of content, and (d) products produced by candidates.

The implementation of LDPs can decrease concerns caused by shortages of principals as well as help alleviate implementation dips and improve the continuity of a district's mission and vision when succession occurs and a new principal takes over; whenever there is a new leader, there is a period of decreased productivity while staff attempt to determine the direction of the new campus leadership (Pernick, 2001; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Pernick (2001) substantiated that the speed of overcoming the implementation dip is increased when the new leader has been trained by the organization as with an LDP. When a new leader has been groomed by the district through an LDP, the campus can be reasonably assured that he/she understands the direction and focus of the district and campus. Interchangeably, if a school is in need of a new direction, an LDP-trained new principal will have the focus to make needed changes (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). This type of continuity effort should be part of a larger strategic plan for a district (Searby & Shaddix, 2008).

### **Peer Collaboration and Support**

According to Umekubo, Chrispeels, and Daly (2015) districts are engaging in cohort structures coupled with professional development for principals to begin the process of becoming strong learning organizations. The researchers also indicated that implementing a principal cohort model creates a sense of collective responsibility and shows the importance of learning at all levels of the system if a district is to become thriving and self-renewing. Umekubo et al., (2015) further notes that individual leaders in an organization bring strengths and specific expertise in a variety of areas that can be fostered and shared through collaboration and support organizational learning. Olsen and Chrispeels (2009) explain that there is potential "intellectual capital" within groups that are bonded together to engage in meaningful collective action. Collaborative cohorts work toward developing an intellectual capital that is created through the combination

and exchange of knowledge in a group setting that leads to new knowledge and actions that improve the collective group (Umekubo et al., 2015).

### **District Strategic Leadership Planning**

For the purpose of this mixed methods case study, research was conducted in Feila Independent School District located in southeast Texas. Feila ISD is an urban community founded in 1917. The district includes 41 campuses that encompass 36.6 square miles and it services students from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. Feila is a Title I school district and is the most ethnically diverse school district in the state of Texas when paralleled to districts of comparable size. The district services 47,000 students and from every culture of the modern world and its students speak more than 80 Languages and dialects.

According to former Feila ISD Director of Leadership, Charles Long, Feila has implemented some form of “grow your own” programs since the 1970’s because its district officials desired to set individuals and campuses up for success. Thus, they created an intentional plan to grow and develop future administrators by seeking out campus teacher leaders to convey key leadership skills that could be used in current positions or in the event that they became campus administrators. Searby and Shaddix (2008) have termed this practice as “developing a culture of continuity in leadership” (p. 35).

Long recalled that Feila initially began with one Leadership Development Program (LDP) that was focused on grooming teacher leaders that aspired to be assistant principals. This was the Feila Administrative Intern Program that was in place for at least 30 years prior to him taking over the program in 2003. Long retired from Feila in 2013 and notes that in recent years, the district has added an Aspiring Principals Program (APP). In addition to both of those LPDs, Feila began the practice of first year

administrator cohort groups in 2003 in accordance with state requirements. With the addition of Long's successor Janie Holmes in 2013, Feila began to continue principal cohort groups into their year three and additional mentoring opportunities were established through monthly cohort collaboration walks and debrief meetings. These sessions took place at the varying campuses of the administrators within the cohorts and were structured so that all principals in the district took part in the monthly collaboration opportunities.

### **Feila Administrative Intern Program**

In 2003, Feila ISD began making adjustments to the Administrative Intern Program. Program evaluation surveys were provided to participants and revamped according to the needs of participants. Long studied responses from participants and conducted an on-going assessment with presenters to ensure that the sessions were focused and designed to jumpstart participants so that when they were hired as an administrator, they would not "walk into it cold." The session spanned across topics such as special education updates, to student discipline, federal funding, Title I grants, finance, nutrition, and subject matter that the new leaders may not typically be familiar. Candidates were selected through a principal nomination process; they were then assessed through interview, inbox activity, reference checks, and final scoring rubrics. Each year, 20 candidates were selected based on a point value system and participants met monthly for 3-hour class sessions that were coupled with projects and an internship in an administrative role during summer school. According to Long, the program was focused on building meaningful relationships to impact meaningful work. In the end, this positively influenced the self-efficacy of new leaders and their effectiveness with carrying out the district's mission and vision.



### **Aspiring Principal Program**

Janie Holmes, a former principal in Feila ISD, became the Director of Professional Growth and Improvement in 2013 and began the Aspiring Principal Program. This program was designed for current assistant principals in the district that were interested in becoming principals in Feila. The themes, curriculum, and projects are aligned with topics that provide continuity with district goals such as professional development, interviewing, growing leaders, ways to support and build positive climate and culture, as well as instructional leadership practices that impact student achievement. AAP candidates complete a district-led internship APP1 and APP2 to prepare for a campus principalship. Aspiring principals also participated in a mock interview process during the fall and spring in which they were partnered up with a current principal to conduct the interview and provide feedback so that the candidate could improve their interviewing skills. This partnership provided an additional layer and source of mentorship for the aspiring principal candidate.

### **Supporting New Leadership**

Janie Holmes works to match Feila's new principals with mentors that are current successful principals within the district and she leads the first-year administrator academies each school year. Due to the low principal turnover from year to year in Feila, the groups are typically small in number and provide opportunities for clarifying, building understanding and connection to district vision as well as significant depth and breadth during discussions. These collaborative cohorts meet monthly in year one to provide a platform for specified topics and a wide-range of discussion that group members would like to address. Principals are able to share their successes, voice their concerns or needs and develop a resource bank of where to go, and who to contact when assistance is needed. The first-year academy meetings are monthly 3-hour long meetings,

year 2 academy meetings are bi-monthly and year 3 academy meetings are quarterly; however, the format is generally the same for all sessions.

### **Principal Cohort Walks**

Charles Long recalled that in 2013 Feila's district-level Instructional Leadership Team and Professional Development Department collaborated to implement monthly focused Principal Cohort walks based on the Richard Dufor's PLC Model. Principals were divided into cohort groups and assigned a leader that would work to ensure that walks were planned out for the school year and assigned a purpose for their walks that is aligned with campus initiatives and growth goals. The intellectual group consisted of both principals and district-level support staff like directors of instructional programs and area superintendents; their purpose was to function as a learning entity that worked to improve practices and confirm effective strategies at the campus level. According to Janie Holmes, the implementation of principal cohort walks has created another safety net for those in the principalship. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for networking of district leaders that builds capacity toward constructing successful school environments aligned with the mission and vision of the Feila Independent School District.

### **Summary of Findings**

Research maintains that principal effectiveness plays an important role in school achievement (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2010; Mendels, 2012; Pepper, 2010; Versland, 2013). Studies indicated the current focus on the skills and abilities of educational leaders and the quality of the programs that prepare them have never been "more intense", noting that the importance of principal leadership is second only to that of teachers (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Additionally, there is much research that concludes that university-based programs do not effectively prepare

principals for their expansive roles and that local education agencies would benefit from implementation of leadership development programs and growth opportunities for school leaders (Bossi, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Joseph, 2009; Mendels, 2012). Effective school leadership is a necessity to support positive outcomes for student achievement and current research has identified the need to develop leaders beyond university educational leadership courses (Davis et al., 2005). Versland (2013) suggested districts should work to develop effective support and mentoring practices for “grow your own” candidates. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) assert that in addition to research based curriculum and instructional strategies, educational programs should also provide supportive structures designed to develop principal self-efficacy.

Research substantiates that in order for school leaders to be effective in their roles, they need to have problem solving practices that are related to experiences they may have in their leadership positions (Bossi, 2007). Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) conducted a research study of five university based principal preparation programs that contain design elements aligned with key features of effective leadership preparation programs. Their research designates that principal effectiveness points to six critical abilities of the principal to impact teaching and learning that should be assessed by credential programs. These include the ability to: (a) influence teacher feelings of efficacy, motivation, and satisfaction; (b) establish the organizational and cultural conditions that foster a positive environment for teaching and learning; (c) promote professional collaboration; (d) promote and support the instructional abilities and professional development of teachers; (e) focus resources and organizational systems toward the development, support, and assessment of teaching and learning; and (f) enlist the involvement and support of parents and community stakeholders (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). According to McIntyre (2001), a problem faced by many current

program designers is the maintenance of a training plan that is developed to provide unique opportunities for candidate leaders to adapt to real-life situations. Based on the results of Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), programs should develop principals who can engage successfully in practices associated with school success such as: cultivating a shared vision and practices; leading instructional improvement; developing organizational capacity; and managing change. The researchers also indicated that offering extensive, high-quality learning opportunities that offer supports in the form of mentoring, participation in principals' networks and study groups, school visits, and peer coaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). The research studies reviewed support the idea that university based preparation programs and district leadership development programs focused on developing and growing effective educational leaders should consider a structure that is grounded in practices that present opportunities for real-life application and building self-efficacy (Bossi, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; Davis et al., 2005; McIntyre 2001; Pernick, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005; Versland, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Self-efficacy is a key concept of social learning theory that was first introduced by Alfred Bandura in 1977. It refers to the extent in which a person feels they can perform successfully in a particular area or domain (Bandura, 1977). Developing self-efficacy should be the basis for of any leadership program; those who lack self-efficacy will be hesitant to apply what they have learned and hence be "ineffective" (Popper & Lipschitz, 1993). Popper and Lipschitz also determined that program frameworks that support leadership development should include three components: developing self-efficacy in the domain of leadership, developing an awareness of different modes of motivating others in correspondence with different theories of leadership and developing

specific leadership skills. They also discuss that programs that include such characteristics in their practices provide “added value” to how leaders develop on their own. Versland’s (2013) research implied self-efficacy theory could be positive or negative and the theory provides a framework that can be utilized to examine factors of school leadership that enhance school success. Frederici and Skaalvik (2012) affirmed that, given the many responsibilities and pressures principals endure, they must have efficacious mindset to cope successfully in diverse situations (Bandura, 1977, 2008; Frederici, 2011; Frederici & Skaalvik 2011, 2012; Versland, 2013).

The science of andragogy as a developing culture focused on helping adults learn is central to the reasoning behind leadership development (Teslinov, 2016). Introduced in 1970, Knowles' andragogical theory is based on four assumptions that differ from those of pedagogy. The four assumptions are as follows: (a) changes in self-concept, (b) the role of experience as a growing reservoir, (c) readiness to learn increases and becomes oriented in social roles, (d) orientation to learning shifts from subject centered to performance centered. According to Holyoke and Larson (2009), adult learners want to dialogue with other individuals who share real-life experiences to determine how they could apply of some of those experiences to their own real-life situations. They also suggest that principals are adult learners and district leadership should be attentive of adult learners’ needs and the characteristics they possess as they develop leadership development programs.

This study surveyed and interviewed principals in years one through four that participated in an aspiring principal Leadership Development Program (LDP) in the participating district and sought to determine the influence that components of the program had on their effectiveness as a school leader. A goal of the research was to identify principals’ perceptions of their self- efficacy and whether they were able to

receive subject-centered components of the leadership development program and cultivate them into performance- centered tasks that support their success as school leaders.

### **Conclusion**

This review of literature indicated there were many factors that influence principal retention. Gates et al., (2004) indicated that turnover is not always linked to those leaving the job or the profession for negative reasons, but that attrition can be positive, such as retirement or promotion. Research also indicated that districts must work to keep administrators in their roles to sustain positive cultures and work to have a succession plan that supports replacing leadership with new leaders who will be effective and continue the goals of the district (Pernick, 2001; Searby & Shaddix, 2008; Umekubo et al., 2015). Pernick (2001) maintains there are major disadvantages for an organization that does not develop from within. According to Tschannen et al. (2014), it is purposeful experiences embedded within interactions and internships that combine skills, knowledge and self-efficacy development that prepares educational leaders for the challenges inherent in today's schools.

Researchers Grissom and Harrington (2010) validated that there are immense amounts of studies done on the professional development of teachers. However, there is marginal research regarding the types of professional development needs of principals and school leaders. Therefore, a need exists to investigate and better understand principal retention and how to increase the longevity of individuals in the principalship as well as ways to build capacity and opportunities for success with potential new leaders (Fuller & Young, 2008; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Versland, 2013). Research substantiated that districts and campuses that have challenging demographics also have higher retention concerns. However, the researcher has identified a high-needs district that retains

principals in their roles well beyond the overall average of three to four years (Fuller & Young, 2008).

This mixed methods case study investigated current principal experiences and this district's practices that support educational leadership preparation. The investigation identified relevant experiences that influence effective development of principals, principal self-efficacy, and leadership abilities. It also determined the influence the district LDP had on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals related to cohort support, instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture and strategic operations. Chapter III presents the methodology of the study which will include: overview of the research problem, the operationalization of theoretical constructs, the research purpose and question, the research design, the population and sample, the instrumentation, the data collection procedures the data analysis, the privacy and ethical consideration and the limitations of the study.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy, and retention. This case study sought to explore experiences that influence principal retention from the perspective of current principals in a high-needs school district in which principal turnover and attrition percentages are low. According to Fuller and Young (2008) districts and campuses that have challenging demographics have higher retention concerns; however, the researcher has identified a high-needs district that has low turnover rate and retains principals in their roles well beyond the overall average of 3 to 4 years (Fuller & Young, 2008).

A purposeful sample of principals who have one to four years of experience leading a high-needs campus within a large urban school district in the southwest region of the U.S. were solicited to provide responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* and participate in one-on-one interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while an inductive coding process was used to analyze the qualitative data. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, validity, and limitations for this study.

#### **Overview of Research Problem**

Principal retention is a growing concern for school districts around the nation (Fuller & Young, 2010; Walker & Quian, 2006). According to Fuller and Young (2010), 26% of principals leave their positions after the first year; the average time a principal



positioned in a high-needs school is about 3.25 years. Leithwood (2010) maintains that principal turnover is inescapable for every school; however, it is the frequency of succession that poses substantial challenges to districts and campuses. Further research largely confirmed the importance of principals being well-prepared and effective in their roles as school leaders, identifying the need to support leaders through purposeful professional development practices and support (Davis et al., 2005, Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Fuller et al., 2011; Mendels 2012).

Additionally, there are several researchers that have concluded that university-based programs do not prepare principals for their leadership roles and that districts may need to implement leadership development programs and growth opportunities (Bossi, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Joseph, 2009; Mendels, 2012). School districts also need strategies to employ stable and effective school leadership to support positive outcomes for student achievement. Current research identifies the need to develop leaders beyond university educational leadership courses (Davis et al., 2005; Grissom & Harrington 2010). Consequently, “grow your own” leadership development programs have gained popularity among large urban districts. There are few studies that focus on the influence that leadership development programs had on school leadership, specifically identifying principals’ perspectives on which experiences had the greatest influence and the extent to which it may have impacted their effectiveness.

### **Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

This study consisted of six constructs: (a) cohorts, (b) school culture, (c) executive leadership, (d) instructional leadership, (e) human capital, and (f) strategic operations. A *Cohort* is defined as a group of people who start and progress through a degree program together (Collins & Obrien, 2011). *Culture* is defined as the symbolic

meaning expressed through language, gesture, dress and so forth, by which the members of a given society communicate with and understand themselves, each other and the world around them (Collins & Obrien 2011). *Executive Leadership* is defined as the principal being responsible for modeling a consistent focus on and commitment to improving student learning and the success of the school by the following: motivating the school community, modeling a relentless pursuit of excellence, being reflective in their practice and strive to continually improve, learn, and grow (Texas Education Code, 2016).

*Human Capital* is defined as the stock of productive skills of an individual (Hanushek, 2009). *Instructional Leadership* is defined as a form of leadership that can take many forms and is a complex process that differs across settings based on individual style, school context and constituents (Costello, 2015). *Strategic Operations* is defined as the assessment of current needs of a campus, through regular monitoring of multiple data points, developing and maintaining yearlong calendar, aligning resources for school priorities and partnering with central office staff to achieve campus goals (Texas Education Code, 2016). The constructs listed above were measured using the *Principal Effectiveness Survey*.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy, and retention. The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as school leaders related to cohort support?
2. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership?

3. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to human capital?
4. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to executive leadership?
5. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to school culture?
6. To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to strategic operations?
7. What influence, if any, did principal's experiences in the district leadership development program along with practices have on their perceptions of self-efficacy and effectiveness as school leaders?

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is a mixed methods case study approach. This approach is appropriate because quantitative methods allow the researcher to provide input from a broad audience and qualitative methods provide the opportunity to identify perceptions of participants in their own voice. A purposeful sample of campus principals who have one to four years of experience were solicited to provide responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (PES) and participate in one-on-one interviews to assess the influence that cohort support; instructional leadership; human capital; executive leadership; school culture; and strategic operations had on principal effectiveness as school leaders. Survey participants met the requirement of participating in the district's principal leadership development program prior to becoming a school principal. The district leadership development program for aspiring principals began in the fall of 2013 and to-date, there were 19 principals eligible to participate in the survey and interviews

for this case study. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed using an inductive coding process.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study was conducted in Feila Independent School District, a large high-needs urban school district in southeastern Texas. This district was purposefully selected, because their principal turnover and attrition percentages are low and they have been successful in retaining principals at their campuses and in the district. Feila was also selected because of its population size, complex demographics, and the economic challenges that face the community it services. Feila ISD's student population is about 47,000, servicing an economically disadvantaged population of 85% based on students qualifying to receive free and reduced lunch. The racial/ethnic make-up of Feila is approximately 30% African American, 53% Hispanic, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander; the remaining percentages accounted for by individual races make up approximately 3% or less (TEA, 2016).

Feila ISD includes 41 campuses: 24 elementary schools, six middle schools, five intermediate schools, and two ninth grade centers and four high schools (TEA, 2016). This district was selected, because of their current and previous principal retention pattern of retaining principals for longer periods of time. The district principal demographic data is outlined in Table 3.1. Principals that have participated in the district Leadership Development Program (LDP) for aspiring principals were the focus for this study. A purposeful sample of campus principals who have one to four years of experience were solicited to provide responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (PES) and participate in one-on-one interviews.

Table 3.1

*District Principal Demographic Data*

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
Total Principals	41	100.0
Total Elementary School	24	58.5
Total Intermediate	5	12.1
Total Middle School	6	14.6
Total Ninth Grade Center	2	4.8
Total High School	4	9.7
Male	9	21.9
Female	32	78.1
African American	21	51.2
Hispanic	7	17.1
White	12	29.2
Asian	1	2.4
Two or More Races	0	0.0

**Participant Selection**

The participants were chosen by purposive sampling. For this study, participants were solicited from current principals in K-12 schools within Feila ISD. The principals selected have participated in the district LDP for aspiring principals. The six schools and principals that were the focus of this study for the interviews are all leaders of campuses that represent high needs populations and the principal participants were purposefully

selected, because they are successful in their positions compared to state statistics for schools with similar populations and demographics. Feila has been able to consistently retain principals at all levels above the state average. The participants are not the object of the study; however, they are a means to understanding their perspectives and experiences that have led to their retention and effectiveness within high needs schools. Table 3.2 outlines the principal participants and their campus demographics.

Table 3.2

*Demographics of Principal Participants*

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Campus	Years in Current Position	% Economically Disadvantaged
Female	African Amer.	Columbus Elementary	3-yrs	94.9%
Female	African Amer.	Bird Elementary	3-yrs	81.8%
Female	Caucasian	Beldon Elementary	3-yrs	97.9%
Male	Hispanic.	Long Intermediate	2-yrs	78.1%
Male	Hispanic	Behr Middle School	1-yr	82.6%
Female	African Amer.	Ramsey High School	2-yrs	79.9%

### **Instrumentation**

Quantitative data were collected using the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (PES), which was developed to assess the influence that cohort support, mentoring support, and choice offerings had on the effectiveness of principals. The instrument was developed in 2014, by the Research and Leadership Development Department of a neighboring school district to assess their leadership development program. The tool is aligned with the

Texas standards for: (a) observation and feedback, (b) instructional planning, (c) data-driven instruction, (d) scholar and adult culture, and (e) instructional leadership principals which outlines the principles for which principals in the state will be appraised (Texas Education Code, 2016). Participants in the survey will be asked to rank their responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating the influence to their effectiveness and 10 representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness. The instrument consists of 48-items with four major components: (a) demographics, (b) cohort support, (c) mentor support, and (d) choice offerings.

The cohort support section of the survey tool is divided into eight subsections: (a) observation and feedback, (b) instructional planning, (c) data-driven instruction, (d) scholar and adult culture, (e) instructional leadership: curriculum, instruction and assessment, (f) professional development for leadership teams, (g) professional development for teachers, and (h) resources management. The mentor support section of the survey tool is divided into five subscales: (a) instructional leadership, (b) human capital, (c) executive leadership, (d) school culture, and (e) strategic operations. The choices offerings section of the survey tool is divided into five sub scales: a) preliminary budget planning, (b) legal updates, (c) staff documentation, (d) leading relevant review, and (e) intentional interventions.

Survey participants were asked to rank their responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing the least influence to their effectiveness and 10 representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness. Responses ranging 1 to 3 indicate that the item had low influence on the participant's effectiveness as a school leader. Responses ranging 4 to 7 indicate that the item had medium influence on the participant's effectiveness as a school leader. Responses ranging 8 to 10 indicate that the item had high influence on the participant's effectiveness as a school leader. Cronbach's alphas were calculated to

measure internal consistency and reliability: (a) cohort support (.968), (b) instructional leadership (.977), (c) human capital (.978), (d) executive leadership (.983), (e) school culture (.983), (f) strategic operations (.961), and (g) choice offerings (.942).

### **Data Collection**

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's (UHCL) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the participating district's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. Once permission was granted, participants completed the *Principal Effectiveness Survey*, and participated in face-to-face interviews. Data was collected from surveys and interviews to triangulate and increase the exchange of overlapping themes and thinking patterns of participants. Surveys were emailed to participants and face-to-face interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The flash drive containing the stored data was locked in a safe storage room and remained there for five years following the conclusion of the study before being destroyed.

One-on-one interviews and an online survey served as the instruments to collect data from research participants. Confidentiality was assured to all participants that partook in the sample. This investigation sought to use methodologies that aid in gaining advantages and strong opportunities for themes and significant patterns to emerge with regard to identifying perceptions of effectiveness and retaining principals in their roles. The interviews gave voice to the research and provide direct exchanges of views with the researcher and participants (DeVault & Gross, 2007). Interviews also provided an opportunity for the researcher to build a rapport with participants. Principal interview data was used to identify the specific trends and practices that lead to the principals' self-efficacy.



The interviews were organized as a one-time 30 to 45-minute session conducted with district principals. All interviews took place at the work site and offices of the individual participating in the interview. A semi-structured interview format was utilized and the focus was to seek perspectives from the varying levels within the Feila organization. Principal interviews included opportunities for them to provide insight to their experiences that have influenced their self-efficacy, effectiveness as a leader, and retention in their roles as school leader. The data collected from the one-on-one interviews served as qualitative representations of participant perceptions and self-evaluation of effectiveness, performance and preparedness for their role as a principal. Interviews were transcribed and input into NVivo to identify common themes and look for saturated topics.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Quantitative**

Research questions 1-6 were answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey*; which required participants to rate the influence that particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a Likert rating scale ranging from 1-10 (One represents the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The responses were grouped to provide correlations to “low influence”, “medium influence” or “high influence”. Responses ranging 1 to 3 indicate that the item had “low influence” on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader. Responses ranging 4 to 7 indicate that the item had “medium influence” on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader. Responses ranging 8 to 10 indicate that the item had “high influence” on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader.

## **Qualitative**

The qualitative data analysis in this portion of the study consisted of an inductive coding process of individual interviews of six principals from elementary, middle school, and high school campuses. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the six participating principals. Once all interviews were complete, they were coded and organized using NVivo, a software program developed by Qualitative Solutions and Research International (QSR). Coding data is a process in qualitative research of categorizing information into segments, and describing details and implications for each category identified based on themes, topics, ideas, terms, phrases, and key words (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). According to Walsh (2003), NVivo is a useful tool in coding data because it allows the researcher to trace the progression of ideas and themes at the earliest stages in a safe format that can be saved, printed, and changed as necessary by the researcher. It also allows the researcher more flexibility to link and compare patterns of raw data within and across multiple documents: especially data collected from interviews (Walsh, 2003).

To analyze the interview data, the researcher created brief descriptive summary statements arising from common categories (Giorgi, 1975). The responses were identified as units and then compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is stated will be further rephrased into brief and overriding thematic statements. This process allowed the researcher to align common themes and create brief descriptive summary statements from which the participants' perceived patterns and relationships of the characteristic variables were interpreted. The researcher then analyzed the research questions under data categories and themes to determine if there is enough information to substantiate the findings and make interpretations.

To continue further analysis, the researcher will use a constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process ensured accuracy since the information is not drawn from a single source or individual (Creswell, 2005). The analysis will focus on triangulating interviews and comprehensive analysis of the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (Bogdam & Biklen, 2003). From this stage forward, categories and codes were generated and revised several times. The researcher listed thematic summaries for each of the interviews by carefully identifying issues and themes that subsequently emerged from the interviews themselves. From these summaries, the researcher continued to identify emergent themes. Next, the researcher extensively analyzed the transcribed data, using various codes and sub codes several times until similar themes come out repeatedly. The researcher further analyzed the interview data to substantiate and confirm all the evidence to support an emerging theme. This overall process was to ensure valid results due to the information being drawn from various sources (Creswell, 2005).

### **Validity**

Triangulation and member checking were the primary techniques the researcher utilized to increase the validity of the study. Triangulation with literature and editing allowed the researcher to continuously validate concepts, recurring themes and shared ideas throughout the study. Member checking assisted with the accuracy of interviews, surveys protocols and observation protocols throughout the study. Interview responses were organized into themes by focusing on redundancy. The researcher constantly strived to ensure objectivity on the feedback on the validity of analysis of data. Peer debriefing was performed by having content area experts in the College of Education at UHCL review the findings in order to maintain standards of quality and credibility of the work.

### **Privacy and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher completed all processes required of the UHCL's CPHS for the study. Pseudonyms were used as the name of the school district where the study was conducted as well as for the individual names of the participants. A survey cover letter was attached to the survey instrument stating the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and responses and identities would remain anonymous. Communication with the participating districts and study participants were documented in written form in order to validate all considerations for ethical issues. Written consent was solicited from the district in which the subjects work. All data was kept securely in a locked file cabinet and on a pin drive in the primary researcher's office, as well as on flash drive for a period of five years following the conclusion of the study. The names of districts and participants will be masked using pseudonyms during the data organization process in order to give them anonymity in research findings. This precautionary measure protected the individual and the school district from association with any information that could be subjectively interpreted.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has limitations in the areas of external validity, or the generalizability of the sample. First, all respondents were in a single urban school district; constructs may vary in another district and therefore may not be universally applicable. This study focused on a single school system and may not be suitable for generalization to school systems with varying leadership needs. For this reason, caution should be taken, when thinking about the implementation of this study, because the results may not be generalizable to other school districts.

Second, the data collected in this study was based on the perceptions of the participants; therefore, there may be other perspectives and experiences of principals that

are not captured in this work. The data of this study was limited to the people who were admitted into the district's LDP and became principals. Participants' responses may also vary depending on the years in which they participated in the aspiring principals' LDP. Future studies may vary, based on the timelines of participants participating in the LDP and the time of collecting the research.

Third, preparation program effectiveness is difficult to measure. This study was based on the perceptions and opinions of principals; the data collected does not triangulate student achievement and school success with principal perceptions of effectiveness. Instead, program achievement was only measured by principals' perceptions of their own effectiveness or challenges. Results may vary by participants, district and the LDP in other districts. In sum, this study may only apply to the participating school district and participants.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter delivered an overview of the research problem, research purpose, and methodology. The research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis methods, assumptions, and limitations for this study were described. To ascertain the voices of the participants, qualitative inquiry provided the best method to get rich descriptions of the administrators. A purposeful sample of campus principals who have one to four years of experience were solicited to provide responses to the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (PES) and participate in one-on-one interviews. Qualitative data was analyzed using NVIVO to conduct an inductive coding process utilizing the documents, interview, survey and observational data. Triangulation of data and member checking assisted with providing greater validity to the study. Chapter IV presents a detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by the findings of the research questions.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy, and retention. This chapter begins by presenting a detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the participants followed by the findings illustrated in Research Questions One through Seven. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the study's findings.

### **Participant Demographics**

Principals in years one to four working in Title I schools located in an urban school district in the southwest region of the U. S. were sent emails soliciting their participation in the study. The survey participants met the requirement of participating in the district's principal leadership development program prior to becoming a school principal. There were 19 principals deemed eligible to complete the survey. Of the 19 principals contacted, 16 (84.2% response rate) completed the survey (nine elementary school principals, one intermediate school principals, two middle school principals, and four high school principals). Elementary school principals lead schools consisting of grades pre-K- 5<sup>th</sup>; intermediate school principals lead schools consistent of grades 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>; middle school principals lead schools consisting of grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>; and high school principals lead schools consisting of grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>. Table 4.1 displays participant demographics regarding campus grade levels, years in their current position, and race/ethnicity. The majority of the survey participants were elementary school principals (56.2%,  $n = 9$ ). The remaining participants were intermediate school principals

(6.2%,  $n = 1$ ); middle school principals (12.5%,  $n = 2$ ); and high school principals (25.0%,  $n = 4$ ). The majority of the principals surveyed had completed one year in their position (56.2%,  $n = 9$ ). The rest of the survey respondents were year two (6.2%,  $n = 1$ ), year three (18.7%,  $n = 3$ ), and year four (18.7%,  $n = 3$ ).

Table 4.1

*Principal Participant Demographic Data*

	Frequency ( $n$ )	Percentage (%)
1. Principal Participants		
Total Principals	16	100.0
Elementary School Principals	9	56.2
Intermediate School Principals	1	6.2
Middle School Principals	2	12.5
High School Principals	4	25.0
2. Years in Principal Position		
1 year	9	56.2
2 years	1	6.2
3 years	3	18.7
4 years	3	18.7
3. Race/Ethnicity		
African American	12	75.0
Hispanic	2	12.5
White	2	12.5
Asian	0	0.0
Two or More Races	0	0.0
4. Gender		
Male	2	12.5
Female	14	87.5

### Research Question One

Research question one, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to cohort support?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The responses were collapsed: (a) responses of 1-3 meant the item had “low” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader, (b) responses of 4-7 meant the item had “medium” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader, and (c) responses of 8-10 meant the item had “high” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader. The 11 items in this section of the survey pertained to activities in which participants participated during their leadership development program related to Cohort Support

Table 4.2 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals’ responses. Principals indicated that the activities related to Cohort Support had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest item that principals felt had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader was scholarly adult culture (87.5%,  $n = 14$ ). There were no items that were scored 1, 2, or 3 indicating “low” influence as it relates to Cohort Support on their effectiveness as a school leader. All items under Cohort Support were scored in the “medium” influence range through the “high” influence range. (scores ranged from 5 to 10 on the Likert scale). Out of the 11 items in the Cohort Support section of the survey, nine (81.8%) of the items were scored as “high” influence by participants. Principals indicated that instructional planning and data driven instruction were the items that had the lowest percent of “high” influence on their effectiveness as



school leaders (both were 43.7%, n = 7). The majority of principals (75.0%, n = 12) indicated that overall Cohort Support had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Medium influence accounted for the remaining overall percentage (25.0%, n = 4).

Table 4.2

*Participant Responses to Cohort Support (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Observation and feedback	0.0 (n = 0)	18.75 (n = 3)	81.25 (n = 13)
2. Instructional planning	0.0 (n = 0)	56.2 (n = 9)	43.7 (n = 7)
3. Data-driven instruction	0.0 (n = 0)	56.2 (n = 9)	43.7 (n = 7)
4. Scholarly adult culture	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)
5. Instructional leadership: District curriculum	0.0 (n = 0)	37.5 (n = 6)	62.5 (n = 10)
6. Instructional leadership: Instruction	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
7. Instructional leadership: Assessment (benchmark/EOC)	0.0 (n = 0)	43.7 (n = 7)	56.2 (n = 9)
8. Professional development for leadership teams	0.0 (n = 0)	31.2 (n = 5)	68.7 (n = 11)
9. Professional development for teachers	0.0 (n = 0)	31.2 (n = 5)	68.7 (n = 11)
10. Resources management	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
11. Overall ranking	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 4)	75.0 (n = 12)

Table 4.3 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by grade level. All 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> principals and 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> principals specified that observation and feedback, instructional planning, scholarly adult culture, instructional leadership (district curriculum and instruction), professional development for teachers, and resources management as having “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to *Cohort Support*. The majority of PK- 5<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that observation and feedback (88.8%,  $n = 8$ ) and scholarly adult culture (88.8%,  $n = 8$ ) had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders as it relates to *Cohort Support*.

Professional development for teachers posed a difference of opinion for principals of PK-5<sup>th</sup> (55.5%,  $n = 5$ ) schools compared to the other campus level principals. Elementary principals scored teacher professional development as having “medium” influence on their effectiveness; however, principals of grades 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> (100.0%,  $n = 7$ ) indicated that teacher professional development had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup> principals indicated that instructional planning (77.7%,  $n = 7$ ) and instructional leadership/district curriculum (55.5%,  $n = 5$ ) had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders compared to 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ) principals who indicated that those items had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Every grade level of principals scored the overall ranking for *Cohort Support* as having “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ).

Table 4.3

*Participant Responses to Cohort Support per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Observation and Feedback	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	11.1 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	88.8 ( <i>n</i> = 8)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
2. Instructional planning	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	77.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
3. Data-driven instruction	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)

	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
4. Scholar and adult culture	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
5. Instructional leadership: District curriculum	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
6. Instructional leadership: Instruction	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)

7. Instructional leadership: Assessment (Benchmark/EOC)	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
8. Professional development for leadership teams	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 4)
9. Professional development for teachers	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 4)
10. Resources management	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	77.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)

	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
11. Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.00 ( <i>n</i> = 4)

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Table 4.4 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. As illustrated in Table 4.1, 56.2 % (*n* = 9) of the principal participants consisted of first-year principals, 6.2% (*n* = 1) of the principal participants consisted of second-year principals, 18.7% (*n* = 3) of the principal participants consisted of 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals, and 18.7% (*n* = 3) of the principal participants consisted of 4<sup>th</sup> year principals. Of the first-year principals, 25.0% (*n* = 4) are elementary principals, 0.0% (*n* = 0) are intermediate school principals, 6.2% (*n* = 1) one is a middle school principal, and 25.0% (*n* = 4) are high school principals. Of the second-year principals, 6.2% (*n* = 1) one is an elementary principal and 0.0% (*n* = 0) are intermediate school principals, middle school principals or high school principals. Of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals, 18.7% (*n* = 3) are elementary principals, and 0.0% (*n* = 0) are intermediate school principals, middle school

principals or high school principals. Of the 4<sup>th</sup> year principals, 6.2% ( $n = 1$ ) is an elementary principal, 6.2% ( $n = 1$ ) is an intermediate principal, 6.2% ( $n = 1$ ) is a middle school principal, and 0.0% ( $n = 0$ ) are high school principals.

The highest item that first-year principals believe had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader was scholarly adult culture (88.8%,  $n = 8$ ). The highest items that 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals believe had “high” influence on their development as school leaders include observation and feedback, and resources management (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ). The highest items that 4<sup>th</sup> year principals believe had “high” influence on their development as school leaders include observation and feedback, instructional planning, scholarly and adult culture, instructional leadership/district curriculum, instructional leadership/ instruction, professional development for teachers and resources management (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ).

The second (100.0%,  $n = 1$ ) and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals (66.6%,  $n = 2$ ) indicated that instructional leadership/assessment had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders compared to first-year principals (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ) and 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals (66.6%,  $n = 2$ ) who indicated that instructional leadership/assessment had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals (66.6%,  $n = 2$ ) indicated that professional development for teachers and overall *Cohort Support* had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders compared to the majority of first, second, and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals who indicated that professional development for teachers (76.9%,  $n = 10$ ) and overall *Cohort Support* (84.6%,  $n = 11$ ) had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders.



Table 4.4

*Participant Responses to Cohort Support per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Observation and feedback	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)	0.0 (n = 0)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
2. Instructional planning	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 6)	33.3 (n = 3)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	100.00 (n = 1)	0.0 (n = 0)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 2)	33.3 (n = 1)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
3. Data-driven instruction	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 6)	33.3 (n = 3)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 2)	33.3 (n = 1)

	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
4. Scholar and adult culture	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	11.1 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	88.8 ( <i>n</i> = 8)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
5. Instructional leadership: District curriculum	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
6. Instructional leadership: Instruction	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	77.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
7. Instructional leadership: Assessment (benchmark/EOC)	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)

8. Professional development for leadership teams	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
9. Professional development for teachers	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
10. Resources management	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
11. Overall ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	77.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)

3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 2)	33.3 (n = 1)
4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

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### Research Question Two

Research question two, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey. Table 4.5 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses to the six items considering Instructional Leadership. Principals indicated that the activities related to Instructional Leadership had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest item that principals felt had "high" influence on their effectiveness as a school leader was prioritizing instruction and student achievement (62.5%, n = 10). Analyze the curriculum was the only item that received a response score of three on the Likert scale (6.2%, n = 1) indicating "low" influence as it relates to Instructional Leadership and their effectiveness as a school leader. Out of the six items in the Instructional Leadership section of the survey, three (50.0%) items were scored as "high" influence by participants. Implementing rigorous curriculum and analyzing the curriculum equally had (56.2%, n = 9) "medium" influence on principal development as school leaders. Modeling instructional strategies and setting expectations for learning were split equally (50%, n = 8) between having "medium" and "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Over half of the principals (56.2%, n = 9) indicated that overall Instructional Leadership had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders.

Table 4.5

*Participant Responses to Instructional Leadership (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Prioritize instruction and student Achievement	0.0 (n = 0)	37.5 (n = 6)	62.5 (n = 10)
2. Implementing rigorous curriculum	0.0 (n = 0)	56.2 (n = 9)	43.7 (n = 7)
3. Analyze of the curriculum	6.2 (n = 1)	56.2 (n = 9)	31.2 (n = 6)
4. Model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 8)	50.0 (n = 8)
5. Develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction	0.0 (n = 0)	43.7 (n = 7)	56.2 (n = 9)
6. Overall ranking	0.0 (n = 0)	43.7 (n = 7)	56.2 (n = 9)

Table 4.6 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by grade level. Principals of grades 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that prioritize instruction and student achievement had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Implementing rigorous curriculum and analysis of the curriculum were scored in the "medium" influence range by principals of grades Prek-5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> as it related to their effectiveness as school leaders. Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that instructional leadership overall (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ) had "medium" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to *Instructional Leadership*

compared to 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade principals who indicated the overall ranking of *Instructional Leadership* had “high” influence on their development as school leaders (85.7%,  $n = 6$ ). Principals of grades 6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> scored one item, analyze of curriculum as having “low” influence (50.0%,  $n = 2$ ) on their development as school leaders related to instructional leadership.

Table 4.6

*Participant Responses to Instructional Leadership per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Prioritize instruction and student achievement	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
2. Implementing rigorous curriculum	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)	0.0 (n = 0)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 2)	50.0 (n = 2)
3. Analyze of the curriculum	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)

	6-8	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
4. Model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
5. Develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
6. Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)



Table 4.7 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. The two highest items that first-year principals believe had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders include prioritize instruction, develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction and instructional leadership overall (55.5%,  $n = 9$ ). Principals in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year group scored all items, including the overall ranking of *Instructional Leadership* as having "medium" influence on their development as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ). Fourth year principals indicated that all items had "high" influence on their development as school leaders related to *Instructional Leadership* (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ).

The items that first-year principals believe had "medium" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders include implement rigorous curriculum (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ), analysis of the curriculum (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ), and model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning (55.5%,  $n = 5$ ). first, second, and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals indicated that develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction, and overall ranking of *Instructional Leadership* had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (69.2%,  $n = 9$ ).

Table 4.7

*Participant Responses to Instructional Leadership per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Prioritize instruction and student achievement	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	44.4 (n = 4)	55.5 (n = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 2)	33.3 (n = 1)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
2. Implement rigorous curriculum	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 6)	33.3 (n = 3)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0))	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 2)	33.3 (n = 1)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
3. Analyze of the curriculum	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	66.6 (n = 6)	33.3 (n = 3)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)

	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
4. Model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
5. Develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
6. Overall ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)

4th year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
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### Research Question Three

Research Question 3, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leaders related to human capital?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey. Table 4.8 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses. Principals indicated that the activities related to Human Capital had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest items that principals felt had "high" influence on their effectiveness as a school leader were both treating staff as their most valuable resource and being strategic with hiring candidates (81.2%, n = 13).

There were no items scored to indicate "low" influence as it relates to Human Capital on their effectiveness as a school leader. All items under Human Capital were scored in the "medium" influence range to the "high" influence range (scores ranged from six to 10 on the Likert scale). Out of the eight items in the Human Capital section of the survey, 100.0% of all items were scored as "high" influence by participants. Principals designated use of multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations as having the lowest "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (56.2%, n = 9). Most principals (75.0%, n = 12) indicated that overall Human Capital had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. "Medium" influence accounted for the remaining overall percentage (25.0%, n = 4)

Table 4.8

*Participant Responses to Human Capital (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Treat faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	18.7 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	81.2 ( <i>n</i> = 13)
2. Ensure all staff has clear goals and expectations	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	31.2 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	68.7 ( <i>n</i> = 11)
3. Be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	18.7 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	81.2 ( <i>n</i> = 13)
4. Ensure the growth and development of administration, faculty, and staff	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 12)
5. Facilitate professional learning communities	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	31.2 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	68.7 ( <i>n</i> = 11)
6. Create opportunities for leadership roles	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 12)
7. Use multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	43.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	56.2 ( <i>n</i> = 9)
8. Overall ranking	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 12)

Table 4.9 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by grade level. None of the principals from any grade level indicated that any of the items had "low" influence (0.0%, *n* = 0) on their development as school leaders related to human capital. Half of 9<sup>h</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that using multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations (50.0%, *n* = 4) had "medium" influence on their

effectiveness as school leaders. Six out of the eight items (75%) on the survey related to Human Capital were scored as having “high” influence by the majority of principals from every level. Principals at every level indicated that *Human Capital* had an overall “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ).

Table 4.9

*Participant Responses to Human Capital per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Treat faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
2. Ensure all staff has clear goals and expectations	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	44.4 (n = 4)	55.5 (n = 5)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
3. Be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)

	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
4. Ensure the growth and development of administration, faculty, and staff	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 3)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 6)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
5. Facilitate professional learning communities	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
6. Create opportunities for leadership roles	Pre-K - 5	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	22.2 ( <i>n</i> = 2)	77.7 ( <i>n</i> = 7)
	5-6	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	6-8	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	50.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	9-12	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	25.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	75.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)



7. Use multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	44.4 (n = 4)	55.5 (n = 5)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 1)	50.0 (n = 1)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 2)	50.0 (n = 2)
8. Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)

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Table 4.10 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. None of the principals surveyed scored *Human Capital* items in the "low" range. The highest item that first-year principals believe had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders include treat faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource and be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ). All second and 3<sup>rd</sup> year principals indicated that treat faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource, be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates, ensure the growth and development of administration, faculty and staff, facilitate professional learning

communities, create opportunities for leadership roles and overall ranking of *Human Capital* had “high” influence on their development as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 4$ ).

First-year principals believe that ensure all staff has clear goals and expectation along with use of multiple data sources had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as eight items had the same percentage of “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 4$ ). The item overall ranking for Human Capital was scored as having “high” influence on principals in years one through four (75.0%,  $n = 12$ ).

Table 4.10

*Participant Responses to Human Capital per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Treat faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
2. Ensure all staff has clear goals and expectations	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
3. Be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.6 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

4. Ensure the growth and development of administration, faculty, and staff	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
5. Facilitate professional learning communities	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	33.3 ( <i>n</i> = 1)	66.6 ( <i>n</i> = 2)
6. Create opportunities for leadership roles	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	44.4 ( <i>n</i> = 4)	55.5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	0.0 ( <i>n</i> = 0)	100.0 ( <i>n</i> = 3)

7. Use multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	55.5 (n = 5)	44.4 (n = 4)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
8. Overall ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	44.4 (n = 4)	55.5 (n = 5)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

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#### Research Question Four

Research question four, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to executive leadership?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey. Table 4.11 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses to the nine items considering Executive Leadership. Principals indicated that all activities related to Executive Leadership had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest items that principals believed had "high" influence on their effectiveness as a school leader include motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence and be reflective in their practice as well as strive for

continuous improvement; both received all scores in the “high” range (100.0%, n = 16).

Overall the majority (87.5%, n = 16) of principals indicated that Executive Leadership had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders.

Table 4.11

*Participant Responses to Executive Leadership (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Be committed to ensuring the success of the school	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)
2. Motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 16)
3. Be reflective in their practice and strive for continuous improvement	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 16)
4. View unsuccessful experiences as learning opportunities	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
5. Inspire and keep staff focused on the end goals	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
6. Possess strong communication skills	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)
7. Be willing to listen to others and create opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)
8. Treat all members of the community with respect through positive relationships	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)
9. Overall ranking	0.0 (n = 0)	12.5 (n = 2)	87.5 (n = 14)

Table 4.12 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by grade level. Principals from all grade levels indicated that each of the items related to *Executive Leadership* had "high" influence on their development as school leaders, as opposed to "medium" or "low" influence on their development as school leaders. All of the principals surveyed from every grade level indicated that motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence had "high influence on their effectiveness as a leader (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ). There were nine items listed in the *Executive Leadership* section of the survey and each item was scored at 75.0% or higher in the "high" range for every grade level. The item overall ranking for *Executive Leadership* was score as having 'high' influence on the effectiveness of principals (87.5%,  $n = 14$ ).

Table 4.12

*Participant Responses to Executive Leadership per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Be committed to ensuring the success of the school	Pre-K – 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
2. Motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
3. Be reflective in their practice and strive for continuous improvement	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)



	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
4. View unsuccessful experiences as learning opportunities	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	25.0 (n = 2)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
5. Inspire and keep staff focused on the end goals	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	25.0 (n = 2)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
6. Possess strong communication skills	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)

7. Be willing to listen to others and create opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
8. Treat all members of the community with respect through positive relationships	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
9. Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	11.1 (n = 1)	88.8 (n = 8)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)

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Table 4.13 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. Principals didn't believe that any of the items had "low"

influence (0.0%,  $n = 0$ ) on their development as school leaders related to executive leadership. The highest item that first-year principals believe had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader include motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence and be reflective in their practice and strive for continuous improvement (100.0%,  $n = 9$ ). All of all second year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals believed that all items in *Executive Leadership* had “high” influence on their development as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 7$ ). One third of the first-year principals tended to feel that view unsuccessful experiences as learning opportunities and inspire and keep staff focused on the end goals had “medium” influence on their development as it relates to *Executive Leadership* (33.3%,  $n = 3$ ).

Table 4.13

*Participant Responses to Executive Leadership per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Be committed to ensuring the success of the school	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
2. Motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
3. Be reflective in their practice and strive for continuous improvement	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

4. View unsuccessful experiences as learning opportunities	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
5. Inspire and keep staff focused on the end goals	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
6. Possess strong communication skills	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
7. Be willing to listen to others and create opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)

8. Treat all members of the community with respect through positive relationships	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
9. Overall ranking	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)

### Research Question Five

Research question five, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to school culture?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey. Table 4.14 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses to the six items considering School Culture. Principals tend to feel that all activities related to School Culture had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest items that principals believe had "high" influence on their

effectiveness as a school leader were both establish and implement a shared vision along with establish and communicate consistent expectations (they equally scored 100.0 %, n = 16). The lowest item that principals believe had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader was focus on students social and emotional development (68.7%, n = 11). Overall, the majority of principals indicated that School Culture had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader (81.2%, n = 16).

Table 4.14

*Participant Responses to School Culture (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
2. Establish and implement a shared vision	0.0 (n = 0)	0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 16)
3. Establish and communicate consistent expectations	0.0 (n = 0)	0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 16)
4. Focus on students’ social and emotional development	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
5. Treat families as key partners in supporting student learning	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 4)	75.0 (n = 12)
6. Overall ranking	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)

Table 4.15 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals’ responses broken down by grade level. All grade level principals believed that establish and implement a

shared vision along with establish and communicate consistent expectations had “high” influence (100%,  $n = 16$ ) on their development as school leaders related to *School Culture*. Principals of grades 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> indicated that establish and implement a shared vision, establish and communicate consistent expectations, focus on student’s social and emotional development and overall *School Culture* had “high” influence on their development as school leaders (100.0%,  $n = 3$ ). Principals of 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade indicated that leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes and treat families as key partners in supporting student learning was split equally between having “medium” and “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (50.0%,  $n = 1$ ). Pre-K- 5<sup>th</sup> grade principals, 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade principals and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes (85.7%,  $n = 12$ ) and treat families as key partners in supporting student learning (78.5%,  $n = 11$ ) had “high” influence on their development as school leaders. Principals indicated that the item overall ranking for *School Culture* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (81.2%,  $n = 13$ ).



Table 4.15

*Participant Responses to School Culture per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 1)	50.0 (n = 1)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
2. Establish and implement a shared vision	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
3. Establish and communicate consistent expectations	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)

	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
4. Focus on students' social and emotional development	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
5. Treat families as key partners in supporting student learning	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	50.0 (n = 1)	50.0 (n = 1)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
6.Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)

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Table 4.16 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. All principals believed that establish and implement a shared vision along with establish and communicate consistent expectations had "high" influence (100.0%,  $n = 16$ ) on their development as school leaders related to *School Culture*. The lowest "high" item that first-year principals felt influenced on their effectiveness as a school leader include treat families as key partners in supporting student learning (66.6%,  $n = 6$ ). The lowest "high" item that 4<sup>th</sup> year principals felt influenced on their effectiveness as a school leader include leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes, focus on students' social and emotional development and treat families as key partners in supporting student learning (66.6%,  $n = 3$ ). Overall, principals in years one through four indicated that School Culture had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders.

Table 4.16

*Participant Responses to School Culture per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Leverage school culture to drive improvement outcomes	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
2. Establish and implement a shared vision	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
3. Establish and communicate consistent expectations	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 9)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

4. Focus on students' social and emotional development	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
5. Treat families as key partners in supporting student learning	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
6. Overall ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

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### **Research Question Six**

Research question six, *How has participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to strategic operations?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principal Effectiveness Survey. Table 4.17 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses to the six items considering Strategic Operations. Principals tend to feel that the activities related to Strategic Operations had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. There were five out of six items that principals indicated as having "high" influence on their effectiveness as a school leader. Each of those five items was scored in the "high" range at a rate of 81.2% (n = 13 for each item). The highest item principals believe had "medium" influence on their effectiveness as a school leader was treat central office staff as partners in achieving goals (31.2%, n = 5). No items were scored "low" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders as it relates to Strategic Operations (scores ranged from five to 10 on the Likert scale)

Table 4.17

*Participant Responses to Strategic Operations (%)*

Survey Item	Low	Medium	High
1. Assess the current needs of the school	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
2. Meet with leadership teams, regularly monitor multiple data points to evaluate progress toward goals	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
3. Develop a year-long calendar and daily schedules for strategic maximizing of instructional time	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
4. Deliberately allocate resources (e.g. staff time, dollars, and tools)	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)
5. Treat central office staff as partners in achieving goals	0.0 (n = 0)	31.2 (n = 5)	68.7 (n = 11)
6. Overall ranking	0.0 (n = 0)	18.7 (n = 3)	81.2 (n = 13)

Table 4.18 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by grade level. No matter the grade level, overall principals tend to feel that the activities related to *Strategic Operations* had "high" influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Principals of all grade levels did not feel that any of the items had "low" influence (0.0%,  $n = 0$ ) on their development as school leaders. One hundred percent of 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade principals and 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that assess the current needs of school, meet with leadership teams, regularly monitor multiple data points to evaluated progress toward goals and develop a year-long calendar and daily

schedule or strategic maximizing of instructional time had “high” influence on their development as school leaders. One-third of the Pre-K -5<sup>th</sup> grade principals (33.3%,  $n = 3$ ) indicated that treating central office staff as partners in achieving goals and develop a year-long calendar and daily schedule or strategic maximizing of instructional time had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader. The item overall ranking for *Strategic Operations* indicated that most principals believe the activities had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders at all grade levels (81.2%,  $n = 13$ ).



Table 4.18

*Participant Responses to Strategic Operations per Grade Level (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Assess the current needs of the school	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.7 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
2. Meet with leadership teams, regularly monitor multiple data points to evaluate progress toward goals	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.2 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
3. Develop a year-long calendar and daily schedules for strategic maximizing of instructional time	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)

	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 4)
4. Deliberately allocate resources (e.g. staff time, dollars, and tools)	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.7 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
5. Treat central office staff as partners in achieving goals	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)	0.0 (n = 0)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)
6. Overall ranking	Pre-K - 5	0.0 (n = 0)	22.7 (n = 2)	77.7 (n = 7)
	5-6	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	6-8	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 2)
	9-12	0.0 (n = 0)	25.0 (n = 1)	75.0 (n = 3)

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Table 4.19 illustrates the collapsed results of the principals' responses broken down by years of experience. Survey responses indicated that all second year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals believe that assess the current needs of the school, meet with leadership teams, regularly monitor multiple data points to evaluate progress towards goals, develop a year-long calendar and daily schedules for strategic maximizing of instructional time, deliberately allocate resources/staff time, dollars, and tools along with overall ranking of *Strategic Operations* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leaders include (100.0%,  $n = 7$ ). Two-thirds of first-year principals indicated that all items of Strategic Operations had a “high” impact on their effectiveness as a school leader (66.6%,  $n = 2$ ).

Table 4.19

*Participant Responses to Strategic Operations per Years of Experience (%)*

Survey Item		Low	Medium	High
1. Assess the current needs of the school	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
2. Meet with leadership teams, regularly monitor multiple data points to evaluate progress toward goals	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
3. Develop a year-long calendar and daily schedules for strategic maximizing of instructional time	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
4. Deliberately allocate resources (e.g. staff time, dollars, and tools)	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
5. Treat central office staff as partners in achieving goals	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)	0.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 1)	66.6 (n = 2)
6. Overall ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	33.3 (n = 3)	66.6 (n = 6)
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 1)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	0.0 (n = 0)	0.0 (n = 0)	100.0 (n = 3)

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### Research Question Seven

Research question seven, *What influence, if any, did principal's experiences in the district leadership development program along with practices have on their perceptions of self-efficacy and effectiveness as school leaders?*, was answered using an inductive thematic coding process of individual interviews of six principals (three elementary school principals; one intermediate school principal; one middle school principal; and one high school principal). Participants had the opportunity to speak openly about how district trainings and support through the Aspiring Principals LDP along with principal cohort experiences influenced their effectiveness and self-efficacy as school leaders. Overarching themes emerged from the interview data and they were assigned to four categories, often overlapping across all seven research questions: (a) program structure (b) self-efficacy, (c) district and peer support, and (d) retention.

#### Program Structure

The first theme, *program structure*, included perspectives from principals related to structure of the district's leadership development program and the ongoing practices to support new and current principals. Common characteristics across elementary, middle and high school principals emerged related to instructional leadership, strategic operations, school culture, executive leadership and human capital.

**Instructional leadership.** Principals identified *Instructional Leadership* as a major facet and expectation of their job duties. Interview correspondence revealed that participants considered this role as one of the most important to play in order for them to be effective leaders on their respective campuses. Participant 3 felt that instructional leadership construct was addressed often within the aspiring principal LDP sessions as well as in his principal cohort groups. He shared,

Instructional leadership was really at the core of our conversations when we met. We knew that we had a lot of hats we need to wear, but instructional leadership was one that was essential to taking that campus and going from where they are and taking them to where we need to be. So basically, we always discussed what an instructional leader does. One of the things that it helped me with is that a lot of us have a lot of things that we do throughout the day, but being in the classrooms is really what an instructional leader, an instructional coach really is about. We really can't help move our teachers along if we're not there to see what they're doing and to offer that feedback and support.

He added,

It was forcing me to get to the classrooms in scheduled time, and I had to really stick to that schedule. And so, having those conversations about what an instructional leader is and how you become more effective as an instructional leader, not only did the Aspiring Principal part helped, but also the first-year principal cohort. As we met, we always made sure, "Are you're getting in the classrooms?" Those were conversations that we all had with each other.

For example, principal participants mentioned the benefit of campus cohort walks in which they have the opportunity to visit other campuses of varying grade levels and dialogue about campus programs, instruction and student achievement. Participant 6 shared:

I would say that out of all of the things, the cohort walks. That's the place where I've grown more as an instructional leader, both for my own campus in setting up what the walk's going to look like, what we're going to be looking for, and then receiving the feedback from the principals that participate in the walk. And then, also going to other campuses to see what they're focusing on and thinking. Oh,

and getting good ideas from either what they're working on, from the way they collect data on what they're focusing on, or just the good practices that you see in the classrooms.

Participant 1 had different viewpoints about the influence that the district LDP had on her effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership. In fact, she expressed:

I think when you're talking about instruction; it's hard to really guide people on how to be effective because every campus is so different. So, I did have a full understanding, going in, that I am the sole person responsible for being the instructional leader and what that role really entailed, but as far as going really deep with it, I really couldn't do that until I got into the campus. So, I think it helped me shape my understanding for the role itself.

**Strategic operations.** According to the Texas Education Code (2017) school leaders are charged with being responsible for assessing the current needs of their campus, regularly monitoring data points, developing a year-long calendar, aligning resources to school priorities and treating central office staff members as partners in achieving campus goals. When participants were asked about experiences influenced their effectiveness as it relates to strategic operations, five out of six indicated that most of what they received during the aspiring principal LDP sessions was an "overview" and that they would have liked to have had more hands-on experiences to improve their effectiveness. Participant 2 shared:

We were just giving us an overview of what things that we're going to encounter, things that we need to do. I know for my first year as principal, cohort group, we were given a calendar of things to look at each month to make sure that you've targeted these specific things. We also, and I don't know if this came from just



my building principal, but creating your year-long calendar to make sure that you have all those important dates. The data, I think the same thing of making sure-- a big thing was having your intervention or your student data sheets to kind of make sure that you're tracking your data. How to analyze it and how do you work with your ILT team was another part of some of the things that we did in our first-year cohort group.

Additionally, participants, 1 and 3 felt that explicit exposure to experiences that would influence their effectiveness as it relates to *Strategic Operations* was limited.

Participant 1 conveyed:

We didn't spend a whole lot of time talking about strategic operations. Again, most of it was about human capital. A lot was about effectiveness of a leader, building meaningful relationships, but we didn't spend a lot of time on strategic operations. But again, we were given some big ideas about what to expect going into this position, but again, I think those kinds of operations are so specific to a campus, that we were given a snapshot of what to expect walking into a building but nothing very specific.

Participant 3 noted:

I mean it's something that we didn't really spend a lot of time on, other than what we did need as a first-year principal cohort. And every time we've met, the director or somebody would say, 'Hey, at this time, we're supposed to be doing this, this, and that,' or, 'Make sure you set up your professional development for this date.' So, there were good reminders but there wasn't really a lot of time spent on, here's what you need to do to plan out.

Being prepared for budgeting and use of funds or resources was described as an on the job experience in some instances. Principals indicated that they had very little to

no working knowledge of budget protocol and how money could and couldn't be used.

Participant 3 stated:

Part of it is, at the very beginning when you have to set up your budget, and then - who do you have to pay, and these different resources that you need to pay for, and these different resources that you need to set up for the rest of the year. That was kind of difficult. That was something that we didn't really spend a lot of time on.

Although the support given toward *Strategic Operations* was not as detailed and specific as principals would have liked, all participants acknowledged the experiences and strategies that they found beneficial. Participant 5 noted, "We have those checkpoints already mapped out for the whole year, so we're not just doing a flyby every now and then. So, I think that has been very helpful." Principal Participants 4 and 6 also made reference to the sessions that focused on having a year-long calendar and the importance that it had for them. Participant 4 stated:

I think the only thing that was insightful is that they share with you what to expect when you go into a campus to conduct the needs assessment or what have you or how to work your budget and look at your program. So, we had in-depth conversations about that and making sure that we utilized central office personnel. So, it was more of an informational session. It's not like we went through, I guess, exact protocols or what have you.

Participant 6 noted:

One of the parts that we've discussed at our principal cohort group—the director would come with a calendar, and it say, "Okay, this month, these are the things you need to be thinking about." So that has been very helpful, especially being brand spanking new because you don't know what's coming. And it gives you a

warning for what's ahead, so you need to set aside time for whatever those items are to make sure that they get completed.

**School culture.** Participants all agreed that *School Culture* is a major focus area for the participating district and that much of their leadership development experiences focused on ways to build positive culture on their campuses. Their accounts revealed the experiences and strategies related school culture that were found to be the most supportive and influenced their effectiveness as a school leader. The reoccurring *School Culture* topics discussed were intentional celebrations and building meaningful relationships. Participant 4 indicated:

I think the only thing would just be the celebration part of it, just trying to motivate staff. We had some training on that. And that was in my forefront, making sure that we recognized the efforts of others. And that's one of the things that our superintendent talked about at our district meetings or what have you. And that's what we start off with, first-year principal. What's good? What's good happening? And so I think just a celebration piece as far as the culture.

All of the participating principals tended to feel that they were the responsible for the culture of their campuses and that it was their obligation to ensure that the culture was positive and supportive of staff needs. When asked about the influenced that participation in leadership development programs had on their effectiveness with school culture, Participant 2 responded by saying:

I think with all of them, the big focus was always meaningful work, meaningful relationships. And I think every cohort that I participated in, it was just like, "Where's your red poster? Make sure you take your red poster out. And you look at those things." Because without having positive relationships, the work really won't get done.

The participating district provides opportunities for schools, and principals to assess their climate and culture through surveys as well as provide support for ways to build the desired culture within schools. Participant 3 stated:

In terms of culture, once I got my climate survey back, it showed that what we were doing as a team and as an ILT and involving the staff with decisions, and before changing it we had their feedback. It actually really did have a good, positive impact, so. And those are things that we discussed in the class, that, 'Hey, always, whenever you're making a change, let them know.'

Participant 1 expressed:

It was pretty effective because again, it tied right into meaningful relationships. So again, we talked about the importance of building relationships with your staff and how that transpires over to culture. There was a lot of time spent helping us develop our vision and our mission, and talk about the importance of doing that, and making sure that was at the forefront because that's going to drive the culture of your school.

**Executive leadership.** When asked to recall the experiences of participating in district leadership development practices had on her effectiveness, Participant 2 had a great deal to share. She expressed:

I would say the different experiences I can remember in the Aspiring Leadership class we covered all of the different parts of leadership that we would have to encounter, whether it's the hiring, whether it's instruction, whether it's management of budget. So, I think just those scenarios and working with the other aspiring principals really helped just kind of get this is what it may look like once you assume the role as a principal. So that's the benefit that I saw. The one thing that I really feel helped me grow or continue to grow, was my first-year cohort

group, and that we continued it because we were really a close-knit group. Just having a clear agenda each meeting where it was basically looking at topics that's happening right now, in the moment. And so, it wasn't like, 'Okay, all these things are coming at you.' It was like, 'Okay. Well, we know this is happening next month or here is the big thing. How are you handling it?' And just giving different insight from different principals that are experiencing a lot of same things that I experienced, I think was the biggest benefit in helping me grow as a leader. It's not just the ideas that I know and things that I've learned, but it's gaining experiences from different people. I think that has had the most impact on me growing as a leader. It's just being able to sit and sometimes just talk, it was just those little things that you don't learn in a book or you won't get from an aspiring class.

Similarly, Participants 2 and 3 recollected the fact that good leadership qualities were clearly defined in the aspiring principal courses as well as in their principal cohort groups once they became principals. They affirmed that those experiences positively influenced their effectiveness as leaders related to executive leadership. Participant 3 indicated:

It really drove in the fact and the realization the buck stops with you. But also, helping us understand that we need to be able to delegate and know what our team's strengths and weaknesses are, so that even though it is your name on that paper that says that you're doing this, you're not the one that actually did all the research or anything like that. I mean you've got people who can delegate that. You can't do it all. Basically, it really did help us understand that you're not going to be able to do it all. You're going to have to trust people and delegate things to get done.

Participant 1 stated:

If anything, between building meaningful relationships and becoming an actual leader, I think those areas were the most impactful because those things don't have to be so specific to a campus. We learned about just the qualities of a good leader. We learned how to handle high-stress situations. Again, lots of conversations were had about how you handle this, how I would handle this. Examples were shared, so because we talked about real life situations at the campus level, I think that did help the most.

**Human capital.** Six out of six principal participants recognized the importance of their faculty and staff and the potential impact that they can have for various outcomes within the school community. A reoccurring discussion regarding hiring well and training well surfaced among most interviews. They indicated that they were accountable for growing, coaching and developing leaders to “build their bench”. Participant 6 voiced:

One thing that we always talked about is building your bench. Yes, you have your leadership team, but if someone wants to leave, who's being groomed to replace them? Is there someone? So, I've always kept that at the back of my mind as a principal to consider the people that I want to grow as leaders. And on our campus, we've ranked our teachers by most effective to someone who needs a lot of support and a lot of help, and we have a plan in place for each one of those different levels of teachers for the type of support that they receive.

Participant 5 stated:

We did talk about-- and it was, kind of, just really listening, honing in on what was suggested when it's time to hire people. And not just necessarily sitting down and asking the questions, but getting them to perform a task, whether it be in a

written response, or I'll see in the lesson plan, so that way we can dig a little deeper into who our candidates are, to really see maybe that level of performance they would have coming in.

When asked about the extent that leadership development experiences had on their effectiveness as leaders, Participant 3 recalled:

It kind of goes along with the instructional leadership one where you're growing your staff and growing your teachers. But really, the influence that the cohorts had on this one was, basically, on hiring and making sure that we're hiring people that fit our campus and we're hiring people for the right reasons. We discuss a lot of times in our cohort that you can teach the content but you can't teach the passion or the morals and values a person has. And so, a lot of times we look for that. And those were things that we even-- we did some exercises about what are some good questions to ask of candidates when they're interviewing for a position on your campus. Because human capital is the best resource that you have on your campus, you really have to pay attention to what you're putting into your campus. And so, it really did have a big impact on all our discussions about, 'Who do we hire? And once you hire, what do you do to get those people moving along?'

Similarly, Participant 4 recalled discussions about hiring, sustaining and retaining staff. She voiced:

The only thing that can really think of is the hiring process and making sure that when we're looking for candidates, not only are we looking for a best fit for the campus, but we are looking for someone to join the team in which others would actually follow. And we're looking at that sustainability and the retention. And so, just going through the process more with HR as well as aspiring principals and the

first-year principals, the talk from the district is about making sure that you have the right people in the right places.

Participant 1 gave detailed accounts of her leadership development experiences related to *Human Capital*. She also indicated that there were opportunities to learn and gain expertise for practices and voiced that she benefited immensely from dialogue and collaboration with experience peers. She stated:

I think we did was scenario-based activities of how to document as one aspect of human capital. I think the program really touched on how to document and how to be consistent. We also talked about coaching, but I really feel like the biggest benefit that I got was with my cohort group. One of the things I think is not my strong point is encouraging people when it's time to leave. Just working with some experienced principals, and listening to the steps that you really need to take when you have a teacher that's not effective. Working with my cohort group of principals, and getting feedback from them on things that they did when they had an ineffective person, really helped me look at how I interview people, and make sure that I'm picking people who are really strong, and best suited for my campus. I also learned how to let people go.

We discussed things that you do to make sure that you're keeping quality staff members, so you're not having high turnover each and every year. There were different things that they put in place, whether it was incentives, whether it was the positive acknowledgment, the recognition. Just doing things to make sure that we're taking care of those people who are going above and beyond, that's doing a good job, pretty consistent, and not really focusing a lot of your attention on the negative people. So I think really working with those experienced principals helped me refine myself in that area.



Overall, six out of six principals tended to feel that the program structure for the Aspiring Principals LDP and district leadership development experiences were beneficial within the constructs of instructional leadership, strategic operations, school culture, executive leadership and human capital. They indicated that those areas have a strong impact on principal's effectiveness and expressed that those components were essential parts of their role. A few of them offered suggestions for leadership development practices that could be enhanced or explored more in depth for new principals. For example, respondents specified that more hands-on opportunities and explicit training on certain areas could further prepare principals to be effective school leaders. In fact, Participant 6 noted:

I think that one thing that could be done to improve that in the preparation program is just having time to talk about the point in the year when both years overlap, and you're still very much in the middle of finishing up and closing out your school year, and all the information is already starting to come for the next school year.

### **Self-efficacy**

The second theme, self-efficacy, included perspectives from principals related to their leadership abilities. Common viewpoints across elementary, middle and high school principals emerged relating to how principals felt about their capabilities and whether district leadership development experiences positively influenced their self-efficacy as school leaders. Participant 6 indicated that participation in the aspiring principals LDP sessions were advantageous and provided a sense of resourcefulness. She stated:

You can talk about what are-- but until you have to do it, it's a whole different thing. But it was very beneficial-- if I didn't have something from the course that I

could go back, and pull out, and look at, I knew who to call. I knew who those contact people were.

Discussion about collaboration and feedback from colleagues surfaced in multiple responses from participants. In fact, Participant 1 added thoughts about what she considered to be the most effective leadership experiences to drive self- efficacy and stated:

I think during the cohort walks, it's good, because people give very honest feedback about your campus. They give very honest feedback about what's really strong in your school and what's not going so well in your school. So I think that feedback from those cohort walks does help me to really assess myself as a principal. I think even during our leadership team meetings for principals in year one, year two, and three, being able to share and talk about them as a group and then hearing that what you're doing is actually working, hearing that some people have the same struggles as you do and that you're not alone in this, I think that helped me kind of take a deep breath and know that I'm doing things the right way, and what I'm experiencing is normal.

Similarly, Participant 2 noted:

I keep going back to it, but I think just being with people who are experiencing similar things you are going through. Hearing some of the initiatives on their campus. Walking their building and seeing their instructional program and their interaction between teacher and student, between teachers and teachers, between the administrator and their staff. It just helps you reflect on your own abilities. That's one of the biggest benefit I see of really working with a cohort group is knowing that you can always learn.

Overall, elementary, middle, and high school principals reported that their self-efficacy was positively influenced by district leadership development experiences and participation in the aspiring principals LDP. Principal participants also voiced that approval and confirmation from collaboration opportunities with colleagues helped to solidify their thoughts about whether they were on target with leadership practices.

Participant 2 shared:

I think just being with people who are experiencing similar things you are going through. Hearing some of the initiatives on their campus. Walking their building and seeing their instructional program and their interaction between teacher and student, between teachers and teachers, between the administrator and their staff. It just helps you reflect on your own abilities.

Furthermore, six out of six principals believed that having such a strong support system in the district was like having a safety net of sorts; which made them feel as though they never had to “go it alone”.

### **District and Peer Support**

The third theme, *district and peer support*, included perspectives from principals related to the support received from the district and principal peers. Common characteristics across elementary, middle and high school principals emerged related to. All principal participants, across the varying grade levels, gave similar praise related to the support given from district level staff and peers. In fact, the response from Participant 5, mirrored the responses of the other participating principals when commenting on the support received and the relationship with central office staff. She stated:

Well, I feel that I have gotten a lot of support from our area superintendent, who is always just reaching out. Everybody’s just always so supportive and helpful. So

even for me this year, I'm going to get a new accountability contact, so they reached out and just made it seem like they're just really anxious to work with us and I appreciate that. So, I think it's that support, that genuine want to help that makes me feel like we are in good communication, or I'm in good communication with everybody and we have mutual respect...

Support from our leaders at the admin building for example, or say, your superintendent can be just coming in and checking in, chitchatting, being an ear when I needed an ear or just getting some sound advice. I feel because they are that was, I consider them to be very nonthreatening and more supportive. That just encourages you to want to come back and continue the job because you know that they believe in your work. So, I think that relationship piece, plays a big part of it.

Overall, elementary, middle, and high school principals reported the district's support systems and strong collaborative partnerships among administrative staff influenced their effectiveness as a school leader. Principal Participant 3 stated:

I mean I have a good relationship with staff at the admin building. I've got people who I call at pretty much every department, and they're always there to help. Sometimes they're busy but the relationship is there. And so I know who to contact at MIS if I need something. I know who to contact at if I need something. So, it's a good relationship and they've always been really helpful when I call. Especially with it being my first year, they would call me and say, 'Hey, are you doing okay? Do you need anything?' So that was really good.

## **Retention**

The fourth theme, *retention*, included perspectives from principals related to retention in their roles as principals. The participating school district services a high

needs and diverse student population; however, principal attrition and turnover is low in spite of the challenges faced by school leaders. When asked about retention in her role as an elementary principal, Participant 6 noted:

It can be very demanding, but I think that just having that support that you get from your cohort group, from other principals in the district, from the different coordinators really helps you to stay in this position and stay afloat. From my perspective, I can't imagine leaving because you've built this team... So I'm like, 'No, I'm here for good. I'm here for the long haul.'

Additionally, common characteristics across elementary, middle and high school principals emerged related to barriers to effectiveness, ideal responsibilities and compensation.

**Barriers to effectiveness.** Six out of six principals agreed that they are faced with various challenges of the profession that impact their effectiveness as school leaders and participants shared the specific barriers related to their job performance at their individual campuses. When asked to describe the barriers to their effectiveness, Participant 1 made reference to "time". She summarized by saying:

I think time is by far the biggest one. While we do have a lot of time in the day, I think that there's so much to do in a given day and then there's so much the district requires and expects of us, especially with T-TESS rolling out. So a lot of time is always spent doing so many different tasks, responding to emails, that you run out of it, so I think that's the biggest barrier. I feel like I could be more effective if I didn't have so many other tedious tasks to work on.

Participant 5 also articulated that "time" is a barrier stating:

Well, nothing that we can help, probably time. It's just because everybody needs you or it's a balance between trying to get into the classrooms, being able to help

people when they come by, and if you're not in here and you're trying to be out in the building or trying to take care of other deadlines that come up, but you're just trying to figure out a way to get it all done. I mean, it gets done, but I think it's just when everybody needs you and you're trying to be here and trying to be there, and trying to do this and trying to do that.

Participants 3 and 5 agreed that restrictions and protocols for the use of funds and staffing needs are barriers to the effectiveness as leaders. Participant 2 stated:

I would have to say the restrictions that we have on certain things. When it comes to money, making moves within staff or personnel, there are a lot of things that you have to do in order to change a position or to change incentive or a raise or whatever within your building and so I think that kind of makes the process hard and makes it to where if you want to think outside the box, it takes so long that you almost end up going, you know what? Let's not do that because it's going to take forever.

Participant 5 explained:

Sometimes you just feel like your hands are tied with budget. You know you need things for your kids, and you have to go through 10 channels before you get your approval or you're told no. And if you're told no, you have to get this explanation as to why, and eventually it may get approved, but I don't think others understand how time-consuming that is because now you're using more time when I could've been in the classrooms.

All of the principals were candid in their responses when describing the day to day routines or practices that interfere with what they consider to be the most important roles of their jobs. Although the barriers varied somewhat, they all indicated that no

matter what the challenge was, the result ultimately impacted how much time they had to get into classrooms and interact with teachers in the ways that they would like.

**Ideal responsibilities.** Every participant confirmed that there are specific non-preferred responsibilities of their role as principal that make the position less ideal. For example, Participant 2 specified that the ideal principalship would be:

Where I'm in the classrooms and I'm hands-on with the instruction. I'm attending planning meetings; I'm working closely with teachers giving them feedback, and being able to coach them consistently. I find at times, when I've tried to do that, it wasn't consistent. Like, I can do two to three coaching but then real life happens and I still have this other side of my job that I must do before resorting to me spending the night here.

Participant 4 explained:

Emails kill me. Meetings are overwhelming too. But if I had to take something away, to be honest, I would probably have to say it would be that clerical stuff. It would be the emails and all the meetings that we have. If I could truly just be an instructional leader where I'm in classrooms from beginning to end and really supporting teachers, and offering PD, that on the job coaching; the live coaching that we call it. I would probably be a happier person.

In summary, all of the principal participants revealed that their concepts of an ideal principalship centered around being an effective instructional leader. They described the activities, and action steps that they would be able to employ without tasks that require them to deviate from the role of instructional leader for their respective schools.

**Compensation.** When asked the question of whether or not the principals felt they were compensated for their work, responses resulted in four out of six participants indicating that they “don’t do it for the money”. Participant 6 shared:

It’s for these kids. They deserve it. They deserve every opportunity that any kid that lives anywhere else gets. I just try to bring programs, and bring things, and bring opportunities to them that they may not otherwise have. Because a lot of the kids that are in our neighborhood, they don’t leave this area. This is it. They may not even take a bus to go anywhere. Going to the children’s museum is somewhere they’ve never been, even going to the zoo. So I know my why.

Participant responses were focused on meaningful work and the notion that no price or value could be placed on the outcomes of the effort they make to grow and develop children.

Elementary, middle, and high school principals reported that their intent is to remain in their roles as principal in spite of campus and district challenges. Principal participants expressed satisfaction with their campus and district level support teams as well as indicated tasks that presented challenges that impeded their effectiveness as a school leader. For example, Participant 2 shared:

Having other people to lean on, talk your problems through, in a way, helps to see, it’s not so bad. Really, we do what we do because of the students, because of the kids need us. It’s because of the staff that we work with helps you to realize why you’re doing the work. Knowing that you’re really making an impact even when you don’t feel like you’re making an impact, but, at the end of the day, I’m staying in this district. I feel like this is where I am supposed to be.



## Conclusion

Overall, principals indicated that the leadership development activities and experiences related to *Cohort Support, Instructional Leadership, Human Capital, Executive Leadership, School Culture, and Strategic Operations* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders, as determined by their responses to the *Principals Effectiveness Survey*. The qualitative analysis found that four themes emerged, which were evident across all seven research questions: *program structure, self-efficacy, district and peer support, and retention*. In the next chapter, this study’s findings will be compared and contrasted with prior studies documented in the research literature. Additionally, the implications of this study’s results will be discussed with considerations toward factors that principals feel influence their effectiveness as school leaders.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and retention. Research has substantiated the importance of principals being effectively prepared for their roles as school leaders to successfully support school achievement (Protheroe, 2011; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Mendels, 2012; Miller, 2013; Versland, 2013). As a result of the need to develop well-prepared leaders beyond university based courses, “grow you own” Leadership Development Programs (LDP) emerged and focused on developing principal candidates from within (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). The practice and implementation of LDPs have become more popular in large urban and suburban school districts (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) determined that principals need more than research-based curricula and instructional practices, noting that education leadership programs should also look to provide experiences and supportive structures that build aspiring principals’ self-efficacy. Researchers Goddard and Salloum (2011) implied that leader self-efficacy can have a positive influence on teacher performance and student achievement. Research additionally implies that self-efficacy is a key cognitive variable that regulates how a leader functions and that effective leadership is linked to positive efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; McCormick, 2001). These beliefs are vital to a leaders’ success because it determines their effort and persistence (Bandura, 1997; McCormick, 2001).

As school districts take action toward developing activities that support effective principal preparation, there is still the question of what strategies or approaches support principal effectiveness and self-efficacy (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Mendels, 2012). Given the sole purpose of a “grow your own” LDP is to build well-prepared leadership, there is an inherent need to examine the extent to which cohort support, instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture and strategic operations influence principal effectiveness and self-efficacy of school leaders in the participating school district.

To quantify the influence that the aspiring principals LDP had on school leaders, 16 principals (nine elementary school principals, one intermediate school principal, two middle school principals, four high school principals) were surveyed using the Principal Effectiveness Survey to address research questions one through six. The responses were collapsed: (a) responses of 1-3 meaning the item had “low” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader, (b) responses of 4-7 meaning the item had “medium” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader, and (c) responses of 8-10 meaning the item had “high” influence on the participant’s effectiveness as a school leader. The participant responses were broken down by overall participants, by grade level, and by years of experience for each of the six research questions. In addition to the survey, six principals (three elementary school principals, one intermediate school principal, one middle school principal, one high school principal) participated in semi-structured interviews that allowed the researcher to gain qualitative data pertaining to how the constructs within the leadership development program influenced their development and self-efficacy as a school leader to address research question seven. Within this chapter, the findings of this study are contextualized in the larger body of

research literature. Implications for school districts and principals as well as recommendations for future research are also included.

## Summary

### Research Question 1

Research question one, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to cohort support?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey. Participants rated the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, grade level, and years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, principals indicated that the activities related to *Cohort Support* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest item that principals felt had “high” influence on their development was instructional leadership/instruction. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests that the role of principal is shifting and that an effective leader must be able to function beyond the role of manager; they must also be an instructional leader (Protheroe, 2011). The participating school district offers opportunities to increase instructional leadership strategies for aspiring principals and principal cohort groups, through intentional collaboration, conducting instructional rounds and providing support from district leadership.

**Grade level.** Related to Cohort Support overall, 44.4% of Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade principals felt that *Cohort Support* had “medium” influence on their development as school leaders, whereas 100.0% of 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> felt that *Cohort Support*

had “high” influence on their development as school leaders. It is evident that the participating district conducts formal and informal structures within cohort groups to nurture meaningful relationships among leaders. The findings of the survey are synonymous with evidence from Umekubo, Chrispeels, and Daly (2015) which indicates when principals are provided strong collaborative practices, trusting relationships are fostered; which will lead to higher levels of social capital and intellectual capital and in turn enable the schools and cohorts to practice the components of organizational learning.

**Years of experience.** Principal responses based on their years of experience indicated that survey questions related to cohort support had either “high” or “medium” influence on their leadership, depending on the item. Varying items were scored differently and there was no correlation with variance as principals gained more experience in their roles as school leaders. For example, the majority of first and third year principals scored the item instructional leadership/assessment as having had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a leader; whereas second and fourth year principals scored that item as having “medium” influence on their effectiveness as a leader. There were instances in which the majority of all principals felt that item was more useful to them and had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a leader. Most Principals in their first through fourth year indicated that four out of the 11 items listed under *Cohort Support* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as leaders. Those items were scholarly and adult culture; instructional leadership/instruction; professional development for leadership teams; and resources management. First through third year principals indicated that instructional planning had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as leaders, however, fourth year principals specified that instructional planning had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Having more experience with the

instruction and planning, fourth year principals indicated that it had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Researchers have identified a relationship between years of experience in a role and the impact on an individual’s self-efficacy, also determining that there is a strong correlation to effectiveness and highly efficacious leaders (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997, 2006; Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Tschannen, Moran, & Gareis, 2014; Versland, 2013). Concurrently, a fourth year principal may feel more familiar with certain practices and find more success in aspects of school leadership than that of a principal with less years of experience.

## **Research Question 2**

Research question two, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, by grade level, and by years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, principals indicated that the activities related to *Instructional Leadership* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest item that principals felt had “high” influence on their development was prioritize instruction and student achievement. The highest item that principals believe had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader include implementing rigorous curriculum and analysis of the curriculum. The findings coincide with Mendel’s (2012) study; which acknowledged that the principal’s role in instructional leadership is

all encompassing and that effective leaders must have a laser-like focus on the quality of instruction in their schools.

**Grade level.** Principal responses by grade level varied for items related to *Instructional Leadership*. All 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that prioritizing instruction and student achievement, model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning, develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction and instructional leadership overall had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to *Instructional Leadership*. Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that instructional leadership overall had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The variance in responses correlate with Costello’s (2015) report which indicated that instructional leadership can take many forms and is a complex process that differs across settings based on individual style, school context and constituents. The majority of Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade principals expressed that every item including instructional leadership overall had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as a leader. Half of 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade principals responded that analysis of curriculum had “low” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. This deviation from the majority consensus could be linked to research conducted by Costello (2015); which indicated that because instructional leadership is so vast, researchers have not been able to offer a concrete way to define the construct. Experiences, campus needs, school environment and resources to name a few could impact Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup> grade principal’s perceptions of instructional leadership and account for the variance of what 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> and 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade principals consider as instructional leadership and how the experiences influenced their development.

**Years of experience.** Protheroe’s (2011) study identified an effective principal as one who demonstrates a blend of behaviors and abilities within two realms – instructional

leadership and management. The research further specified that performance behaviors were centered on these two overarching realms to encompass specific tasks for success.

The first, second, third, and fourth year principals indicated that varying items had either “medium” or “high” influence on their effectiveness as a leader across all items. First, second and fourth year principal participants indicated the overall ranking of *Instructional Leadership* as having “high” influence on their effectiveness. Meanwhile, third year principals indicated that it had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a leader. These findings correlate with Aguerrebere, Houston & Tirozzi’s (2007) study in that it is important to provide advanced training for principals, particularly within the area of instructional leadership, because the job is growing and becoming much more challenging.

### **Research Question 3**

Research question three, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to human capital?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, grade level, and years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, principals indicated that the activities related to *Human Capital* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The highest items that principals tend to feel had “high” influence on their effectiveness include, treats faculty/staff members as their most valuable resource and be strategic in selecting and hiring candidates. Additionally, principals indicated that the item for



overall ranking of human capital had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader. These findings correlate with Kimball’s (2011) study which reported principals can’t rely on happenstance for staffing decisions because critical staffing decisions require strategic planning and careful selection processes.

**Grade level.** All 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that six out of eight items related to *Human Capital* had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> principals’ responses designated three items as having the highest “medium” influence items on leadership effectiveness. Those included: ensure all staff has clear goals and expectations; facilitate professional learning; and use of multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations. Overall, the majority of principals across all grade levels believed that the item Human Capital had “high” influence on their effectiveness as a school leader. These results coincide with Kimball’s (2011) implication that goal setting from both principals and teachers motivates performance and should be communicated. Clear goals and expectations are crucial to growth and success. Principal effectiveness is linked to teacher effectiveness, which in turn impacts student achievement and success.

**Years of experience.** Participating principals across all grade levels indicated that treat faculty members as their most valuable resource had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to *Human Capital*. The third year principals identified ensure all staff has clear goals as having “medium” experience on their leadership effectiveness, compared to first, third and fourth year principals who indicated that the same had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The concept of effectiveness is achieving explicit goals or objectives and setting goals supports self-efficacy through focusing on performance and growth (Bandura, 1994, 1997, 2004; Collins & O'Brien, 2011).

#### **Research Question 4**

Research question four, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to executive leadership?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, by grade level, and by years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, the highest items that principals believe had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to Executive Leadership include motivate school community through the pursuit of excellence and be reflective in their practice and strive for continuous improvement (100.0%, n = 16). This understanding consistent with the expectations of the Texas Education Code (2016), indicating the principal is responsible for modeling a consistent focus on and commitment to improving student learning and the success of the school by the following: motivating the school community; modeling a relentless pursuit of excellence; being reflective in their practice; and strive to continually improve, learn, and grow.

**Grade level.** All of the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade principals (100.0%, n = 3) indicated that every item of their experiences with Executive Leadership had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders compared to one-fourth of the 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade principals (25. %, n = 4) who indicated that every item of their experiences with Executive Leadership had “medium” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Similarly, research asserts that educational organizations require principals to have the objective perspectives that management provides, the visionary aspects of leadership as

well as be capable of having significant positive effects on student learning and other important outcomes (Cardno & Youngs, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2011)

**Years of experience.** All of the second, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals indicated that all items of Executive Leadership had “high” influence on their development as school leaders, compared to a few first-year principals who indicated that some items of Executive Leadership had “medium” influence on their development as school leaders. This correlates with the idea that “effective” or “successful” leadership is critical to schools; therefore, if we want it to improve, we must recognize what it looks like and comprehend how it works across multiple platforms (Leithwood et al., 2004).

### **Research Question 5**

Research question five, *To what extent did participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to school culture?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness). The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, by grade level, and by years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, the highest items that principals believe had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to School Culture include establish and implement a shared vision and establish and communicate consistent expectations (100.0%, n = 16). Researcher found that successful schools are responsible for both instructional leadership that rests on a firm foundation of positive climate and culture complimented with business-like management of school resources and data (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Protheroe, 2011; West, 2011).

**Grade level.** The majority of Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that the item overall ranking for School Culture had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. This is consistent with Herrington (2013), who suggested school culture is important because it can determine if the school environment is supportive or hostile and divided. Research suggests the ways people think, believe, and feel create guidelines for behavior. Effective principals encourage their vision and ensure that it translates to reality through meaningful teamwork, group problem solving and open communication with staff (Bandura, 2008; Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

**Years of experience.** All of the second, third and fourth year principals (100.0%, n = 7) indicated the item overall ranking for School Culture had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders, compared to the first-year principals (77.7%, n = 6) the item overall ranking for School Culture had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. Research literature upholds the theory that changes in culture have the potential to impact the way that adults work together to improve practices in the learning environment and that cultural relationships have strong connections to instructional effectiveness (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

### **Research Question 6**

Research question six, *How has participation in district leadership development practices influence effectiveness as a school leader related to strategic operations?*, was answered using frequencies and percentages of responses to the Principals Effectiveness Survey, which required participants to rate the influence particular activities had on their effectiveness as a school leader using a rating scale (one representing the least influence to their effectiveness and ten representing the greatest influence to their effectiveness).

The participant responses were then broken down by overall participants, by grade level, and by years of experience.

**Overall participants.** Overall, principals indicated that treat central office staff as partners in achieving goals had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders; however, it is the lowest item scored related to Strategic Operations. This finding disagrees with Mendels and Mitgang (2013), who reported the relationships between school districts and the principal are evolving. Instead, principals indicated that they felt prepared to work with central office staff and treat them as partners.

**Grade level.** The majority of 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade principals indicated that the items related to Strategic Operations had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders (five out of six items scored “high” influence, 100.0%, n = 3). This correlates with the understanding that principals are expected to be instructional leaders, disciplinarians, budget analysts and public relations experts (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson, 2005).

**Years of experience.** The first-year principals results showed that 66.6% of principals felt that all the items related to Strategic Operations had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. All of the second, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year principals indicated that the items related to Strategic Operations had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders in five out of six items (100.0%, n = 7). The state of Texas indicates that the principal is responsible for assessing the current needs of their campus, through regular monitoring of multiple data points, developing and maintaining yearlong calendar, aligning resources for school priorities and partnering with central office staff to achieve campus goals (Texas Education Code, 2016).

### **Research Question 7**

Research question seven, *What influence, if any, did principal's experiences in the district leadership development program along with practices have on their perceptions of self-efficacy and effectiveness as school leaders?*, was answered using an inductive thematic coding process using transcribed data from face-to-face interviews with six principals (3 elementary school principals, 1 intermediate school principal, 1 middle school principal and 1 high school principal). Participants had the opportunity to speak openly about how district trainings and support through the Aspiring Principals leadership development program (LDP) along with principal cohort experiences influenced their effectiveness and self-efficacy as school leaders. Overarching themes emerged from the interview data and they were assigned to four categories, often overlapping across all seven research questions: (a) program structure (b) self-efficacy, (c) district and peer support, and (d) retention.

**Program structure.** Common characteristics across elementary, intermediate, middle and high school principals emerged related to instructional leadership, strategic operations, school culture, executive leadership and human capital. Principal participants expressed that program structure influenced their effectiveness as leaders through coursework and the ongoing practices to support new and current principals. Each of the principals spoke candidly about the impact that was made on their knowledge and expertise in the area of instructional leadership. Principals reported their participation in collaborative cohort meetings and rounds were major factors to their success and sense of self-efficacy. All six of the principals interviewed discussed the importance of school culture and how their successes were attributed to the lessons, discussions and collaborative efforts within cohort groups. Having a laser-like focus on both instructional leadership and school culture correlates with researchers Louis and Wahlstrom (2011),

who reported that changes in culture have the potential to impact the way that adults work together to improve practices in the learning environment; it is those cultural relationships have strong connections to instructional effectiveness.

**Self-efficacy.** This theme, self-efficacy, included individual's perspectives related to their leadership abilities and effectiveness in their roles. There were common viewpoints across intermediate, middle, and high school principals emerged as to how principals felt about their capabilities and whether district leadership development experiences positively influenced their self-efficacy. Most of the participants voiced that the cohort experiences and collaboration with other principals increased their self-efficacy and how they viewed their leadership effectiveness. During the principal cohort meetings, they were able to observe other campuses, share successful scenarios and practices, and develop a toolkit of ideas and tangibles to try at their own campuses. Each participant expressed that participation in the Aspiring Principals LDP sessions were advantageous and provided a sense of resourcefulness and feeling of support from district leadership. Researchers have identified promising implementation practices of Leadership Development Programs for principal preparation that allow districts to put into practice "grow your own" training programs that support succession planning, self-efficacy and retention of school leaders (Geroy et al., 2005; Darling- Hammond et al., 2007; Joseph, 2009; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2012; Pernick, 2001; Versland, 2013; Wallin, 2005).

**District and peer support.** The third theme, district and peer support, included perspectives from principals related to the support received from the district and principal peers. Common characteristics across elementary, intermediate, middle and high school principals emerged related to the support given from district level staff and peers. Participants validated the need for district and peer support to be effective school leaders.

They noted that there were various avenues for support as well as intentional systems for new leaders to get the resources and information necessary to meet the needs of their schools. One participant expressed likening the support to that of having a feeling of a safety net in place to ensure they did not “fall through the cracks”. Studies largely confirm the importance of principals being well-prepared and effective in their roles as school leaders; identifying the need to provide leaders purposeful professional development practices and on-going support (Davis et al., 2005, Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Fuller et al., 2011; Mendels, 2012).

**Retention.** The fourth theme, retention, included perspectives from principals related to retention in their roles as principals. The participating school district services a high needs and diverse student population; however, principal attrition and turnover is low in spite of the challenges faced by school leaders. Principals were able to articulate factors that they considered to be barriers to their effectiveness and what they considered to be ideal responsibilities of their roles. Most of them recognized that the role of principal is all encompassing and multifaceted; requiring them to wear many hats. This understanding correlates with Federici and Skaalvik (2011) whose study affirmed that principals are responsible for all aspects of school management and their responsibilities require well-developed social and leadership skills, mercantile skills, and instructional and administrative skills.

The work of the principal has changed tremendously over the past decades and the implications of this change have included new tasks and greater areas of responsibility, because effective principals demonstrate a blend of behaviors into two realms—instructional leadership and management (Mendels, 2012; Protheroe, 2011; West, 2011). Participants agreed that there are various challenges of the profession that impact their effectiveness as school leaders; however, the issue of time and clerical tasks



was one that emerged across all interviews. Their focus was not centered on having more time in a day, but more time to do the things that “really matter” to student achievement, like being an instructional leader. This issue of time led to mention of the non-preferred duties of their jobs that impact the time they have to spend in classrooms, making the role less ideal. Participants shared what they considered to be specific barriers related to their effectiveness, many of which were described as clerical tasks. Overall, the barriers identified did not overshadow the principal’s perceptions of the good outweighing the bad. Each of them expressed their dedication and commitment to the participating district and their school communities.

### **Implications**

Current studies have shed light on the challenges and needs for effective principal preparation and the importance of specific leadership skills for success in their roles education research (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Fuller & Young, 2010; Leithwood, 2010; Mendels, 2012; Versland, 2013). Liethwood’s (2004) study reports that principal effectiveness has statistically substantial effects that play a “highly significant” and “frequently underestimated” role. Research further indicates that the experiences new principals bring to the table is essential to their potential for success and suggests that leadership development practices assist with presenting authentic experiences (Fuller & Young 2010; Pernick 2001, Versland 2013, 2015). Studies also imply that university-based preparation programs do not fully prepare principals for their wide- ranging roles and a district leadership development program may be needed to prepare principals effectively for their roles local education agencies would benefit from the implementation of leadership development programs and growth opportunities for school leaders (Bossi, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al, 2005; Joseph, 2009; Mendels, 2012).

Studies designate that necessities of high quality in the programs that prepare principals as never having been “more intense”. Research supports the idea that current focus on the skills and abilities of educational leaders is a necessity to support positive outcomes for student achievement, and current research has identified the need to develop leaders beyond university educational leadership courses through “grow your own” leadership development programs. The assertion is that it should provide supportive structures focused on developing principal self-efficacy. (Davis et al., 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2005, 2007; Versland, 2013). The results of this research study have implications for district administrators and principals in the participating school district as well as other district administrators in the state of Texas who develop leadership development programs for school leadership. District leadership may want to contemplate implementing a “grow your own” leadership development program (LDP) to prepare aspiring principals prior to them becoming school leaders (Davis et al., 2005; Hall, 2008; McIntyre, 2001; Versland, 2013).

Additionally, this research has implications for aspiring principals in the participating school district that are interested in taking part in deliberate professional development activities and experiences that may guide them to becoming effective school leaders. Current principals indicated that overall participation in the district LDP and cohort support experiences had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders related to cohort support, instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations. Participating in a structured program that is aligned with state standards for administrators and designed to provide aspiring principals with professional development activities that align with these constructs is beneficial for all parties involved. The aspiring principals become more knowledgeable in those areas and develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy that will guide them toward more effective

leadership practices prior to becoming school leaders. Moreover, the aspiring principals can use strategies and experiences learned as opportunities to set goals for growth within the constructs and implement them within their assistant principal roles on their respective campuses.

The results of this research have significant implications for the directors of the leadership development program and cohort support of the participating school district as it relates to regarding determining which constructs, and leadership experiences influenced principal effectiveness as school leaders. Districts allocate funding and hours of time to provide leadership development opportunities for aspiring principal programs and activities, so determining which experiences and practices were beneficial to participants could assist with improving specific areas of the program. McIntyre (2001) implied that leadership program developers have challenges with implementing courses and coursework that offers aligned knowledge development and hands on experiences that mimic real-life situation. The quantitative findings specified the constructs in which principals defined as having “low”, “medium” or “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders. The participating school district could use the results to support program evaluation of the current leadership development program and to reconsider practices for areas that participants found less beneficial or unrelated to their effectiveness as a leader. This reassessment could result improving the outcomes of the program with regard to more intentional activities or elaboration of constructs that principals indicated they needed more support to influence their effectiveness as school leaders.

In addition, this study presented data based on grade level (Pre-K-5<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, and 9-12<sup>th</sup>). Disaggregation of results by grade level program could provide district directors focus areas to differentiate based on the needs of the varying campus levels the

future principals may serve. The data was also broken down by principal's years of experience, which could provide insight into what current principal's needs are for cohort support and the items principals find beneficial based on their years of experience. Exploring this discrepancy could assist with revamping the professional development approach related to constructs aligned with principal standards.

The results of the qualitative research have implications for how principals prefer to receive professional development and cohort support. Research implies that leadership development is important for succession planning and honing the skills of new leaders (Joseph, 2009; Pernick, 2001; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2012). Knowing what professional development activities principals perceived as being effective and beneficial to their preparation could provide direction to school districts seeking new approaches to effective leadership development. Overall, principals identified that being able to have discussions about real-life situations; being able to have a safety net of staff at the district level and networking opportunities with cohort members were the factors that impacted their effectiveness as a leader the most. Courses and sessions which were more like sitting through a training were mentioned as support for checklist items, notes to self and daily routines. (as opposed to sitting through a training) were examples of things that influenced their development as a school leader. Furthermore, principals across grade levels and years of experience reported their principal cohort meeting for years one through three influenced their effectiveness as a school leader. This indicates those forums were essential to them as new principals.

There are also potential implications for policy makers and district leaders in terms of developing and implementing leadership development programs. Principal retention is critical because training new personnel is extremely expensive. The implications of this study may help diminishing principal rotation. Also, there may be

implications in terms of funding and the way that school districts receive monetary resources to invest on leadership development programs. For example, policy makers could consider providing monetary incentives for those districts who create their own leadership development programs. This type of support could be crucial to the development of future professional development courses and cohort sessions for aspiring principals and new building principals.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The research findings presented various opportunities for further recommendations and suggestions for future research. First, the researcher recommends replicating this study in a school district that is more diverse and has a larger population of administrators. This study reported results from principals who lead schools varying from elementary, intermediate, middle and high school levels, however, the number of principal participants for each grade level, as well as principal participants with varying years of experience was disproportionate. The researcher recommends that the study be conducted with a larger number of principals and with proportional numbers of elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school principals to better generalize the data for each of those campus levels. Likewise, the study may not be able to be replicated in other areas due to the lack of substantial implementation time of the leadership development program and minimal principal turnover. If the LPD has not been in progress long enough to have a significant number of participants, there will be little significance in the data. This is also true if principals generally stay in their roles and there are very few principals hired each school year. However, if a program has been in place for a period of five to ten years or more a longitudinal study would be suggested to further explore. Careful attention should be taken when thinking about the

implementation of this type of study in other school districts as the results may not be generalizable to other school districts.

Second, this particular investigation and research was primarily collected within one to four years following the principals' participation in the aspiring principal's leadership development program. It was determined that principal participants felt participation in the leadership development practices was beneficial to their leadership in some way. Most remembered key expectations and themes from the LPD courses and could expound upon the components they felt had the most influence those components on their effectiveness as leaders. This connection to the courses after years of time have passed suggests that there is a continued needed alignment and exploration of practices and program structure within the principal cohort groups that continues to support constructs.

Third, this study does not take into account prior leadership experiences that participants had prior to becoming a principal. This includes varying experiences with campus levels, student populations and communities. It is recommended that future researchers may need to determine certain factors regarding prior experiences. For example, how many years the participant had been an assistant principal, previous campus types (i.e. Title I, Bilingual, etc.) or possibly their prior leadership roles before becoming an assistant principal. Fourth, participants were able to give open ended responses on the *Principals Effectiveness Survey* and those responses could have been cross-referenced with responses from the face-to-face interviews. The researcher discovered common responses regarding the constructs and program structure. A future study could include all verbatim responses to collect additional qualitative data for comparison across all principal participants.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences; their leadership effectiveness; self-efficacy; and retention. This mixed methods case study includes a quantitative portion, followed up with a qualitative phase that included face-to face interviews with six principal participants. Survey responses from principal participants revealed that the majority of principals across grade levels and years of experience expressed a positive attitude toward the leadership development program and cohort support experiences provided by the participating school district. Principal participants indicated that overall every construct proved to have had “high” influence on their effectiveness as school leaders.

This body of research offers strength to the results of prior studies that sought to pinpoint development practices and experiences that influence effective leadership. Recent research reports that university-based principal preparation programs are not effectively leadership roles that mandate instructional leadership and management skills; hence leadership development programs (LDP) have become a necessity for larger school districts (Davis et al., 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2005, 2007; Versland, 2013). This study identified activities and practices of a district leadership development program that had positive and perceived “high” influence on the effectiveness of principals in years one through four. Furthermore, the results could provide the participating school district with qualitative responses and quantitative data related to their approach to preparing beginning principals for the constructs that define their roles as school leaders; as well as gives other school districts in the state of Texas an idea of what elementary, intermediate, middle and high school principals need to feel developed and ready for their role as school leaders.

The implementation of an LDP is to serve as an intentional and systematic plan focused on investing in the future of an organization by providing an opportunity to build available talent to begin the process of leadership succession (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Pernick, 2001; Searby & Shaddix, 2008). Research has also recognized the need for succession planning in order to decrease concerns caused by shortages of principals as well as help alleviate implementation dips to improve the continuity of a district's mission and vision when a new principal trained by the organization takes over (Pernick, 2001; Schechter & Tischler, 2007). Although there is a great deal of research that identifies the connection between leadership effectiveness and school success, there is very little research that defines environments and practices that support principal effectiveness and retention from the perspective of school leaders. This study has the potential to fill the gap in literature about the type of professional development experiences that principals find beneficial to their success as well as identify the support that is needed to retain them in their positions. It identifies practices that district leadership development programs can implement to support developing strong self-efficacy for aspiring principals as well as ways that district leadership can implement intentional systems that continue to provide avenues for leadership growth of current principals.

The results of this research offer insight to ways of growing leadership capacity in a manner that is meaningful to them and facilitates principal effectiveness. The findings identified can positively impact the practices of district leadership and possibly curtail the growing numbers of principal shortages; especially in high-needs schools. Participating principals expressed their intent to return to the district and their campus for the “long haul”, as one principal stated. The qualitative responses of principal participants indicated their intent to stay at their campuses and in the participating district in spite of



their challenging and diverse school populations, varying barriers and non-preferred tasks, because they felt supported by the district and their colleagues. They were confident that the activities, practices and experiences provided through the leadership development program and cohort support were impactful to their success and effectiveness as a school leader.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

**Title:** RETAINING EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS: A CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS IN A HIGH NEEDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Principal Investigator(s):** Tangelia Hughes-Beston

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Felix Simieou III, PhD

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and retention.

**PROCEDURES**

Once permission is granted, participants will participate in the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* (principals only), face-to-face interviews, and campus walks. The investigation will examine perspectives from district leadership and principals at the campus level. The study will be focused on determining factors that influence principal effectiveness, self-efficacy and school leader retention.

**EXPECTED DURATION**

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately 1 hour.

**RISKS OF PARTICIPATION**

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

**BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT**

**There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand practices and activities that principals perceive as an influence on their effectiveness as a school leader.**

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS**

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Tangelia Hughes- Beston for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.



### **FINANCIAL COMPENSATION**

**There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.**

### **INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT**

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS**

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Tangel Hughes-Beston, at 832-814-9966 or by email at [tangelabeston@gmail.com](mailto:tangelabeston@gmail.com).

### **SIGNATURES:**

**Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.**

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed

name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Obtaining  
Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)*

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY COVER LETTER

February 2017

Dear Principal:

Greetings! You are being solicited to complete the *Principal's Effectiveness Survey*. The purpose of this survey is to examine the preparedness of principals and the support that is needed for retention and success. The data obtained from this study will allow me to do develop and understanding of your experiences as a leader and how you view the support that you have receive from participation in your district's leadership development programs.

Please try to answer all the questions. Filling out the attached survey is entirely voluntary, but answering each response will make the survey most useful. This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete and all of your responses will be kept completely confidential. No obvious undue risks will be endured and you may stop your participation at any time. In addition, you will also not benefit directly from your participation in the study.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and your willingness to participate in this study is implied if you proceed with completing the survey. Your completion of the *Principal Effectiveness Survey* is not only greatly appreciated, but invaluable. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me!

Sincerely,

Tangela Hughes- Beston

Doctoral Student, UHCL

832-814-9966

tangelabeston@gmail.com

## APPENDIX C

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

#### Principal Effectiveness Survey

The purpose of this study and questionnaire is to determine the influence of educational leadership development practices on administrator experiences, their leadership effectiveness, self-efficacy and retention. The study seeks to identify effective principal support systems that impact self-efficacy, dispositions and leadership abilities; as well as the impact associated with Leadership Development Programs (LDPs), mentoring, leadership cohorts, and professional development on principal retention. The survey consists of four major components: 1) demographics, 2) cohort support, 3) mentoring and support, and 4) course offerings. The survey is designed for quick completion, so the majority of the responses solicit the ranking of your experiences. There are two (2) open ended questions that are based on the most or least impact on your effectiveness as a school leader. The survey should not take longer than 10 minutes.

#### Q1 PART I- COHORT DEMOGRAPHICS: Select the description of your current position

- Principal (1)
- API (2)
- Coordinating HS Principal (3)

#### Q2 Select the year of your current position

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)

#### Q3 Current Campus Level

- Elementary (1)
- Intermediate (2)
- Middle School (3)
- 9th Grade Center (4)
- High School (5)

#### Q4 Ethnicity

- African American (1)
- Hispanic (2)
- White (3)
- Asian (4)
- Two or More Races (5)

Q5 Number of years as an assistant principal prior to participating in the Aspiring Principal's Program

- ☐ 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 (7)
- ☐ 8 (8)
- ☐ 9 (9)
- ☐ 10 or more (10)

Q6 PART II-COHORT SUPPORT: To what extent did participation in monthly principal cohort meetings increase your effectiveness as a school leader in the following areas: 1) Observation and Feedback, 2) Instructional Planning, 3) Data-Driven Instruction, 4) Scholarly Adult Culture, 5) Instructional Leadership: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, 6) Professional

Development for Leadership Teams, 7) Professional Development for Teachers, and 8) Resource Management?

Q7 Please rank your responses using a scale from 1 to 10. One (1) representing the least impact to your effectiveness and 10 representing the greatest impact to your effectiveness.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Observation and Feedback (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Instructional Planning (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Data- Driven Instruction (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Scholarly Adult Culture (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Instructional Leadership: District Curriculum (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Instructional Leadership: Instruction (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Instructional Leadership: Assessments (7)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
PD for Leadership Teams (8)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
PD for Teachers (9)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Resource Management (10)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (11)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q8 PART III- MENTORING AND SUPPORT: To what extent did district provided mentorship and support increase your effectiveness as a school leader in the following

areas of TEC Principal Standards: 1) Instructional Leadership 2) Human Capital, 3) Executive Leadership, 4) School Culture, and 5) Strategic Operations?

Q9 Please rank your responses using a scale from 1 to 10. One (1) representing the least impact to your effectiveness and 10 representing the greatest impact to your effectiveness.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Prioritize instruction and student achievement (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Implement rigorous curriculum (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Analyze the curriculum (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Model instructional strategies and set expectations for learning (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Develop systems of routine monitoring to improve instruction (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

# Q10 MENTORING AND SUPPORT

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Treat faculty/ staff members as the most valuable resource (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ensure that staff has clear goals and expectations (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Being strategic in selecting and hiring candidates (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ensuring the growth and development of administration, faculty and staff (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Facilitating professional learning communities (PLC) (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Creating opportunities for leadership roles (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Using multiple data sources for accurate appraisals and evaluations (7)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (8)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•



Q11	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
MENTORING AND SUPPORT										
Being committed to ensuring the success of the school (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Motivating school community through the pursuit of excellence (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Being reflective in practices and striving for continuous improvement (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Viewing unsuccessful experiences as learning opportunities (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Inspiring and keeping staff focused on the end goals (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Possessing strong communication skills (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Being willing to listen to others and create opportunities for stake holders to provide feedback (7)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Treating all members of the community with respect through positive relationships (8)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (9)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

## Q12 MENTORING AND SUPPORT

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Leveraging school culture to drive improvement outcomes (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Establishing and implementing a shared vision (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Establishing and communicating consistent expectations (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Focusing on students' social and emotional development (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Treating families as key partners in supporting student learning (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q13 MENTORING AND SUPPORT	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Assessing the current needs of the school (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Meeting with leadership teams, regularly monitoring multiple data points to evaluate progress toward goals (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Developing a year-long calendar and daily schedules for strategic maximizing of instructional time (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Deliberately allocating resources (e.g. staff, time, dollars, and tools) (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Treating central office staff as partners in achieving goals (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Overall Ranking (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q14 Time spent with your assigned leadership development mentor (select one)

- 0 hours per month (1)
- 1 to 2 hours per month (2)
- 3 to 4 hours per month (3)
- 5 to 6 hours per month (4)
- 7 to 8 hours per month (5)
- 9 to 10 hours per month (6)
- More than 10 hours per month (7)

Q15 Rank the primary method of interaction with your leadership development mentor. One (1) represents primary method of mentoring interaction to five (5) being the least primary method of mentoring interaction.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Face - to -Face (1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (Verbal) (2)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (Text) (3)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Skype/ Video Chat (4)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Email (5)

Q16 What has been the greatest value of your leadership development and support?

Q17 What was the lowest value of your leadership development and support?

Q18 Provide an overall ranking of the mentoring and support received while participating in the Aspiring Principals leadership development program.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Overall Ranking (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q19 To what extent did participation in the Aspiring Principals' leadership development courses increase your effectiveness as a school leader in the following areas:

1) Preliminary Budget 2) Legal Updates, 3) Staff Documentation, 4) Leading Relevant Review, and 5) Intentional Interventions?

Q20 To what extent did participation in the Aspiring Principals leadership development program increase your effectiveness as a school leader?

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q21 PART IV- COURSE SUPPORT: Please rank your responses using a scale from 1 to 10. One (1) representing the least impact to your effectiveness and 10 representing the greatest impact to your effectiveness.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)
Budget Planning (1)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Legal Updates (2)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Staff Documentation (3)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Leading Relevant Review (4)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Intentional Interventions (campus PD plans, coaching, walkthroughs) (5)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Building a Team (6)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Entry Plans (7)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Developing Core Values, Vision, and Mission (8)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
SDMC (9)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q22 To what extent did participation in the Principal cohort meetings increase your effectiveness as a school leader?

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q23 Did participation in the Aspiring Principals' coursework have an impact on your successes and leadership effectiveness?

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

Q24 Did participation in Principal Cohort meetings have an impact on your successes and leadership effectiveness?

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

Q25 What suggestions or adjustments could you share that might enhance/improve protocols or content of the Aspiring Principals' coursework?

Q26 What suggestions or adjustments could you share that might enhance/improve protocols for Principal cohort support and needs?

APPENDIX D  
SURVEY APPROVAL EMAIL

**From:** "Verrett, Shannon L" <[SVERRETT@houstonisd.org](mailto:SVERRETT@houstonisd.org)>  
**Date:** January 17, 2017 at 11:50:33 AM CST  
**To:** "[tangela.hughes@aliefisd.net](mailto:tangela.hughes@aliefisd.net)" <[tangela.hughes@aliefisd.net](mailto:tangela.hughes@aliefisd.net)>  
**Subject: Re: Principal Effectiveness Survey**  
Permission is granted! Good luck along your journey.  
S. Lachlin Verrett, Ph.D.

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**From:** [Tangela.Hughes@aliefisd.net](mailto:Tangela.Hughes@aliefisd.net) <[Tangela.Hughes@aliefisd.net](mailto:Tangela.Hughes@aliefisd.net)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2017 11:23:43 AM  
**To:** Verrett, Shannon L  
**Subject:** Principal Effectiveness Survey

Hello Mr. Verett,

Dr. Eric Tingle contacted you on my behalf this morning regarding the use of the HISD Principal Effectiveness Survey instrument. I am currently a doctoral student with the University of Houston Clear Lake I am emailing you to ask permission to use the Principal Effectiveness Survey in my mixed methods case study with research participants. My study is seeking to identify the impact of current leadership development program experiences that support principal effectiveness in high needs schools.

Thank you so much for your time and response! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at [832-726-4971](tel:832-726-4971).

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## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to cohort support?
2. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to instructional leadership?
3. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to human capital?
4. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to executive leadership?
5. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to school culture?
6. How did the participation in district leadership development practices influence your effectiveness as a school leader related to strategic operations?
7. What experiences, including the district leadership development program, influenced your perception of your overall effectiveness as school leaders?
8. What experiences, including the district leadership development program, have influenced your perception of your self-efficacy as school leader?
9. What experiences, including the district leadership development program, have influenced your retention as school leader in a high needs school?
10. As you balance your responsibilities, do you have the necessary human capital resources needed to make instructional leadership a realistic priority? If not, what would you need?
11. What are the greatest barriers (challenges) to performing your job?
12. Describe the relationship that exists between the central office staff and you as a building administrator. How is it helpful and supportive?
13. As reform/accountability has increased, what has been the impact on your job expectations?
14. In your opinion, what are the three most important components of a quality leadership development program for future principals?
15. How does your compensation as a building administrator compare with the job expectations?
16. Compare your daily responsibilities with the duties in an ideal principalship. What kinds of tasks take you away from meaningful leadership, and how might those responsibilities be redistributed?