STOP THE CHURN:
HOW DISTRICTS CAN SUPPORT PRINCIPALS TO INCREASE THEIR RETENTION

A disquisition presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ABSTRACT

Public school districts in the United States are struggling to retain principals. Principals leave schools for a variety of reasons related to the following: quality of life, pressures related to legislation and accountability, organizational structures, preparedness for the role, and leadership capacity. Clark County Schools, a rural school district in western North Carolina, has experienced principal turnover rates typically higher than the state average over the past ten years. In an effort to increase principal retention, the school district implemented a research-informed, principal leadership academy designed to increase principal support through mentoring, a professional learning network, and differentiated professional development. The goal of the principal leadership academy was to increase principals' sense of self-efficacy, connectedness, job satisfaction, and leadership performance in order to reduce principal turnover and increase stability within schools; ultimately increasing student and teacher performance. Improvement science was utilized throughout implementation to help leaders plan, monitor, and inform the improvement process. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to measure whether goals were achieved and to provide data for an analysis of impact. While initial results did not meet the goals set for increased self-efficacy, connectedness, job satisfaction, and leadership performance, the school district discusses lessons learned and provides recommendations for other districts considering implementation of a principal leadership academy.

A Disquisition

In concert with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), Western Carolina University requires candidates for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership to complete a *disquisition*, a term coined by WCU's educational leadership faculty in part to distinguish the dissertation in practice (DiP) from a traditional dissertation. A disquisition allows a scholar-practitioner to identify a problem of practice within the context of his or her organization, analyze the problem, implement methods or strategies to address the problem, and assess whether the chosen methods or strategies led to the desired improvement (Lomotey, 2018). The format of this paper is different than a traditional dissertation and includes the problem, a causal analysis, a theory of improvement, an improvement initiative, a description of the formative evaluation process used to monitor the improvement initiative, a summative evaluation of the process, and the resulting implications and recommendations for educational leaders.

The Scholar-Practitioner

As a scholar-practitioner, there was a duality in the role that I served. From the scholar's perspective, I researched the problem of practice and analyzed the process followed throughout implementation of the improvement initiative. As the practitioner, I facilitated the implementation of the particular improvement initiative. Leaders naturally assume the practitioner role as that is their typical role day in and day out. However, it is imperative that the scholar role coexist with the practitioner role in order to adequately use research, design improvement initiatives, collect and analyze data, analyze the process, and make data-informed decisions to move an organization forward.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Public school districts in the United States are struggling to retain school principals. A recent report from the School Leaders Network (2014) found that 50% of new principals do not stay beyond their third year of leading (School Leaders Network, 2014). Another report from Rand Education stated that of principals who were new to a school, experienced or novice, over 20% left within two years (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton & Ikemoto, 2012). These alarming statistics are raising awareness of the problem of principal turnover.

In 1960, Grusky recognized that turnover in leadership, changing from one school leader to another, causes instability in an organization (Grusky, 1960; Partlow, 2007). High levels of principal turnover impede school climate as well as student achievement as schools no longer have the leadership stability necessary for success (Gates et al., 2006). In order for school principals to be effective – demonstrate the necessary leadership skills to develop and sustain strong school climates and positively influence student achievement – school principals must remain in their jobs. Research by Fullan (1991) shows that it takes several years to implement change--at least five years for significant reform within a school (Fullan, 1991; Wallace Foundation, 2013). With more than 20% of principals leaving their school every year (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012; Miller, 2013), how can improvement efforts be fully implemented, realized, or sustained?

To have a beneficial impact on a school, a principal needs to be in place for five to seven years (Fullan, 1991; Wallace Foundation, 2013), yet schools are assigned a new principal typically every three to four years (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson,

2010). In a study of North Carolina principals, after six years only 55% were still serving as principals in the state, and a majority of those principals had moved to other schools (Gates et al., 2006). If the majority of principals are either leaving school administration or changing schools within a six-year time frame, how can school leaders be expected to sustain or improve student performance?

Principal turnover leads to teacher turnover, no matter whether the principal is effective or not (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013). When there is a new principal at a school, there is a 17% higher probability that a teacher will leave (Beteille et al., 2012; Hull, 2012) and the teacher turnover rate stays high into the principal's second year as well (Miller, 2013). The more stable the leadership at a school, the more stable the teaching force (Hull, 2012).

Principal turnover rates are higher in low-performing schools, schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students, and schools with large numbers of minority and linguistically diverse students (Miller, 2013; Gates et al., 2006). More leadership turnover means less consistency for students and staff, which in turn leads to lower student performance. In schools where the principal leaves after only one year, student performance declines in the following year (Burkhauser et al., 2012; Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). Miller (2013) found that the more principal transitions at a school, the lower the student test scores and the higher rate of teacher turnover. The most disadvantaged students – those who need high levels of stability – are experiencing the least amount of stability as a result of the turnover (Miller, 2013).

Principals leave their positions as public school leaders for a variety of reasons. Turnover can be voluntary such as promotion or retirement or involuntary as in the

governing board/leader chooses to remove the principal (Partlow, 2007). Boyce and Bowers (2016) divide principals who leave into two categories: satisfied and disaffected. Satisfied principals were principals who were more positive about their role as school leader and had fewer school climate problems and higher levels of influence on curriculum, often setting standards for performance (Boyce & Bowers, 2016). Disaffected principals were less enthusiastic about their role and more likely to transition to a non-principal role upon leaving the principalship (Boyce & Bowers, 2016). Females were almost twice as likely to be identified within the disaffected group. Disaffected principals were also one and a half times more likely to not have participated in a leadership support program for aspiring principals (Boyce & Bowers, 2016).

A Causal Analysis

No matter whether principals are satisfied or disaffected, there are numerous reasons why a principal leaves a school or their role as school leader. This section provides a causal analysis. A causal analysis is a protocol through which a common understanding of a problem is established and root causes are analyzed in an effort to understand the current outcomes (Byrk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). The discussions brought forth from a causal analysis question why and how organizations have particular outcomes. One tool that helps guide a causal analysis is a fishbone diagram (Byrk et al., 2015; Langley et al., 2009). In a fishbone diagram, the problem is stated in the head of the fish and the potential causes are represented on the bones, or lines extending from the body. The fishbone diagram (Figure 1) illustrates various causes for principal turnover, categorized in the following ways: quality of life, legislation and accountability, organizational structures, preparedness for the role of principal, and

leadership capacity. In the initial meetings of the design team, members of the team brainstormed causes of principal turnover from their own perspectives as principals and district office personnel. Team members shared personal stories and discussed their own experiences as beginning principals. Research literature was then reviewed and compared to what was discussed by the team. Design team members combined and condensed the causes into what is listed in Figure 1. After the diagram, a literature review is provided examining the causes outlined by the design team.

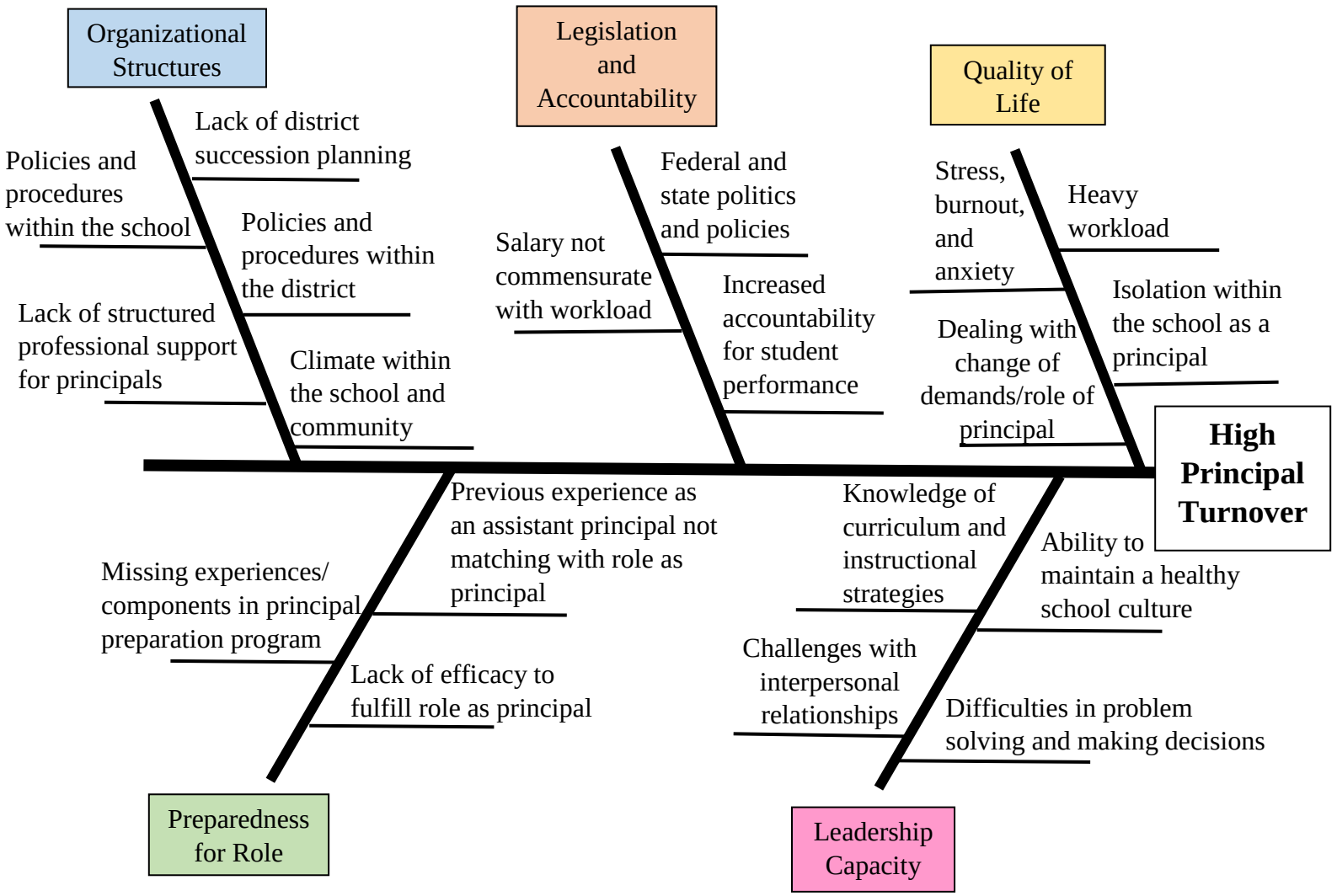

Figure 1. Fishbone diagram of causes of principal turnover

Quality of Life

Research shows that the demands of the principalship both professionally and personally negatively affect principal retention. The expectations of school leaders have changed tremendously over the past few decades placing a heavy burden on principals. Administrators of the past were management-oriented (Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Fetters, 2012; Ricciardi & Petrosko, 2000) and secondarily, supervisors of teachers and student learning (Clifford et al., 2012). Today, principals have to be visionaries, instructional leaders, disciplinarians, facility and budget managers, and experts on assessment and community relations (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011; Hertling, 2001; Miller, 2013; Wood, Finch, & Mirechi, 2013). Not all aspiring principals have the dispositions, knowledge, and/or skill-set to effectively perform all of these responsibilities (Davis et al., 2005).

Principals enter the profession because they are intrinsically motivated, wanting to serve and influence students and staff (Gentilluci, Denti, & Gualianone, 2013). As principals enter their first principalship, they are surprised by the demands and excessive pace of the position (Optlatka, 2012; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Principals have the ultimate responsibility for what happens in a school (Spillane & Lee, 2014). This increased sense of responsibility can overwhelm principals (Spillane & Lee, 2014) to the point they feel overburdened and underprepared to execute the responsibilities on their shoulders (Duke, 1988).

Most school leaders do not believe their job is achievable (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014). Principals are expected to multitask by managing the budget

and building, determining priorities, improving the school, and implementing state and district initiatives (Optlatka, 2012). Principals feel as if they are being pulled in multiple directions at the same time (Spillane & Lee, 2014) and feel that they have little time to focus on instructional leadership within their building (Optlatka, 2012; Ricciardi & Petrosko, 2000).

A study of school principals revealed that principals logged over 40 different kinds of tasks each day (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009). When the tasks were categorized, principals spent 30% of their time on administrative activities and 20% on organizational management compared to less than 10% on instructional activities (Horng et al., 2009).

There is a gap between what principals actually accomplish and what they hope to accomplish (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). The ability to effectively manage time becomes invaluable for school leaders, and if time is not managed well, principals can become stressed and frustrated. The amount of work combined with the managerial tasks demanded of principals prevent them from doing what they intended to do upon entering the position – improving student success – so principals leave the position (Johnson, 2005).

In addition to the surprise, shock, and stress of the demands of the position (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Duke, 1988; Gentilluci et al., 2013; Optlatka, 2012), principals feel isolated and lonely (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Lee, 2015; Optlatka, 2012; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Zellner, Ward et al., 2002). As principals transition to the head leadership role, their relationships with staff members change, intensifying the loneliness of their new position (Spillane & Lee, 2014).

Principals are also frustrated by sacrifices they make personally (Duke, 1988). Principals work long hours due to the excessive workload. In a study by Yerkes and Guaglianone (1998), high school principals described work weeks of 60 to 80 hours. Principals leave their leadership positions because they are tired – tired of the long days, tired of meetings, and tired of meaningless paperwork (Duke, 1988). The long hours in addition to the worry of making the "right" decisions contribute to stress and burnout of school leaders (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Principals strive to find the balance between work and their personal lives so that they have time to attend to personal needs yet also complete all the duties and responsibilities of being the principal. However in reality, most principals sacrifice their personal needs while attending to the needs of their school.

Increased Legislative and Accountability Requirements

Increasingly, legislation and policy affect principal turnover. Policies at the federal, state, and district level that hold principals accountable for student performance contribute to the stress of principals (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Federal legislation efforts over the past decade have required a connection between student academic achievement and principal performance (Wood et al., 2013). With high stakes testing, more rigorous accountability models at the federal and state levels, and increased pressure from taxpayers and government leaders, "the demand for accountability among principals has never been greater" (NAESP, 2012). Policy makers and many constituents want principals to be held accountable for student achievement and growth thus increasing the level of pressure applied to school leaders.

The United States Department of Education in the Race to the Top legislation defined an effective principal as one "whose students, overall and for each subgroup,

achieve acceptable rates of student growth" (US Department of Education, 2009). In evaluating principal performance, policies emphasize replacement of principals at underperforming schools in lieu of improving the capacity of the principal through professional development (NAESP, 2012). Principals are pressured to increase student performance immediately; however, organizational change takes time, and one or two year contracts do not allow principals sufficient time to make substantive change (Fullan, 1991; Viadero, 2009; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

A school's achievement status affects whether leaders want to be principal of a school (Tran, 2017). The main reason for principals leaving, particularly in low-performing schools, is to lead a less challenging school (Hull, 2012). Principals believe that a less challenging school will be less stressful and easier to lead.

Another reason why principals leave is an inadequate salary. Generally, the move from a teaching position to the role of principal results in a small salary increase; however, when you take into account the increased days and time worked, the actual salary for a principal is only slightly more than a teacher's salary (Norton, 2002). As the pay for teachers has increased, the pay differential between a school administrator and a teacher has declined (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Viadero, 2009). Low salary is often cited as the primary reason for individuals not seeking the principalship (Norton, 2002; Viadero, 2009). Unfortunately, our present system requires principals to work more and work better, but it does not appropriately compensate them for these requirements. A study by Baker, Punswick, and Belt (2010) found that relative salary, pay compared to peers in the same labor market, influenced principal retention. Principal pay has not increased as the responsibilities have multiplied (Doyle & Locke, 2014), and principals are more likely to

want to leave their position if they are not satisfied with their pay (Tran, 2017). With all that rides on the shoulders of principals, principals feel undervalued by a salary disproportionate with the time and energy that they devote to the school and the education of students.

District Factors and Organizational Structures

District factors and internal organizational structures also affect principal turnover. Principals often do not feel supported at the district level (Louis et al., 2010). In this section, three factors have been identified, including principal transitions and succession planning, district and state policies, and professional development of school principals.

Principal transitions and succession planning. School districts seldom have processes to match a principal candidate with the needs of a particular school (Doyle & Locke, 2014). Effective leadership depends on matching leaders with the school and the school community (Griffith, 1999; McREL, 2009). For example, the leadership needed in a rural school with unique contextual and cultural variables may be different than what is needed in an urban or suburban school. Size of a school and district as well as the level of the school (elementary versus secondary) also affect what leadership knowledge is needed (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walstrom, 2004). Successful principals have to be able to match their knowledge and skills to the specific context in which they serve.

How and when principal transitioning occurs affects a principal's level of stress and performance (Spillane & Lee, 2014). For example, research shows that when there is rapid principal turnover, teachers' perceptions of principals are affected (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). In addition, having to prove oneself to the teaching

staff can be extremely stressful, especially for new principals. Principals who have previously served as an assistant principal in the same school faced less stress as they were already familiar with the staff and the school's vision (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Principal transitions at the last minute and to new schools/locations pose additional challenges as the leader must respond to a sharp learning curve in a short amount of time (Spillane & Lee, 2014). This can be overwhelming for a new principal with little or no prior principal experience (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013).

Succession planning, intentional development and promotion of leaders within a district, is essential to ensuring a supply of high quality candidates for school leadership positions (National College for School Leadership, 2007); however, few districts have succession plans (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). The lack of succession planning by districts makes it harder to find the best candidate for the principalship as vacancies occur. Development of trust between teachers and principals is critical during succession events (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004). According to Grusky (1960), "the successor is almost always a stranger." The successor often represents change which can be isolating and reduces opportunities to gain informal information about the organization (Grusky, 1960). If the incoming principal cannot earn the trust of the school staff as he or she transitions to the school, then he or she will struggle in leading the school.

In transitioning to a school, principals have to navigate the politics within the school. When principals enter a school, they must deal with the influence of past principals (Optlatka, 2012; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Staff members, especially those who

are ineffective, can be resistant to the ideas of the new leader and pose challenges to the new principal (Spillane & Lee, 2014). As principals transition to a new school, they have to establish their creditability and build trust with the staff (Lee, 2015; O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013).

Working conditions within a school and district affect a principal's desire to stay (Hull, 2012). The incoming principal inherits the organizational history and traditions of the new school. The principal must be able to quickly understand the school's history and traditions and use that knowledge as he or she works to bring about change (Clifford et al., 2012). Incoming principals often have to address and work within the scope of the already created plans of the previous principal. The previously planned steps reflect the former administrator's perspective and approach and may not coincide with the beliefs of the new school leader (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013). Principals have to possess the necessary skills and aptitude to navigate within these boundaries while trying to incorporate their own values, beliefs, and desires for the school.

District and state policies. Some districts have policies that run counter to principal retention, such as policies that require principal rotation at regular intervals (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Hull found that "consistently replacing a principal can actually harm a school" (2012). Turnover that occurs every two to three years makes it unlikely that a principal will be able to build trust among staff members (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). The purposeful movement of school leaders every few years at the discretion of district leadership does not allow principals the time to affect and sustain meaningful change and runs counter to the research suggesting that sustained leadership is more effective.

State policies and state funding of school districts can limit what districts are able to do to support principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). The New Teacher Center, a national nonprofit organization, found that there are only 20 states that have some form of an induction program for beginning principals as of 2015-2016 (New Teacher Center, 2016). Of the 20 states with an induction program for principals, only six states supported principals during both their first and second years of service (New Teacher Center, 2016). If support through legislation and funding are not provided at the state level, it is difficult for districts to make provisions for these services. "Only a minority of states have effectively exercised their authority to improve school leadership statewide" (Wallace Foundation, 2012).

Professional development of school principals. District leaders have the largest impact on the professional capacity of school leaders and can create conditions within the organization to support school leaders (Louis et al., 2010). To increase leader efficacy, districts should provide both adequate human and financial resources, encourage the development of parent and community relationships, allow schools autonomy to pursue goals, require decisions to be made based on data with assistance in interpreting and using the data, and develop and set achievement standards and district curricula (Louis et al., 2010). If these conditions are poorly managed or poorly implemented by district leadership, then school leaders face tension and negative consequences (Louis et al., 2010).

Most districts do not have a systemic professional development plan for school leaders (Louis et al., 2010). Principals have repeatedly voiced a need to increase their expertise and personal skills, yet professional development offerings are lacking

(Educational Research Service, 2000). District leaders tend to attribute lower student performance in struggling, low-performing schools to external factors not principal leadership knowledge and/or skills (Louis et al., 2010), and as a result, they do not see a need to develop leadership capacity.

Principals often find there is no formal or systematic initiative that provides support for principals within their districts (Gentilluci et al., 2013). Little attention is provided to developing administrators once they are hired (Ricciardi & Petrosko, 2000), and the professional development that is offered often does not address the specific needs of each principal (Ricciardi & Petrosko, 2000). Typical professional development for principals includes a workshop where one-size-fits-all, and leaders sit patiently and listen (Ikemoto et al., 2014). The lack of professional capacity development is not the result of district leaders not caring or wanting to help. There is often insufficient planning and lack of funding within the district to effectively support principal growth (Wallace Foundation, 2012).

Preparedness for the Role and Leadership Capacity

Another reason principals leave the principalship is that they do not feel adequately prepared for the role. With the evolution of the role of the principal and the greater complexity in the environment, principals need to be effectively trained for the demanding responsibilities of their leadership role (Bush, 2009). Sixty-nine percent of principals feel that the principal preparation programs in institutes of higher education are out of touch with the present realities in schools today (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The training of school leaders has not kept pace with the changing role of principals (Wallace Foundation, 2012) nor has it been aligned with what districts need

(Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010). There is a disconnect between principal preparation programs and the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to be a school leader. Additionally, many pre-service principals lack the skills to apply theory to practice when they are named to their first position (Oplatka, 2009).

Experience as an assistant principal does not always prepare one to become a school principal either. Assistant principals are often assigned duties that comprise only a fraction of those completed by principals, and they have little opportunity or encouragement to cross-train. Missed opportunities often include instructional leadership and budgeting in favor of student discipline, supervision, and managerial tasks like counting equipment or textbooks (Ricciardi & Petrosko, 2000; Zellner, Ward et al., 2002). Tasks such as these do not provide opportunities for assistant principals to manage systemic or programmatic change (Zellner, Ward et al., 2002).

Principals sometimes leave because they do not believe they are suited for the position and lack the self-efficacy to lead (Duke, 1988). Principals want to feel that they are affecting change or making a difference in their role as school leader. If principals do not see changes happening within the school, they begin to doubt their abilities to effect change, their self-efficacy. In a study of Illinois principals from 2001 through 2008, DeAngelis and White (2011) found that three out of ten principals who left their position became assistant principals, teachers, or other non-administrative positions because they felt they were not prepared for the role of school leader. Despite university preparation and previous administrative experiences, new principals often lack the capacity and self-efficacy to meet the challenges of the school leader role (Gentilluci et al., 2013).

A principal's decision to remain at a school, whether a first year principal or simply new to the school, is affected by the principal's ability to improve student performance and overcome challenges (Burkhauser et al., 2012). Principals are more likely to leave when student performance decreases in their first year at a school (Burkhauser et al., 2012). In addition, studies show that principals at low-performing schools tend to leave due to feelings of frustration and their inability to affect change by improving school performance (Goodwin, 2013). These feelings of frustration when coupled with policies where principal pay is tied to performance do little to encourage or entice principals to stay at low-performing schools. Principals will leave, often moving to schools seen as less challenging and having more resources.

Problem of Practice within the Local Context

Clark County is a rural county nestled in the foothills of northwestern North Carolina, not far from the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian mountains, approximately 75 miles northwest of Charlotte. The county is home to slightly more than 83,000 people, according to the 2010 United States Census Bureau Report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Population predictions for the county from the US Census Bureau show a decrease in population estimates with a projected loss of 1,000 people by 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Clark County is still recovering from the recession of 2008 and high unemployment rates that peppered this community and surrounding areas following the recession.

According to the 2010 US Census Bureau Report, the majority of the county population is white, 90%, with a small percentage of African Americans, 5%, and Hispanics, 5%. Approximately 16% of the county population lives below the poverty

level as reported in the 2010 US Census Bureau Report. Of the persons who are 25 and older in Clark County, 76.7% are high school graduates, and 13.7% have earned a bachelor's degree based on the 2010 US Census Bureau Report. With the decline in manufacturing in the area, the public school system and local hospital system are the two largest employers in the county, and median household income for the year 2015 for Clark County residents was $35,763 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Clark County Schools (CCS) is a public school system that serves approximately 12,000 students. The vision of the school district reads, "Every student will graduate from high school, be globally competitive for work or postsecondary education, and be prepared for life in the 21st century" (www.clarkschools.com). The school system is comprised of 26 schools serving students in prekindergarten through high school. There are 11 elementary schools, 4 kindergarten through grade 8 (K-8) schools, 4 middle schools, 3 traditional high schools, 2 specialty high schools, and 2 alternative schools. To serve students, Clark County Schools employees over 1,850 personnel. This encompasses both school and district level employees, of which 850 are teachers.

Since the 2007-2008 school year, district enrollment has decreased slightly each year. This decrease is aligned to the loss of jobs in the community since the recession of 2008. The majority of the district's student population is reported as White (81%). The remaining students are Hispanic (9%); African-American (5%); and Multi-Racial (4%). Students identified as English as a Second Language (ESL) represent 8% of the student population. Sixty-two percent of students are classified as economically disadvantaged. As of November 2016, 11.6% of students were identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG). Students with disabilities represent 13.6% of the student

population based on the December 2016 headcount by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016b).

Principal Turnover in CCS

Clark County Schools employed 72 school and district administrators in the 2016-2017 school year (North Carolina Public Schools Statistical Profile, 2017). Of these 72 administrators, 26 were school principals, and 18 were assistant principals. As of 2015-2016, the majority of principals, 39%, in Clark County Schools were in their first three years of being a school leader (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a). Of the remaining principals, 35% had four to ten years of experience, and 27% had ten or more years of service as a school leader (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a).

According to the 2015-2016 NC School Report Card for Clark County Schools, the principal turnover rate for the district was 15%, higher than the state principal turnover rate of 9%. For the past six years, the district's principal turnover rate has ranged from 4% in 2011-2012 to as high as 19% in 2012-2013 (Figure 2). With the exception of 2011-2012 and 2014-2015, the principal turnover rate for the district has been higher than the state rate each year (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a; NCDPI, 2015; NCDPI, 2014; NCDPI, 2013; NCDPI, 2012). The state principal turnover rate for the past six years has been relatively steady and has ranged from 8% to 11% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a; NCDPI, 2015; NCDPI, 2014; NCDPI, 2013; NCDPI, 2012).

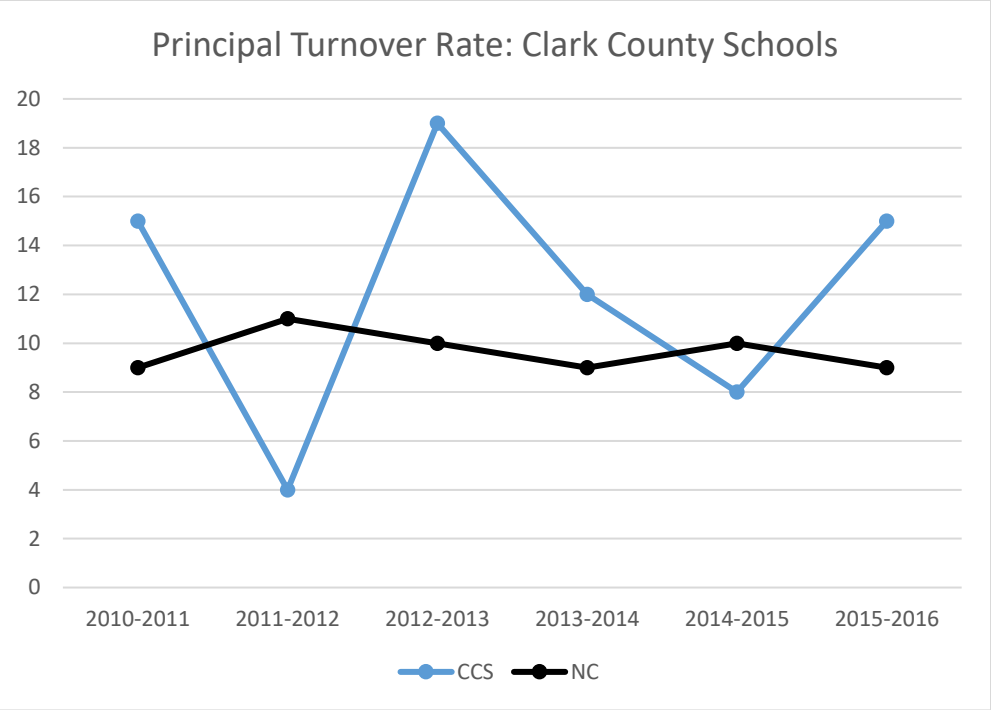

Figure 2. Graph of principal turnover rate in Clark County Schools.

Clark County Schools appears to mirror the national trends in principal turnover as reported earlier in this paper. Factors influencing principal turnover in Clark County Schools include promotion, retirement, local policies and procedures, and state policies. For example in 2016-2017, six of the 26 schools in the district had a different principal than the previous year of 2015-2016. Of the six principals who left their school, two were promoted to district office positions either in Clark County Schools or a neighboring school district, and one retired at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. The remaining three principals were moved from one school in the district to another with local board approval by the district superintendent.

Principal turnover for 2015-2016 was very similar. Of the five principals who left from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016, two principals were promoted, one retired, and the other

two were moved at the superintendent's discretion with local board approval. Of the two moves made by the superintendent, one was made in response to North Carolina General Statutes for low-performing schools. One option for school districts to turn-around a low-performing school is to replace the current principal. The superintendent chose that option with one of the district's low-performing schools.

Principal Placement and Induction Practices at CCS

While the ultimate decision of placing principals in Clark County Schools rests with the superintendent and local board of education, the process to fill principal vacancies has varied depending on the situation. For example, if a principal vacancy is foreseen well in advance as is usually the case with retirements, the superintendent will typically collect input from the school staff and the community including qualities they want in a school leader. The feedback collected is used by the interview committee to select the top two candidates. The superintendent interviews the finalists and recommends one of them to the board of education for approval.

The timing of a principal vacancy often affects the process for determining the next school leader. If the vacancy occurs close to the start of the school year, the superintendent usually names someone to fill that post with board approval. Clark County Schools Board Policy 7100, Recruitment and Selection of Personnel, and Board Policy 7423, Employment of Administrators, outline the procedures for selecting employees for positions within the district. Board Policy 7423 clearly states that "subject to review by the Board, the Superintendent is delegated the responsibility and authority to place administrators in positions which he/she believes will best serve the school system. However, Board approval is necessary whenever a person is promoted from an assistant

principal position to a principal position or from the school level to the Education Center" (Clark County Schools Board of Education Policy Manual, 2013).

The board of education hired a new superintendent who started July 1, 2018, replacing the previous superintendent who retired June 30, 2018. The previous superintendent had an open door policy for principals. If a principal wanted to make a request for a change in his or her position, he or she could schedule a meeting and discuss concerns directly with the superintendent. A few years ago, one principal after her first year of service as a school principal requested a change in assignment, asking to be assigned to an assistant principal role in the district. Because of changes in other school administrators in the district that year, the superintendent was able to move the principal to an assistant principal assignment.

The majority of principal vacancies for the last five years have been filled from personnel already employed as administrators in the district. Two of the four principal placements for 2018-2019 included two principals who were employed by neighboring school districts. However, both employees were previous Clark County Schools' employees. While there are policies and procedures for selecting personnel, hiring for principals has happened either through a formal interview process or was decided upon by the superintendent. In the summer of 2016, two of the six vacancies followed a formal interview process. The remaining vacancies were filled at the discretion of the district superintendent with local board approval. Similarly, in the summer of 2018, two of the four vacancies followed a formal interview process and the other two were appointments by the district superintendent.

Once hired as a school principal, there is no formal induction program or professional network for principals organized by district administrators. District-level directors reach out to principals informally and support principals as needed when questions arise. Principals meet twice monthly – once by level and once as a K-12 group; however, these meetings are focused on updates, reminders, and district initiatives. Limited time is devoted to the professional development needs of principals.

The principals and assistant principals meet monthly as part of the Clark County Principal and Assistant Principal Association (CCPAPA), a member organization of the North Carolina Principal and Assistant Principal Association (NCPAPA). School leaders use this time to network, discuss issues and concerns, and work to address their needs professionally. These meetings usually last about two hours and are organized by school leaders for school leaders within the district with limited assistance from district administrators.

Under a previous superintendent, more than 10 years ago, there was a mentoring program for principals. From conversations with various administrators, the former superintendent led the effort and met with the new principals regularly. According to the Associate Superintendent for Human Resource Services, the mentor program ended due to lack of qualified principals to serve as mentors for new principals.

The previous superintendent who retired in June 2018 created an aspiring leaders program in the 2009-2010 school year. The program focused on current assistant principals and teacher leaders who had administrative degrees. Participants had to apply to the program and commit to attending all of the sessions. Session topics addressed curriculum, data and assessment, finance, human resources, community and local board

relations, and auxiliary services such as maintenance, transportation, and child nutrition. The program continued through the 2013-2014 school year and was discontinued due to lack of interest in the program and lack of qualified applicants.

The local context and existing research about principal turnover and retention were used to develop the theory of improvement.

Theory of Improvement

While all principal turnover cannot be eliminated, and certainly some leaders must be removed in order to improve schools, the long-term goal for all district leaders facing this problem is to reduce principal turnover rates to the greatest extent possible. Reducing turnover of school leaders increases student achievement, teacher retention, school climate, and school improvement efforts which benefits students, teachers, and the community as a whole (Beteille et al., 2012; Gates et al., 2006; Hull, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2012).

Figure 2 is a driver diagram (Byrk et al., 2015). A driver diagram is a tool to organize theories or hypotheses about improvement (Byrk et al., 2015; Langley et al., 2009). In the figure below, research-supported factors that contribute to a reduction in principal turnover are listed. The two left columns describe the goal of the improvement, both an ultimate aim and an immediate aim. In this case, the immediate aim is to increase principal retention with the idea that if principals are retained longer at a school and within a district then this will lead to improved or sustained school climate and improved or maintained student academic performance. The third column of the driver diagram lists agents responsible: individual principal factors, district policies and procedures, and state legislative policies. These agents responsible came from the review

of the research on principal turnover and are factors affecting principal retention. For my theory of improvement, I chose to focus on individual principal factors and to see what change could be implemented to affect those factors. The fourth column in the diagram lists primary drivers of principal turnover. Primary drivers are hypotheses about a change that could improve principal retention (Byrk et al., 2015). From the individual principal factors, I hypothesized that changes in principals' sense of job satisfaction and connectedness and their capacity to lead a school – taken together as principals' sense of self-efficacy – would increase the individual factors of principals and therefore increase their retention. The last column lists change agents, ideas to be developed, tried, and refined, in an effort to increase principal retention (Byrk et al., 2015). Out of possible options to increase principals' sense of self-efficacy, I chose to focus on the creation of a mentor program for beginning principals and the creation of a professional learning network for all principals in the district.

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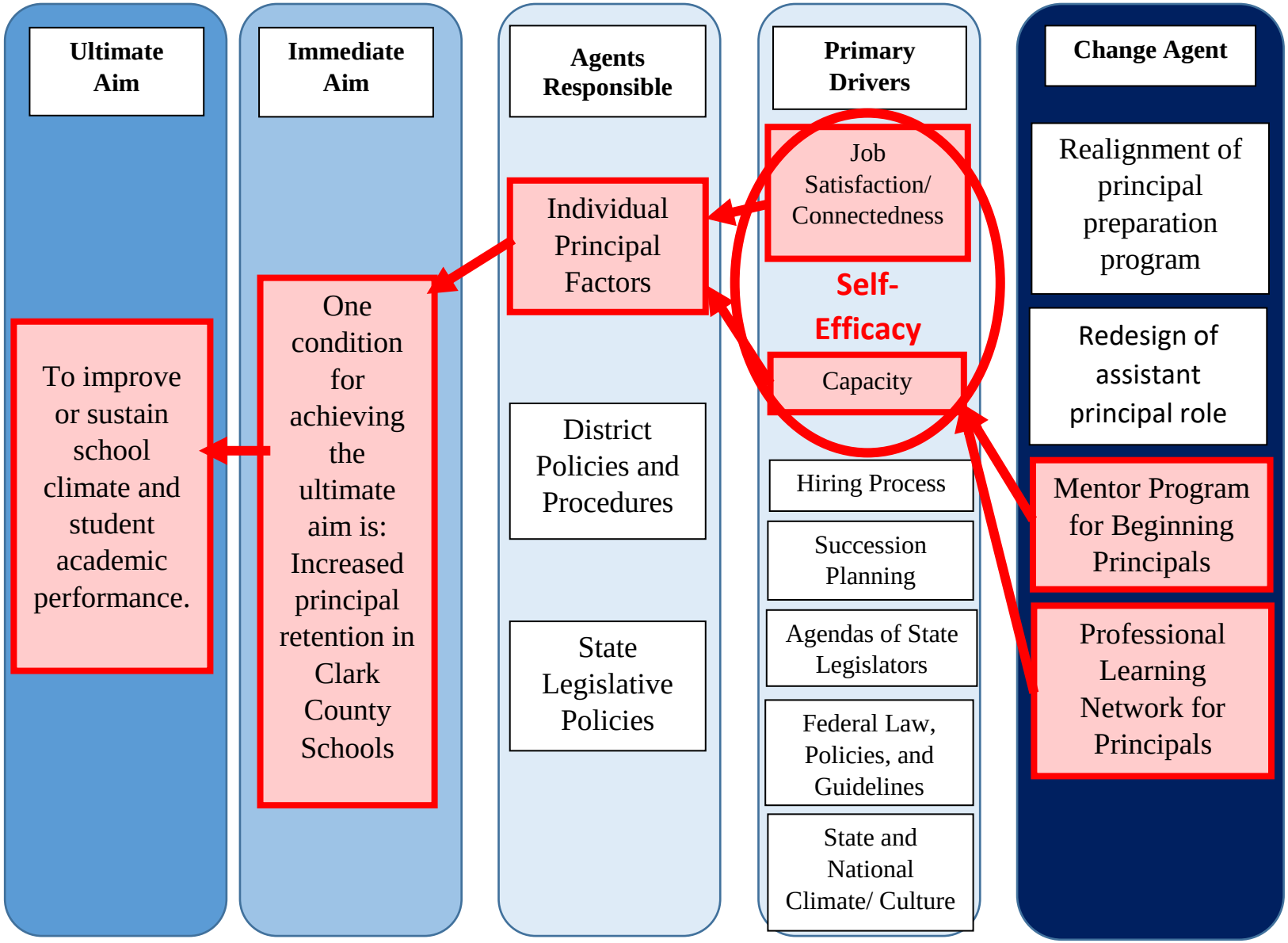

Figure 3. Driver diagram for addressing principal turnover.

To increase principal retention in Clark County Schools, structured, research-informed support needs to be provided to principals to increase their self-efficacy and performance, their connectedness to other principals in the district, and their job satisfaction. I proposed that if we increase the formalized support for principals through research-supported processes, especially for those new to the role, to a school, or to the district, the retention rate of principals as well as their perceptions of their own performance and success would increase.

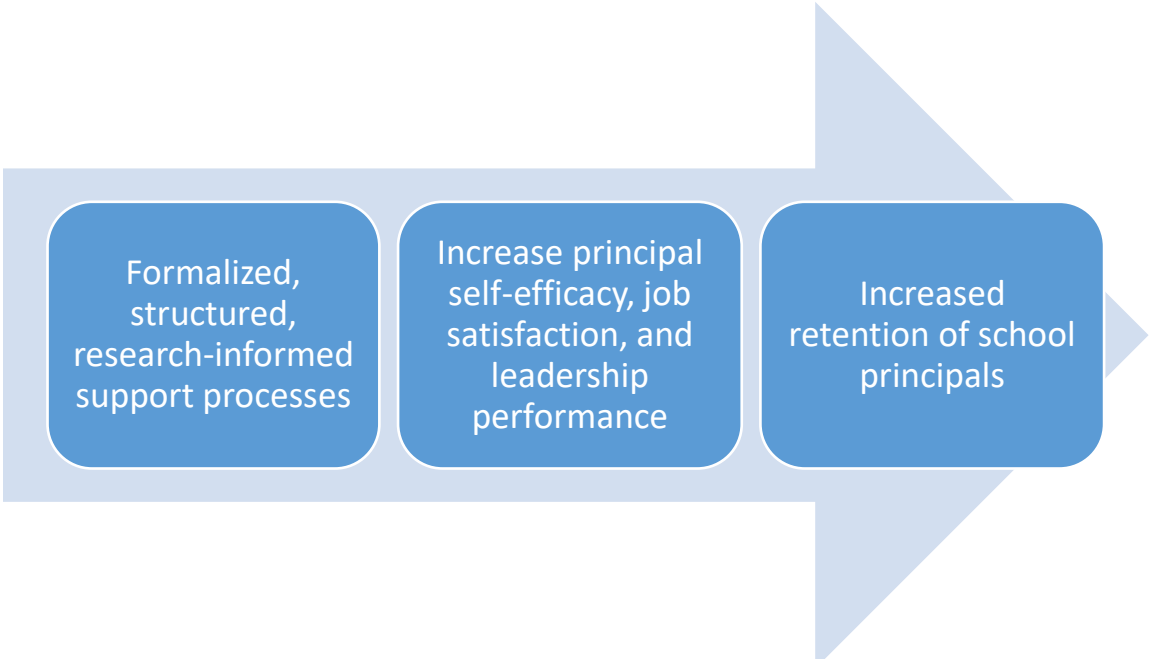

Figure 4. Theory of Improvement to increase principal retention.

My theory of improvement holds that: *Formalized, research-informed support processes, provided by district leaders to school principals, will increase principal self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and leadership performance reducing principal turnover thus contributing to the conditions necessary for improved or sustained school climate and*

student academic performance. More specifically, research suggests the consideration of two processes: (1) assigning mentors, and (2) creating a professional learning network. The implementation of these two processes will provide professional development experiences that are differentiated to meet the individualized capacity needs of principals.

The Improvement Methodology

The improvement initiative implemented focused on district support of principals. Unlike the other drivers, district leaders have a large degree of responsibility for building and sustaining principal capacity and connection and, when assumed, can actually affect change in both areas (Hull, 2012; Louis et al., 2010; National College for School Leadership, 2007). The improvement initiative implemented across Clark County Schools was a principal leadership program. It included a mentoring program for beginning principals and a professional learning network – both of which sought to build leadership capacity and social connection. The goal was that formalized, research-informed support processes would increase the self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and leadership performance of principals leading to a reduction in principal turnover.

A Literature Review

To operationalize my theory of improvement, I worked with a team of educators in Clark County Schools to design and implement a formalized, research-informed, principal support process that we named, the Principal Leadership Academy (PLA). -The PLA contained two primary components: a) beginning principal mentor program and b) a professional learning network, both of which provided professional development tailored to the needs of principals. This section outlines research literature that supports these processes.

Capacity Development for School Leaders. Unfortunately, educational leaders who want to build the capacity of their school leaders, do not usually ask themselves, "How do adults learn best?" As educators, principals are comfortable and familiar with the pedagogical model of learning, in which a focus on the content to be learned often supersedes consideration for the adult learning process (Lawson, 2016). Without consideration for the adult learning process, there is a real risk that the learners will not achieve or sustain the desired learning outcomes (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Lawson, 2016). Given this understanding, I sought to create capacity development opportunities for principals informed by the research on andragogy, or the teaching of adult learners. A review of the research revealed promising outcomes for professional learning opportunities that were: ongoing, differentiated, and collaborative.

The most recent professional standards for education leaders released in 2015 stated that principals need *ongoing* support to be successful in the dynamic role of school leader (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Professional development should not be a brief moment in time event (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). In order for professional development to increase educator effectiveness, it must be sustained. "Episodic, periodic, or occasional professional learning has little effect on educator practice or student learning because it rarely includes ongoing support or opportunities for extended learning to support implementation (Learning Forward, 2017). Ongoing support for principals also reduces the feelings of isolation that school leaders experience (Johnson, 2005).

Principals, no matter their years of experience, need continuous support (Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002). As Learning Forward states about

implementation of professional learning, "professional learning is a process of continuous improvement focused on achieving clearly defined student and educator learning goals rather than an event defined by a predetermined number of hours" (Learning Forward, 2017). It takes three to five years of ongoing professional development for educators to bridge the gap between knowing and doing and to integrate new ideas in their practice (Learning Forward, 2017).

Support for principals should be differentiated and targeted to meet individual needs. Differentiation means the professional learning is tailored to the needs of the participants. Differentiation could be accomplished through the content, teaching strategies, learning environment, or products of the learning process (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). A "one-size fits all" approach will not support principals in their learning (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Duncan & Stock, 2010). Districts need to offer a menu of support to principals (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013) in which various topics are presented in a variety of ways that address varying learning styles. Principals need professional development tailored to their needs and the needs of the district (Wallace Foundation, 2012). Adults need to have ownership in what they are learning, and the learning needs to be appropriate to what they need (Zepeda, 2007). In Knowles' model of andragogical learning, adults want learning to be self-directed and they have responsibility in choosing what best fits their needs (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Lawson, 2016).

Adults need to be provided time to collaborate with one another and have time for reflection at the conclusion of the activities (Fenwick, 2000; Zepeda, 2007). Active engagement with the content of the professional development and with other participants allows the educator to interact throughout the learning process (Learning Forward, 2017).

"Educator collaborative learning consistently produces strong, positive effects on achievement of learning outcomes" (Learning Forward, 2017). Examples of collaboration include discussion and dialogue, reflection, co-construction of knowledge, coaching, modeling, and problem solving (Learning Forward, 2017).

Best practices state that professional development should be responsive to feedback and evaluations to ensure that the opportunities are meeting the needs of the participants (Wallace Foundation, 2013). When designing professional learning, it should include all phases of the learning process: "acquisition, application, reflection, refinement, assessment, and evaluation" (Learning Forward, 2017). Reflection and evaluation help the adult learner to move beyond surface-level understanding to a deeper understanding of purpose, meaning, and connection (Learning Forward, 2017).

Mentoring. Mentoring is one way to support principals in their role as school leader. A mentor relationship is typically a relationship between a younger individual and more experienced, older person (Kram, 1985). Mentors provide needed and practical support to new principals to ease the transition into the role (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Crow, 2007). Mentors are considered to be advisors, critical friends, guides, listeners, role models, strategists, supporters, and teachers for new principals (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Norton 2002).

Successful mentor relationships possess both career and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). Career functions are related to the job itself – "sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments" (Kram, 1985), whereas psychosocial functions are more personal such as "role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship" (Kram, 1985). Mentors help principals to gain

confidence in their decisions and in their role (Crow, 2007). Principals need mentors to help them to build relationships within the school and the community, manage school and teacher performance, make data-driven decisions, and handle personnel issues (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Crow, 2007; Norton, 2002).

For mentoring to be successful, it needs to be person-centered (Bush, Glover, & Harris, 2007). Principals serving as mentors need to volunteer and be carefully selected and matched (Bush et al., 2007; Ikemoto et al., 2014; Kram, 1985). The mentor benefits from the coaching and interaction with the mentee. Kram describes this as the "potential reciprocity of a developmental relationship" (1985). Both the mentor and mentee need to be trained, have time and support for the process, and need to understand the reflective nature of mentoring (Bush et al., 2007; Ikemoto et al., 2014; Kram, 1985).

Professional Learning Network. Other research notes that professional learning networks are proven support processes for principals. Bush and Glover (2004) remarked that principal networking was one of four leadership development approaches. Networking provides support to principals and is more effective when structured and when it has a clear purpose (Bush, 2009). Professional learning networks provide time for principals to engage in embedded professional development focused on a problem of practice and build trust and camaraderie among its members (Baker & Bloom, 2017).

In *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World*, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) found that supports for principals should include principals' networks, collegial study visits, guided walk-throughs focused on instructional practices and how to improve student learning, mentoring, and peer

coaching. Kay, Hagan, and Parker (2007) also note the importance of mentoring, coaching, and professional networks as tools to help principals grow and develop.

Induction Program. As professional development is differentiated for principals, special consideration needs to be made for principals in their first few years of service. Beginning principals need an induction program to better prepare them to be the instructional leader of the school (Backor & Gordon, 2015). Backor and Gordon (2015) define an induction program as mentoring, an online network of support, a cohort support group, and professional development. Principal induction programs help to smooth the transition for principals as they enter their new position (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013).

The improvement initiative drew upon this research to create a principal leadership program designed to meet the needs of principals and better support them as school leaders. Both the beginning principal mentor program and the professional learning network allowed principals the opportunity to collaborate with each other in an individual setting and as a larger group. The professional development opportunities were ongoing and were tailored to the needs of the principals. Opportunities for principals to provide feedback were built into the research-informed support processes.

Improvement Initiative Goals

The ultimate goal of the principal leadership academy was to increase the principal retention rate for Clark County Schools. In order to increase the principal retention rate, the more immediate goal was to increase principal self-efficacy as measured by feelings of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and connectedness.

Improvement was measured by comparing baseline data from the pre-survey and the initial leadership goal ratings against post-program survey results and ratings.

"SMART" (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005) targeted goals for the principal leadership academy were developed. SMART stands for strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2005).

1. Principals' overall sense of self-efficacy will increase by 25% from the pre-survey results to the post-survey results.
2. Principals' overall sense of connectedness and job satisfaction will increase by 25% from the pre-survey results to the post-survey results.
3. Using each principal's leadership performance goal as a measure, principals will rate their performance of the selected goal 25% higher in December than in August.

Design and Implementation of the Principal Leadership Academy

The overarching goal of the improvement initiative was to increase support to principals thereby increasing their sense of self-efficacy and feelings of connectedness and job satisfaction, leading ultimately to increased retention of principals.

Design Team. A team of district and school administrators comprised the design team for this improvement initiative. Together, they worked to finalize the design of the improvement initiative, providing feedback to ensure the initiative would meet the needs of current and future principals in the district. This design team also oversaw the implementation of the principal leadership program. In addition to me, the design team was comprised of the Associate Superintendent for Human Resource Services, the Associate Superintendent for Auxiliary Services, the Assistant Director for Human

Resource Services, one elementary principal, one middle school principal, one K-8 school principal, and one high school principal.

The Associate Superintendent for Human Resource Services had over 30 years of experience in education, serving as an administrator at the school and district level. In addition to handling all services related to human resources, she supervised and evaluated all elementary principals in the district. The Associate Superintendent for Human Resources served on the design team until her retirement from Clark County Schools at the end of June 2018. She was a valuable resource because of her years of experience and in understanding the needs of principals from a human resource perspective.

The Associate Superintendent for Auxiliary Services had over 20 years of experience in education. All twenty years have been in Clark County Schools. He has served as a teacher, an assistant principal, a principal, and a district leader during his tenure in the school district. Auxiliary services encompasses the departments of Child Nutrition, Maintenance, Transportation, and the before and after school care program. The Associate Superintendent for Auxiliary Services also supervised and evaluated middle school and K-8 school principals. His perspective was unique in the fact of his knowledge of the district and community and due to the departments that he supervised.

The Assistant Director for Human Resource Services was added to the design team due to the retirement of the Associate Superintendent for Human Resources at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Human Resource Services includes personnel, benefits, professional development, and student support services for the district. The involvement of assistant director ensured that the human resources department was represented on the design team and provided continuity once the Associate

Superintendent for Human Resources retired. The assistant director is also an Educational Leadership doctoral student at Western Carolina University, part of Cohort 5, researching principal and assistant principal support.

The remaining members of the design team were principals representing the various levels that exist in the district: elementary – grades K-5, middle – grades 6-8, and high – grades 9-12. One principal was in her seventh year as principal at one of the district's high-performing elementary schools. She was a former Exceptional Children's teacher before taking time to complete her administrative degree as a Principal Fellow. This principal was a high school assistant principal prior to become principal at West Clark Elementary School. She was one of the most tenured elementary principals in the school district and ensured that the design team understood the leadership needs and challenges at the elementary level.

The second principal was completing her fourth year as a principal. All four years were at South Clark Middle School. Prior experiences included being a teacher, middle school instructional facilitator for Clark County Schools, and elementary level assistant principal. Having recently been a new principal, this second principal was able to provide insights into what would be beneficial for beginning principals as well as insights from the middle grades.

The third principal represented high school principals on the design team, serving as principal at Clark Early College High School (CECHS). Previous positions for this principal included instructional facilitator for CECHS and elementary school teacher. This principal was unique in that she transitioned to the principalship from an instructional facilitator position, never having served as an assistant principal. She had

nine years of experience as a principal. This principal represented the high school level as well as specialty schools as CECHS is a cooperative innovative high school located on the community college campus.

Improvement Initiative Components. The principal leadership academy was comprised of two components – a beginning principal mentor program that paired beginning principals with mentors and a professional learning network. These components were designed to provide professional development tailored to meet the diverse needs of principals. By having the two components, it allowed all principals in the district an opportunity to participate, if they desired to do so.

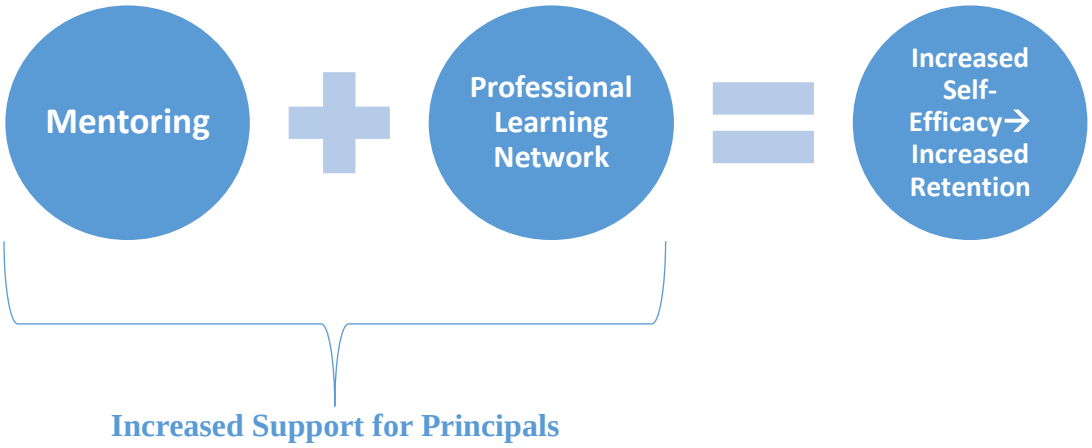

Figure 5. Improvement initiative components

Mentoring. As part of the beginning principal mentor program, each participating principal in their first, second, or third year of service was paired with a more experienced principal within the district serving at the same level (e.g. elementary, middle or high school). For example, a beginning elementary school principal was paired with a more experienced elementary school principal in the district. Volunteers were

solicited from seasoned principals to serve as mentors. From the principals that volunteered, a list of possible mentors was created. Personalities and skill sets of principals were key considerations when attempting to narrow the list of mentors. This vetting was completed by the Associate Superintendent for Humans Resources and me. Beginning principals were provided the list of potential mentors and were asked to rank potential mentors with whom they thought they would work the best. Each beginning principal was paired with their first or second choice of mentor.

Once paired, all mentors and beginning principals convened to discuss expectations and to allow time for team building among the new principals as well as between mentors and mentees. Training and expectations were provided to both the mentor and beginning principal during a two-day professional development workshop to ensure that all parties understood their role. Mentors were expected to make a minimum of two contacts per month with their assigned beginning principal. The goals of the beginning principal mentor program were to strengthen the skillset of beginning principals and provide an avenue for relationship building among job-alike roles.

Professional Learning Network. The second component of the principal leadership academy was a professional learning network which provided professional development for principals. The results from the pre-survey questions and the chosen leadership performance goals were used to determine topics to be discussed. The professional learning network provided an open environment for principals to have honest discussions relevant to what they do and need in their leadership roles. It was a meeting focused on professional development of principals facilitated by principals.

The professional learning network was different than a traditional professional development offering. Principals had a space and time to meet face to face as peers to discuss the various topics related to their needs or leadership goals. Meetings were set monthly, and principals could choose between two different times to select the meeting that best fit their personal schedule. Each meeting had a different focus such as teacher coaching or data-based decision making. The principal who facilitated the meeting used a specific protocol each month to lead the discussion. Through the professional learning network, principals were building relationships with other principals throughout the district while also supporting their need to have an outlet to discuss concerns and have opportunities to learn and grow both personally and professionally.

Improvement Initiative Implementation Timeline. The design team began initial meetings in the summer and fall of 2017 as the team discussed principal turnover in Clark County Schools, possible reasons, and then selected a path to follow in creating an improvement initiative. I served as the facilitator for each of the meetings. The first meeting started with a review of the expectations and responsibilities of the design team and discussion of the problem of practice – principal turnover. The charge statement (Appendix A) was shared during the first meeting and set the stage for the work that the design team was to do throughout the implementation of the agreed upon improvement initiative. After briefly discussing the problem of practice and the charge statement, team members were tasked with completing a fishbone diagram between the first and second meetings.

The focus of the second meeting centered on the causes of principal turnover. Comparing the fishbone diagrams created by design team members provided opportunity

for discussion, clarification, and eventually consensus on one fishbone diagram for the whole group. This strategy allowed each individual in the group to reflect prior to group discussion and have ideas ready to share. Ideas emerged from the discussion that may not have been possible had the team members not had the opportunity to contemplate the topic between meetings.

After reaching agreement on the causes of principal turnover, the design team discussed the current state of affairs in Clark County Schools and what parts of the system affect principal turnover. Toward the end of the second meeting, I introduced a template for a driver diagram. The purpose of the driver diagram was to outline theories of improvement for increasing principal retention (Langley et al., 2009). Between the second and third meeting, design team members created driver diagrams.

The third meeting proved to be a pivotal meeting for the design team. Similarities among the driver diagrams started the meeting discussion. It did not take long for the group to reach consensus, agreeing upon one theory of improvement. The design team agreed that increasing the job satisfaction, connectedness, and leadership performance of current principals might lead to an increase in the principal retention rate for Clark County Schools. The design team believed that a mentoring program for beginning principals and a professional learning network for principals would increase the capacity of principals, ultimately leading to a higher retention of principals and increased student performance.

After deciding upon the improvement initiatives to increase principal retention, the design team began work on its charter (Appendix B). According to Langley et al. (2009), the charter outlines the aim of the improvement effort, answering the question

"What are we trying to accomplish?" (p.90). Using the charter template from Langley et al. (2009, p. 445), the design team defined the aim including a general description, expected results, boundaries, and participation.

The team finalized the idea of the principal leadership academy containing both a beginning principal mentor program and a professional learning network for all principals in November 2017. The design team began meeting monthly in April 2018, once the planned research project was approved by Western Carolina University's Institutional Review Board.

Due to the hectic pace of the end of the school year, participation from principals was solicited in mid-to-late June 2018 once the 2017-2018 school year had concluded. I conducted informational sessions at various times throughout the month to introduce the principal leadership academy and ask principals to participate in at least one component of the program. If principals were unable to attend the group informational sessions, I met with them individually to explain the project and solicit their participation. All 26 principals agreed to participate and signed consent forms for the principal leadership academy.

Principals were asked to complete the pre-survey in late June and the leadership performance goal survey in August. The pre-survey contained demographic questions as well as questions about self-efficacy, connectedness, job satisfaction, and professional development experiences and needs. The leadership performance goal survey was delayed until August in order to give principals time to meet with their evaluator and discuss possible leadership goals for the 2018-2019 school year.

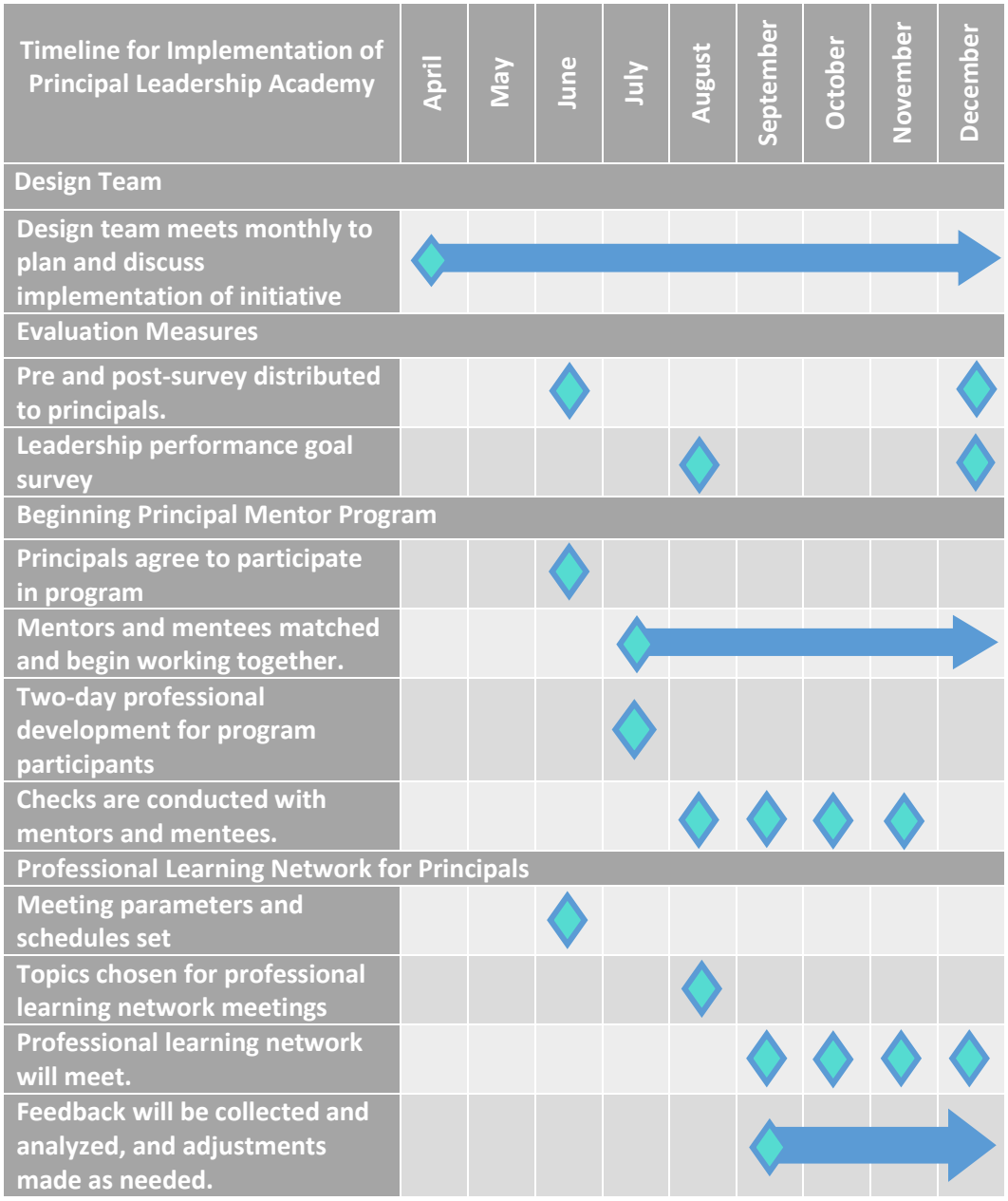

Figure 6. Timeline of major events in the implementation of the Principal Leadership Academy in Clark County Schools.

Mentoring. To be a part of the beginning principal mentor program as mentees, principals had to be in their first, second, or third year of service as a principal. All four beginning principals eligible to participate as mentees agreed to participate. One principal was in his first year as principal; one principal was in his second year; and

two principals were in their third year as principal. Of the beginning principals, two served at elementary schools and two served at K-8 schools.

In July, a list of principals who were willing to serve as mentors was compiled based on completed consent forms. The list included 17 principals. Potential mentors were sorted by their current level of service – K-5, K-8, 6-8, or 9-12. Based on my knowledge of the personalities, background, and performance of the mentors and the personalities of the beginning principals, I recommended three names of potential mentors to each beginning principal. When I met with each beginning principal to select their first choice for mentor, I showed him or her the three names that I felt would be good matches but also showed the larger list in the event that the beginning principal had already thought of someone with whom they wanted to be paired. Each beginning principal selected a principal from the narrowed list. I then called each selected mentor to ask if he or she would be willing to serve as mentor to a specific beginning principal. All four principals selected by the beginning principals agreed to be mentor principals. The pairings were as follows:

- First year K-8 male principal paired with K-5 male principal.
- Second year K-5 male principal paired with K-5 male principal.
- Third year K-8 female principal paired with 6-8 female principal.
- Third year K-5 female principal paired with K-5 female principal.

All paired principals were invited to a two-day orientation to the beginning principal mentor program on July 25 and 26. Seven of the eight participants in the mentor program were able to attend. The principal who could not attend was a third year K-5 principal. Her mentor did attend and met with her at a later date to review the

information. The schedule for the two-day training is included in Appendix C. The design team included topics over the course of the two days that they felt were most needed for beginning principals based on the literature about principal turnover and their own experiences as leaders. The topics covered were thought to be good refreshers for the veteran principals serving as mentors as well.

The two-day orientation started with a review of what the principals had agreed to do through the beginning principal mentor program and an overview of the expectations for contact and paperwork (i.e. mentor logs, beginning principal journals, weekly surveys, etc.). After the initial review of the program, the orientation included team building activities, self-care and stress management, goal setting, human resources, data-based decision making, and finance. Principals also had opportunities to create a timeline for the year, role play scenarios, and dive deeply into the data from the school where the beginning principal worked.

After the two-day orientation, mentors and beginning principals were to make at least two contacts per month from August through December. Each mentor kept a log of his or her contact with the paired beginning principal. Beginning principals completed a weekly survey indicating their level of stress for the week, a weekly journal for them to describe successes and challenges from that week and any contact with their mentor, and a weekly check of their perception of their own level of effectiveness.

Professional Learning Network. In addition to the beginning principal mentor program, the principal leadership academy included a professional learning network for all principals. The design team used the results from the pre-survey completed in June to design the professional learning network. The professional learning network meetings

were held monthly and were focused on a different topic each month. Topics were chosen based on responses to the initial pre-survey and meeting evaluation feedback throughout the implementation of the principal leadership academy.

Professional learning network meetings allowed principals the opportunity to discuss topics in an open environment. Topics chosen during the timeline of the disquisition included: teacher coaching, data-based decision making, finance and budgeting, and scheduling. Meetings were set to be about an hour in length, and volunteers were solicited from current principals to facilitate each meeting. With facilitators being a peer, the design team felt that principals would be more willing to discuss the topics. Meetings were held in public spaces whenever possible and purposefully located away from the district office. The meetings were also scheduled at different times of the day in an attempt to fit the busy schedules of principals.

Once the topics were chosen each month, the design team reviewed possible protocols from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center and selected what the team felt would be the best fit for the chosen topic. I met with each principal facilitator about a week prior to the professional learning network meeting. I shared the protocol and worked with the facilitator to walk through the layout of the meeting so that he or she felt comfortable leading the session. I also provided all necessary materials such as markers, large poster paper, post-it notes, etc. Facilitators kept logs of the meetings, and then all attendees were sent an evaluation electronically within 48 hours of the meeting.

For a typical meeting, the facilitator of the meeting would arrive at the neutral location early to set up materials as needed. As principals arrived, they would sign in so

that an attendance log was kept and meeting evaluations could be sent to participants after the meeting. The facilitator would welcome participants and introduce the topic and protocol for the meeting. The protocols shaped the discussion of the topic and allowed principals to discuss the topic in-depth, asking follow-up questions when needed, in a peer-only environment. The facilitator used their judgment to guide the discussion and keep the discussion focused on the topic or allow principals to discuss related topics. Toward the end of the hour, the facilitator would begin to wrap up the protocol and bring closure to the meeting before principals departed.

Evaluation of the Improvement Methodology

This section details the formative evaluation process which includes the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle (Langley et al., 2009) and then describes the summative evaluation process used to "look back" and measure the overall success of the principal leadership academy over the course of the five month implementation. Data collection for the principal leadership academy included both quantitative and qualitative methods, and measures for evaluation included both process and balancing measures (Langley et al., 2009). Process measures were to determine if the program was implemented with fidelity, and balancing measures were to show if parts of the organization outside of the principal leadership academy and not targeted by the principal leadership academy were affected during implementation of the improvement initiative (Byrk et al., 2015).

Formative Evaluation Process

Throughout the implementation of the principal leadership academy, the design team formatively assessed the two components and responded to the data as it was

analyzed through the lens of improvement science and in particular, the use of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle (Langley et al., 2009).

Use of improvement science. In *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organizational performance*, Langley et al.'s (2009) model for improvement outlines three questions: "What are we trying to accomplish? How will we know that a change is an improvement? What changes can we make that will result in improvement?" These three questions are essential in determining if the change that was implemented was an improvement. Change does not guarantee improvement.

In order for a change to become an improvement, it must meet three criteria as defined by Langley et al. (2009): "alter how work or activity is done or the makeup of the product; produce visible, positive differences in results relative to historical norms; and have a lasting impact" (p.16). The improvement initiative was designed to increase principals' capacities to lead their school and strengthen their relationships among each other in the short-term, thereby resulting in increased principal retention long-term for Clark County Schools.

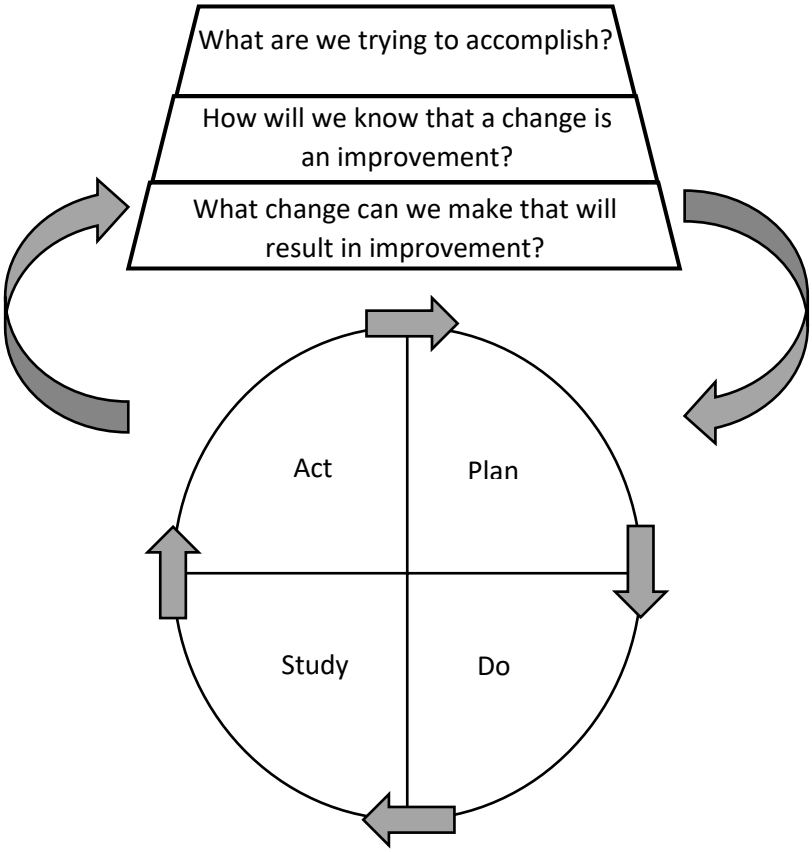

Figure 7. Langley et al.'s Model for Improvement. From p. 24 of Langley, G. J., Moen, R. D., Nolan, K. M., Nolan, T. W., Norman, C. L., & Provost, L. P. (2009). *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organizational performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey and Bass.

The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle (Langley et al., 2009) was used throughout the implementation of the principal leadership program. A design team was established to plan the improvement initiative using Langley et al.'s model for improvement. The PDSA Cycle began with the planning phase to finalize the design for each component – the beginning principal mentor program and the professional learning network. For the next stage, the Do phase, the various components were implemented, and data and observations were collected. During the Study phase, the data that was collected was reviewed and compared with predictions of what the design team thought

would happen. Next, the Act phase allowed the design team to implement changes and determine where to start for the next PDSA Cycle. As part of improvement science, the PDSA Cycle is iterative in nature, meaning the cycles continued throughout the timeline of the improvement initiative. Evaluation measures were used to determine what was working, what was not, and what to continue to change to improve the program itself as well as the implementation of the program (Langley et al., 2009).

As the principal leadership academy was implemented, measures were used to formatively evaluate the success of each component of the program, and at the conclusion, measures were used to do a summative evaluation of the program as a whole. Data collection included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Measures for evaluation included process and balancing measures (Langley et al., 2009). Process measures were used to determine if the program was implemented with fidelity. Balancing measures were used to show if other organizational measures declined during implementation of the improvement initiative. All participating principals completed a weekly effectiveness survey and weekly stress level check as balancing measures for the principal leadership academy.

Process Measures – Mentoring. For the beginning principal mentor program, process measures included mentor contact logs and beginning principal journals. The mentor contact log (see Appendix D) was completed by the mentor principal and included the time, date, length, and location of the meeting, a summary of topics discussed, and any other notes deemed pertinent by the mentor. The mentor was also asked to rate how effective he or she felt the meeting was using a five-point Likert scale. Data was analyzed from the mentor contact logs every 30 days during the 90 day cycle.

Data analysis included comparisons of actual versus expected number of meetings between mentors/mentees and comparisons of length of meetings versus perceived effectiveness of meetings. Meeting topics were coded holistically and descriptively, looking for trends in topics discussed between mentors and mentees (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). To increase the validity of coding, a second person coded the topics. Data analysis also included comparison of the coding of meeting topics versus perceived effectiveness of meetings.

Another process measure was the beginning principal journal. Beginning principals were required to complete a weekly electronic journal describing their successes, challenges, and any contact with their mentor. If contact was made that week with their mentor, then the beginning principal also had to rate their perception of the mentor's assistance. See Appendix E as an example of what beginning principals completed. Every 30 days, beginning principal journals were coded. Process coding was used to summarize actions described by the beginning principals, and emotion coding was used to label the experiences and perspectives of the new principals (Miles et al., 2014). Again, for validity purposes, a second person was asked to code the beginning principal journals. Once coded, trends were examined across mentees to determine what changes may be needed in the design of the beginning principal mentor program.

Balancing Measures – Mentoring. Balancing measures for the mentor program for beginning principals included a weekly survey to the beginning principals about how effectively they felt they had accomplished routine leadership tasks and a weekly stress level check. The weekly perception of effectiveness survey, Appendix F, asked beginning principals to rate four common leadership tasks on a Likert scale for how well

they performed the task. The leadership tasks included completing classroom observations, completing required paperwork, handling student discipline, and communicating with parents or community members. Data analysis looked at both the average of the ratings of the four tasks each week as well as comparing specific task ratings over the course of a four week span.

The second balancing measure was a weekly stress level check. It was a one question survey that asked the beginning principal to rate his/her own stress level each week on a scale of one to ten. See Appendix G as a demonstration of what principals completed. The survey was set to be sent automatically each Thursday. Data analysis for the stress level survey was conducted every four weeks to compare ratings weekly as well as an average of the four weeks.

Process Measures – Professional Learning Network. For the second component, the professional learning network, formative evaluation process measures dealt with the meeting itself – the meeting evaluation and the facilitator log of the meeting. As part of the documentation of the professional learning network meetings, the facilitator of the professional learning network meeting completed a table, Appendix H, collecting basic data – date and time of the meeting, length, location, format, topic(s), and number of principals attending. All attendees completed a meeting evaluation form that was sent electronically within 48 hours of the meeting. The meeting evaluation form for attendees, Appendix I, included the participants' description of the topic(s) discussed, their opinion about the format and length of meeting, their opinion as to how beneficial the meeting was using a Likert Scale, their biggest take-away from the meeting, what worked well in the meeting, suggestions for improvement, and suggestions for future

topics. Since meetings were scheduled monthly, evaluation forms were completed monthly.

Data analysis included calculating the percent of principals participating in each of the professional learning network meetings. Meeting attendance was compared from meeting to meeting looking for trends in attendance. Data analysis also compared meeting length, meeting format, and meeting attendance looking for trends to determine if the meeting length and/or format was correlated to meeting attendance. The principals' opinions of the meeting were compared from meeting to meeting to see how the mean, median, and range changed. In addition, comparisons were made between how a meeting was rated with meeting attendance at the following meeting.

Answers to the qualitative questions on the professional learning network meeting evaluation were coded. Descriptive coding was used to categorize topics discussed in the professional learning network meetings as well as topics listed as suggestions for future meetings (Miles et al., 2014). Descriptive and evaluative coding were used to code the take-aways, what worked well, and suggestions for improvement (Miles et al., 2014).

Balancing Measures – Professional Learning Network. As a balancing measure, the same weekly perception of effectiveness survey (see Appendix F) that was described previously with the beginning principal mentor program was used with principals participating in the professional learning network. Every four weeks, data analysis looked at the average of the ratings of the four tasks each week compared to the baseline data collected prior to the start of the professional learning network meetings. Data analysis would also compare specific task ratings over the course of a four week span. In addition the weekly stress check (Appendix G) was also used as a balancing

measure to compare the stress level of principals for weeks with and without professional learning network meetings.

Formative evaluation, as part of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, allowed the improvement initiative design team to review data on a regular basis during the implementation of the principal leadership academy to decide what needed to be tweaked, dropped, or adapted with the beginning principal mentor program and the professional learning network to better meet the needs of participating principals. Over the course of the first fifteen weeks of the 2018-2019 school year, there were three PDSA cycles.

Mentoring: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 1

The first PDSA Cycle represented weeks 1 through 5 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. The planning for the first PDSA cycle occurred in design team meetings during the 2017-2018 school year and into the summer of 2018. During these meetings, the logistics for the beginning principal mentor program were established as a minimum of two contacts per month between the mentor and beginning principal. Prior to the start of the PSDA Cycle 1, beginning principals were paired with mentors in July 2018 based on level of current service, gender, and beginning principal choice. Beginning principals and mentors attended a two-day orientation for the program in July. The orientation explained program expectations and provided time for team building and professional development on a variety of topics. Twice monthly contacts as part of PDSA Cycle 1 were to start in August 2018 with mentors keeping a log of all contact between beginning principals and mentors.

Do. Mentors met and logged their contact with their assigned beginning principal during this first cycle. Beginning principals completed weekly journals outlining their successes and challenges as well as any contact made with their mentor. Based on mentor logs, all mentors had at least two contacts per month with their beginning principals. The length of the meetings between mentors and beginning principals varied considerably, from five minutes to seven hours. The majority of meetings recorded were five minutes in length and were quick "check-ins" with the beginning principal. The longer meetings, 60 to 120 minutes, were generally rated higher in terms of effectiveness by the mentor principal. Topics discussed during contact between beginning principal and mentor as indicated by the mentor included the opening of school, personnel, professional development, curriculum, and job demands.

For weeks 1-5, one beginning principal completed two journals, two beginning principals completed three journals, and one beginning principal completed all five journals. Beginning Principal A, a first year principal paired with Mentor A, completed two journals and had contact with his mentor both of those weeks. Beginning Principal B, a second year principal paired with Mentor B, completed three journals and had contact with his mentor at least twice. Beginning Principal C, a third year principal paired with Mentor C, completed all five journals and had three contacts with her mentor. Beginning Principal D, a third year principal paired with Mentor D, completed three journals and had two contacts with her mentor. Topics of discussions with mentors as shared by the beginning principals included working with staff, setting professional goals, curriculum, and personnel.

Weekly surveys and journals housed in Qualtrics were first distributed to principals on August 30 (Week 1). Mentor principals completed the perception of effectiveness survey and stress level check each week on Thursday. Beginning principals completed the beginning principal journal, the perception of effectiveness survey, and the stress level check weekly each Thursday. The first mentor log check occurred during Week 5.

Study. For the beginning principal mentor program, the design team reviewed the mentor log statistics. Based on the completed logs, all mentors had had the required two contacts per month with their beginning principals (see Table 1). The length of the each contact varied considerably, from five minutes to seven hours, with the majority of meetings being quick, five minutes "check-ins" with the beginning principal. The longer meetings, 60 to 120 minutes, were generally rated higher in terms of effectiveness by the mentor principal. Topics of discussion between the mentors and beginning principals included the opening of school, personnel, professional development, curriculum, and job demands.

Table 1

Summary of Mentor Contacts Prior to Week 1 and Weeks 1-5

	Prior to Week 1			Weeks 1-5		
Mentor	*N*	*Time*	*Effectiveness*	*N*	*Time*	*Effectiveness*
A	2	47.5	3	5	7	2
B	3	23.3	4.67	2	5	4
C	3	160	3.67	2	5	1.5
D	4	11.3	4	4	6.3	5

Note: N = number of contacts; *Time* is the average length of the meetings in minutes; *Effectiveness* is the average rating of effectiveness of the contacts as rated by the mentor rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being most effective.

As noted in the table, mentors made contact with beginning principals prior to the weekly distribution of surveys beginning the week of August 27-31 (Week 1), which coincidentally was the first week for students for the 2018-2019 school year. The design team noted that once school started, the amount of time that mentors were able to spend with their beginning principal reduced dramatically.

The design team compared components of the beginning principal journals to the mentor contact logs. The journals completed by the beginning principals confirmed the minimum of two contacts per month. Design team noted the differences in how beginning principals rated the effectiveness of the mentor contacts compared to the mentor ratings of effectiveness. Beginning Principal A's average rating of effectiveness was 2.5. Beginning Principal B rated both meetings as very effective (4). Beginning Principal C had an average rating of 2.67 for effectiveness. The range of effectiveness of

the mentor contacts for Beginning Principal C were 1, not effective at all, to 4, very effective. The average rating of effectiveness of the mentor contacts for Beginning Principal D was 3.5. The design team noticed that for three of the four beginning principals, they rated the effectiveness of the meetings higher or the same as the mentor. There was only one mentor who rated the effectiveness of the meetings much higher than the beginning principal (Mentor D rated the effectiveness as 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 and Beginning Principal D rated the meetings as 3.5 in effectiveness).

The design team reviewed the coding of the mentor-beginning principals discussions from the perspective of the beginning principal. The coded topics of discussions were similar to what the mentors had stated in their logs and included working with staff, setting professional goals, curriculum, and personnel.

The beginning principal journal included successes and challenges by week. The successes and challenges were coded and then studied by the design team The successes named in Weeks 1-5 were opening of school for the year, professional development with staff, working with parents and the community, teacher evaluations, and visiting classrooms. Challenges noted in the first five weeks were meeting demands and deadlines, time management, finding the work/life balance of the role, transportation issues, personnel, student discipline, and working with parents. The design team noted that there were some topics that were successes one week and then challenges the next, or, for one principal, her successes were also listed as her challenges for that week.

Act. The design team decided not to make any changes to the beginning principal mentor program at the end of the first PDSA Cycle. This decision was based on the balancing measures including the stress level checks and the weekly perception of

effectiveness survey in addition to how the beginning principals had rated the contacts with their mentors. Mentors were to be reminded to make at least two contacts per month with their beginning principal, to try to spend more than five minutes with their beginning principal per contact, and to update their mentor log as contacts were made.

Mentoring: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 2

The second PDSA Cycle represented weeks 6 through 9 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. Based on the first PDSA cycle, the design team had decided to continue to require the two contacts per month for the beginning principal mentor program. I sent reminders to mentors about the two contacts per month and encouraged longer contact when possible. I also reminded the beginning principals about the need for two contacts per month. The design team felt that asking mentors to make more contacts per month may lead to mentors dropping from the program and perhaps add additional stress on the beginning principal.

Do. For the beginning principal mentor program, three of the four mentors had the expected two contacts per month (see Table 2). Time for these contacts varied considerably from five minutes to 120 minutes. One mentor, Mentor C, had contact via email in lieu of face to face meetings or phone calls. Another mentor, Mentor B, visited his assigned beginning principal at the beginning principal's school. The mentor was able to tour the building, visiting classrooms and gaining a better understanding of the environment in which the beginning principal worked. Topics of discussion between mentors and beginning principals included professional development, expectations of staff, and curriculum. Mentors completed mentor logs detailing contact with beginning

principals in addition to completing the weekly perception of effectiveness surveys and weekly stress level checks.

Table 2

Summary of Mentor Contacts for Weeks 6-9

Mentor	Weeks 6-9		
	N	*Time*	*Effectiveness*
A	1	5	1
B	2	67.5	4
C	2	*	1.5
D	2	7.5	4.5

Note: N = number of contacts; *Time* is the average length of the meetings in minutes; *Effectiveness* is the average rating of effectiveness of the contacts as rated by the mentor on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most effective.
* No time was listed by mentor in log as contact was electronic.

Beginning principals completed the weekly journals as well as the perception of effectiveness surveys and stress level checks. Two beginning principals, Beginning Principals C and D, completed the journal for two of the four weeks. Beginning Principal A completed a journal for one of the four weeks, and Beginning Principal B did not complete any journals during the four week period. Of the completed journals, only one principal, Beginning Principal D, indicated contact with her mentor. Topics discussed included curriculum and school policies.

Study. The design team met late October to review the data from Weeks 6 through 9. For the beginning principal mentor program, the beginning principals'

response rate for the beginning principal journals for the second PDSA Cycle made it difficult for the design team to compare the mentor logs with the beginning principal journals. Of all the beginning principal journals completed, only one principal indicated contact with her mentor, and both contacts for that particular beginning principal were listed as being very effective (rated as 4). The mentors' rating of effectiveness of the meetings ranged from 1 to 4.5. Based on the data from mentors, it seemed that two of the four pairs of principal felt their meetings were effective and the other two pairs felt their meetings were ineffective. The design team did begin to note a pattern in the ratings of effectiveness between PDSA Cycle 1 and PDSA Cycle 2. From the mentor principals' perspectives, Mentors B and D rated their meetings with their beginning principals as very effective for both PDSA Cycle 1 (4 and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) and PDSA Cycle 2 (4 and 4.5 on a scale of 1 to 5). Mentors A and C rated their meetings lower for both PDSA Cycles (2 and 1.5 for PDSA 1 and 1 and 1.5 for PDSA 2). The only available beginning principal data during this PDSA Cycle matched to Mentor D, and the average rating of the effectiveness of the mentor contacts by the beginning principal was 4 compared to the 4.5 rating of effectiveness as rated by the mentor. The design team was disappointed in the lack of data. The lack of data made it difficult to ensure contact was made between mentors and beginning principals and to get a better sense of the connection between each pair of principals.

The design team was also able to review additional information gathered from the beginning principal journals. The beginning principals' successes and challenges were coded. Successes listed by beginning principals in Weeks 6-9 included classroom observations, professional development, student discipline, parent night, and a

site visit to another school. Challenges included student discipline, working with parents, working with staff, being out of the building, curriculum, and assurance of fulfilling expectations. Similar to the first PDSA Cycle, topics that were listed as a success one week were a challenge the next. The design team felt that the challenges were typical challenges of beginning principals, especially the questioning of one's ability and the worry of being out of the building.

Act. Based on the incomplete data from beginning principals, it was hard to determine what changes needed to be made to the beginning principal mentor program. Of the five completed beginning principal journals during the four week period, only two journals indicated contact with a mentor, and these two journals were from the same beginning principal. The design team ultimately decided to stay the course with the expected two contacts per month and to remind both mentors and beginning principals to complete logs, journals, and the weekly surveys about effectiveness and stress. It was difficult to suggest changes with the limited amount of data on hand to make that decision. The team decided to continue to monitor and compare the ratings and data collected during the next PDSA Cycle to look at possible changes mid-year to the beginning principal mentor program.

Mentoring: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 3

The third PDSA Cycle represented weeks 10 through 15 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. Considering the data collected and analyzed from the first two PDSA Cycles, the design team decided to move forward with the beginning principal mentor program and not make any significant changes to the program. Mentors would continue

to make two contacts per month with their assigned beginning principal. I sent a reminder to the mentors about maintaining the two contacts per month. Then, I followed up with beginning principals and reminded them to complete their weekly journals.

Do. For the beginning principal mentor program, mentors and beginning principals were expected to make at least two contacts per month. All four mentors had at least two contacts during the six week period. Three of the four had at least three contacts during this time frame (see Table 3). Meetings still tended to be short in nature with the exception of Mentor C. However, in Mentor C's calculation of time, she included a lengthy meeting that both the beginning principal and she attended. Meeting topics varied from simply checking in to see how the beginning principal was doing to discussions of professional development, coaching teachers, preparing for an upcoming Title I audit, and analyzing newly released performance and growth data from the state.

Table 3

Summary of Mentor Contacts for Weeks 10-15

	Weeks 10-15		
Mentor	*N*	*Time*	*Effectiveness*
A	3	3.7a	1
B	2	10	4.5
C	4	32.5	3.3
D	3	6.7	4.7

Note: N = number of contacts; *Time* is the average length of the meetings in minutes; *Effectiveness* is the average rating of effectiveness of the contacts as rated by the mentor on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being most effective.

. During this six week period, one beginning principal completed two journals, and the other beginning principals completed three, four, and five journals. Beginning Principal A, the first year principal, had to have knee surgery and was on medical leave from mid-November through the end of December. Of his completed journals, one journal indicated contact with his mentor. Beginning Principal B completed four of the six journals and indicated contact with his mentor on one of those four weeks. Beginning Principal C completed five of the six journals and listed three contacts with her mentor. Beginning Principal D completed three of the six journals and met with her mentor twice. Topics of discussion as described by the beginning principals included: checking in, Title I audit, data, and current issues.

Study. After Week 15, the design team reviewed the data from the mentor logs and the beginning principal journals. Beginning principals completed more journals in PSDA Cycle 3 than they had in the previous cycle. Beginning Principal A, the first year principal, had to have knee surgery and was on medical leave from mid-November through the end of December. Of his two completed journals, one journal indicated contact with his mentor, and it was rated as not effective (1). Beginning Principal B completed four of the six journals and indicated contact with his mentor on one of those four weeks. The mentor contact was rated as very effective (4). Beginning Principal C completed five of the six journals and listed three contacts with her mentor. The average rating of effectiveness for those meetings was 3. Beginning Principal D completed three of the six journals and met with her mentor twice. The average rating of effectiveness of these two meetings was 3.5. Principals continued to discuss timely concerns with mentors like the Title I audit.

The design team also looked at the success and challenges shared by beginning principals through their weekly journals. Successes and challenges were coded. Successes over this six week period included working with parents, completing classroom observations, completing Title I documentation, professional development, and creating teacher ownership/leadership opportunities. Challenges over this six week period included balancing demands; finding time; personnel; working with parents; handling student discipline; and completing classroom observations. Like previous PDSA Cycles, there was overlap between the successes and challenges faced by beginning principals. The design team felt that the challenges the beginning principals faced were in line with the research that had been studied prior to implementation.

In reviewing the data from PDSA Cycle 3, the design team noted that there were continued trends from the first two PDSA Cycles for the beginning principal mentor program. The pairings of Mentor A and Beginning Principal A and Mentor C and Beginning Principal C were rated as less effective than the other two pairings by both the mentor and the beginning principal of each pairing, similar to both PDSA Cycle 1 and PDSA Cycle 2. For the other two pairs, Mentor B and Beginning Principal B and Mentor D and Beginning Principal D, the mentors continue to rate the effectiveness of their contacts higher than the beginning principal. However, the design team notes that the beginning principal journals indicated that the beginning principals seemed satisfied with the assistance and contacts from their mentor.

Act. In reviewing the data from PDSA Cycle 3, the design team noted that there were continued trends from the first two PDSA Cycles for the beginning principal mentor program. The pairings of Mentor A and Beginning Principal A and Mentor C and

Beginning Principal C were rated as less effective than the other two pairings by both the mentor and the beginning principal of each pairing, similar to both PDSA Cycle 1 and PDSA Cycle 2. The design team felt that it would be good to have conversations separately with each of the principals to better understand the dynamics of each pairing and to see if there was something that could be done to assist each pair.

For the other two pairs, Mentor B and Beginning Principal B and Mentor D and Beginning Principal D, the mentors continue to rate the effectiveness of their contacts higher than the beginning principal. However, the beginning principal journals indicated that the beginning principals seemed satisfied with the assistance and contacts from their mentor. The design team felt it would be good to do a quick check individually with each mentor and beginning principal of these two pairs as well. This would allow the design team to determine if the data from the mentor logs and beginning principal journals were an accurate description of what was actually happening.

Professional Learning Network: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 1

The first PDSA Cycle represented weeks 1 through 5 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. For the professional learning network, design team members used the results from the pre-survey to determine topics for the monthly meetings. The design team chose to schedule the first professional learning network meeting in mid-September and to offer two different sessions with the same topic in hopes of better meeting the needs and schedules of busy principals. One session was scheduled in the afternoon in the northern end of the district, and the second session was scheduled in the morning in

the southern end of the district. The goal was for the professional learning network meetings to last about one hour.

Do. The first professional learning network meeting focused on teacher coaching. The design team had selected the protocol, Blooming Questions, from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center as a basis for the teacher coaching session. The protocol was accessed at https://www.nsrfharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/blooming_questions_0.pdf. The protocol, originally written to be used with teachers, was adapted for the professional learning network meeting so that principals could experience how they could use it as they coached teachers in their schools. An elementary school principal facilitated the session.

In preparation for the professional learning network meeting, principals were asked to visit classrooms in their schools and make a list of three questions they heard teachers asking students in classrooms. The goal of this particular professional learning network meeting was to demonstrate to principals how to increase the level of rigor of questions, using as an example the questions they brought to the meeting, and to mimic conversations that could be held with teachers about the level of questioning teachers use in their classrooms. Appendix J provides an outline for the meeting. The facilitator distributed copies of the protocol to all principals and then reviewed Bloom's Taxonomy with principals. Principals were divided into small groups of three to four and charted the questions that they brought to the meeting. In small groups, the principals discussed the level of each question using Bloom's Taxonomy. Discussions were had about how representative the questions were of all teachers within the school. Then, the small groups picked one question from the list and using the handouts about Bloom's

Taxonomy, principals were asked to create a new question at a higher level of rigor. The facilitator debriefed the activity with the group by asking questions about the principals' thoughts about the activity and process they used to develop a higher-order thinking question. Discussion also centered on how to use this protocol with staff members and how to have critical conversations with teachers about this topic. After the professional learning network meeting, participants were sent a meeting evaluation form to be completed electronically.

For the professional learning network meeting, sixteen principals out of the twenty-six principals in the district attended one of the inaugural meetings for an attendance rate of 61.54%. The sessions were held on back-to-back days. Eleven principals attended the afternoon session held in Lenoir, the northern end of the district, and five principals attended the morning meeting in Granite Falls, the southern end of the district. Of the sixteen principals, eight were elementary principals, four were K-8 principals, two were middle school principals, and one was a high school principal. Meetings were specifically held in public meeting spaces – the public library in Lenoir and the recreation center community building in Granite Falls. The afternoon session lasted an hour, and the morning session lasted 50 minutes.

Weekly surveys housed in Qualtrics were first distributed to principals on August 30 (Week 1). After that date, surveys were sent each Thursday for principals to evaluate their week via the perception of effectiveness survey and the stress level check. The design team met in early October to review data collected from Weeks 1 through 5.

Study. For the professional learning network, the design team examined the results from the meeting evaluation form. The evaluation form provided valuable

information about the opinions of the participants. There was a response rate of 75% for the professional learning network meeting evaluation form. Of the twelve responses, the meeting format was rated as extremely appropriate (N=10) and somewhat appropriate (N=2). All responses rated the meeting as neither too long nor too short (N=12). When asked how beneficial the meeting was, responses ranged from moderately beneficial to extremely beneficial. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating was 4.33 for how beneficial the meeting was. The design team was pleased with the response rate and overall ratings by participants.

The remaining questions on the professional learning network meeting evaluation form – topic, takeaways, what worked well and suggested improvements – were coded. The design team reviewed the coded responses. When principals were asked to describe what was discussed in the professional learning network meeting, the following topics were stated: questioning, Bloom's Taxonomy, instructional rigor, higher-order levels, and coaching teachers. Based on these responses, the design team felt that the meeting stayed focused on the topic of teacher coaching based on the protocol that was used. Coding of the principals responses showed that principals felt their biggest takeaways from the teacher coaching session were collaboration with colleagues, learning how to move questions to higher levels of thinking, and improving teachers. In responding to what worked well, principals felt the discussions, the group size, and the format of the meeting worked well. Suggested improvements for the next meeting included changing the start time for the afternoon session, technology in the room, and more explanation about what to expect. Most principals responded with no suggestions (N=7). The design team

discussed each suggested improvement in turn to determine if suggestions should be incorporated for the next professional learning network meeting.

Balancing Measure – Perception of Effectiveness Survey. In addition to the process measures listed above, the design team analyzed results from balancing measures starting with the perception of effectiveness survey. Beginning with Week 1, all principals in the district were sent a link to participate in the perception of effectiveness survey. The perception of effectiveness survey asked principals to rate how they thought they performed four typical administrative tasks in that one week's time frame – completed classroom observations, completed paperwork, handled student discipline, and communicated with parents or the community.

The design team chose to look at the results of all principals and then delineated beginning principals and experienced principals. Principals participating in the beginning principal mentor program also chose to participate in the professional learning network meetings. Because of this overlap, the design team felt it best to look at all responses. Of the twenty-six principals in the district, eighteen principals responded to the survey for Week 1 for a response rate of 69%. Three of the four beginning principals were part of the eighteen who responded for Week 1. Week 2 had the highest response rate of Weeks 1 through 5 with 23 principals responding, an 88% response rate. Weeks 3, 4, and 5 had the following number of responses: 17 (65%), 16 (62%), and 19 (73%).

Average weekly ratings by task were compared for each of the five weeks of PDSA Cycle 1. The data were charted using the categories of beginning principals and more experienced principals, those principals with four or more years of experience (Figures 8 and 9). Each task was rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not well at all and

5 being extremely well. For Week 1, beginning principals felt they performed most effectively in handling student discipline and least effectively in completing classroom observations. The design team noted that the results from Week 1 held steady for beginning principals throughout the first five weeks with the exception of Week 5 where the beginning principals felt they most effectively communicated with parents or the community that week. For all five weeks, completing observations was rated the lowest, tying in Week 3 with completing required paperwork.

The design team reviewed the ratings for experienced principals, contrasting the results of beginning principals and experienced principals. The highest ratings for experienced principals during Weeks 1 through 5 were communication with parents or the community (Weeks 1, 2, 3, and 5) and the handling of student discipline (Weeks 2, 3, and 4). The lowest ratings were completing teacher observations (Weeks 1, 3, and 4) and completing required paperwork (Weeks 1, 2, and 5). The design team observed that ratings of the experienced principals were similar to what was stated by the beginning principals.

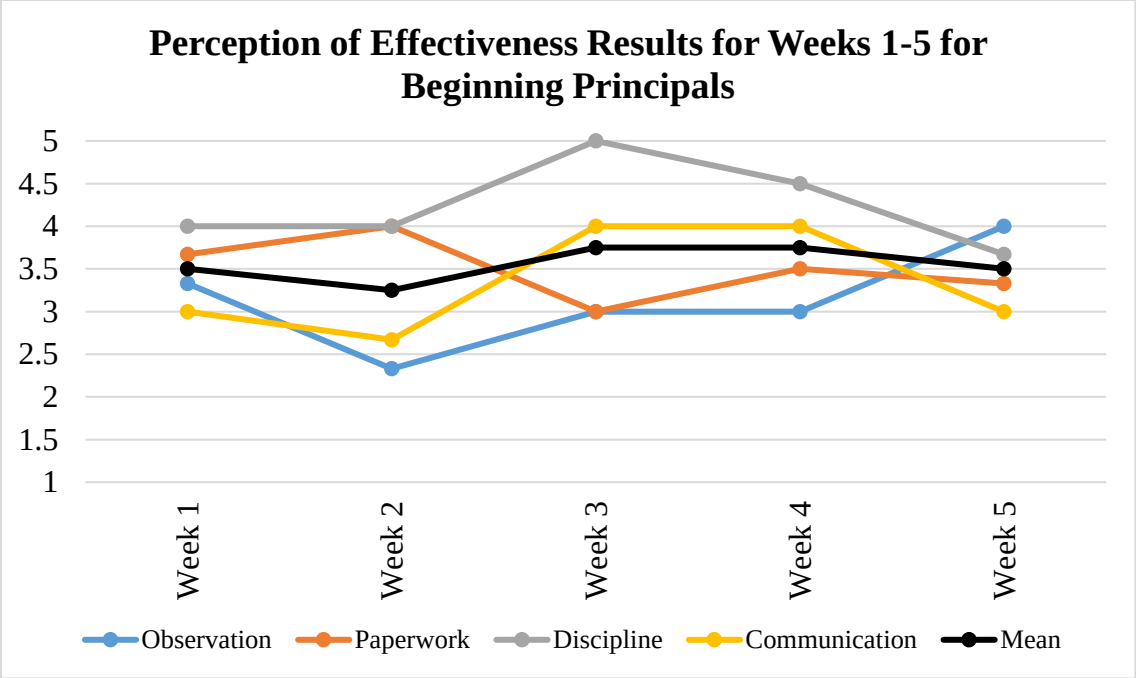

Figure 8. Run chart of Beginning Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 1-5

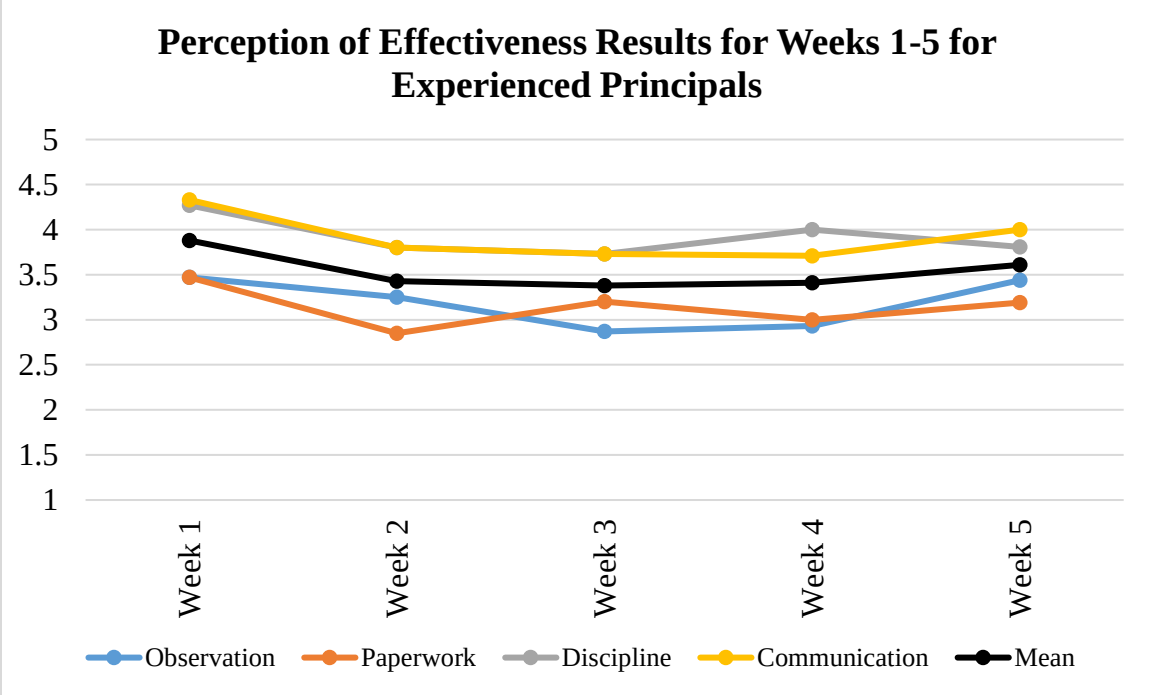

Figure 9. Run chart of Experienced Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 1-5

In addition to analyzing the tasks each week, the design team made comparisons between weeks without a professional learning network meeting (Week 1, 2, 3, and 5) and the week with the professional learning network meeting (Week 4). When individually looking at the ratings of each task for Week 4, the design team found that none of the ratings by task for beginning principals were the lowest ratings in this five week cycle. For experienced principals, Week 4 had the lowest rating for communication with parents or the community of any of the first five weeks; however, the design team believed this rating was not far out of line with the two previous weeks (Weeks 2 and 3) . When examining weekly averages of all five weeks, Week 4 for the beginning principals had the highest average rating, tied with Week 3. For experienced principals, Week 4 was in the middle of the five weeks with two weeks with higher averages and two weeks with lower averages. The design team thought that the professional learning network did not negatively affect principals' overall effectiveness as compared to the other weeks during the PDSA cycle.

Balancing Measures – Stress Level Check. Another balancing measure was the stress level check for principals. All principals were sent via email a stress level check on Thursday evening from Qualtrics to gauge their level of stress each week. It was a one question survey asking principals to evaluate their level of stress on a scale of 1 to 10, the higher the number, the more stressed the principal felt. In comparing the average stress level of beginning principals to the experienced principals, the design team noted that the beginning principals had a lower average stress level in Weeks 1 through 4 and a higher average stress level in Week 5 than experienced principals. The design team also compared the stress level for the week of the professional learning network meeting to

the weeks without the professional learning network meeting. The team found that the average stress rating for Week 4 for the beginning principals was the median of the five weeks in contrast to the Week 4 average stress rating for experienced principals which was the second highest rating.

Table 4

Comparison of Stress Levels between Beginning Principals and Experienced Principals for Weeks1-5

	Beginning Principals		Experienced Principals	
Week	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*	*M (SD)*
1	3	5.33(2.52)	15	6.86(2.26)
2	3	4.33(2.31)	20	6.35(1.50)
3	2	6(1.41)	15	7.47(2.72)
4	2	5.5(3.54)	14	7.21(2.55)
5	3	7.33(1.15)	16	6.56(2.73)

Note: N=number completing the stress check each week; *M*=average of the stress level check for that week; SD=standard deviation.

The design team studied the data from the various formative evaluation measures for Weeks 1 through 5 and decided that collectively principals seemed to be active participants in the principal leadership academy.

Act. For the professional learning network, the design team was pleased with the attendance rate at the first meetings. However, team members wondered if switching the

times of the meetings by location would increase attendance at the meetings. There would continue to be two meetings to try to accommodate the busy schedules of principals. For the next meetings, the Granite Falls session would be in the afternoon, and the Lenoir session would be in the morning. Using a protocol in the professional learning network meetings created a structure yet still allowed time for discussion and collaboration. Based on the feedback from participants, the design team felt it was best to keep a protocol for the next professional learning network meeting and to continue to keep the meetings to about an hour in length. It was also decided that I would encourage principals to complete the surveys each week and that I would send reminder emails weekly to principals at least two weeks prior to professional learning network meetings.

Professional Learning Network: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 2

The second PDSA Cycle represented weeks 6 through 9 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. For the professional learning network meetings, the design team decided to continue with the two meeting options per month to allow principals choice in meeting dates, times, and locations. The team switched locations and times for the two meetings to attempt to better fit the schedules of principals. The afternoon meeting was held in the southern end of the county on a Tuesday afternoon. The second professional learning network meeting was scheduled for the northern end of the county on the following Wednesday morning. The professional learning network meetings were scheduled in mid-October (Week 8). Reminders were sent to principals about the sessions two weeks prior to the meetings and again the week before the meetings.

Based on data from the pre-survey and feedback from the first professional learning network meetings, the topic for the second set of meetings was data-based decision making. The design team found several protocols from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center that could be used when leading discussions about data. Protocols included The 5 Whys for Inquiry, A Change in Practice with Cycles of Inquiry, and Data Driven Dialogue.

Like the first set of meetings, the design team solicited a volunteer to facilitate the sessions for the principals. An elementary principal volunteered to lead the October professional learning network meetings. I met with the elementary principal a week prior to the meeting to discuss logistics and finalize details for the meeting. After our discussion, we decided that the protocols from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center would be shared as resources that principals could review and/or use with their staff. The majority of the time would be spent discussing how principals collect and use data to make decisions in their school. The principal and I brainstormed a list of questions (Appendix K) that would be used to facilitate the meeting and focus the discussion on data-based decision making.

Do. For the professional learning network meeting, fifteen principals attended the meetings for an attendance rate of 57.69%. As was planned by the design team, the sessions were held on back-to-back days and focused on data-based decision making. Three principals attended the afternoon session held in Granite Falls, the southern end of the district, and 12 principals attended the morning meeting in Lenoir, the northern end of the district. Of the fifteen principals, eight were elementary principals, two were K-8 principals, three were middle school principals, and two were high school principals. The

afternoon session lasted an hour, and the morning session lasted an hour and fifteen minutes.

An elementary principal facilitated the meeting about data-based decision making. He welcomed principals as they entered the meeting and had each principal to sign in to track attendance. The facilitator started the meeting by reviewing the three selected protocols with all principals - The 5 Whys for Inquiry, A Change in Practice with Cycles of Inquiry, and Data Driven Dialogue. The facilitator stressed that the protocols were resources that principals could use when facilitating data discussions with their own staffs. Then, the facilitator led a discussion with principals using the questions developed during the plan phase (Appendix K). The facilitator allowed principals to ask other questions related to data-based decision making throughout their time together as well. The session allowed principals time to collaborate and share stories of how they use data in their school to improve or attempt to improve student achievement. Within 48 hours of the meeting, I emailed an evaluation form to all participants to complete to collect feedback on the professional learning network meeting.

Study. The design team examined the data from the professional learning network meeting evaluation form. Of the fifteen principals that attended the professional learning network meeting, thirteen principals completed the evaluation form, a response rate of 86.7%. From the responses, the meeting format was rated as extremely appropriate (N=12) and somewhat appropriate (N=1). All responses but one rated the meeting as neither too long nor too short (N=12). The other response rated the meeting as too short. When asked how beneficial the meeting was, responses ranged from moderately beneficial (N=3) to very beneficial (N=7) to extremely beneficial (N=3). On

a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating was 4 for how beneficial the meeting was. As in the first PDSA cycle, the design team was pleased with the ratings from the professional learning network meetings.

Other parts of the meeting evaluation form had to be coded and then the design team reviewed those responses. When principals were asked to describe what was discussed in the professional learning network meeting, respondents stated: data-based decision making, data analysis, data management, best practices, using data, and making time to manage and use data. Principals felt their biggest takeaways from the data-based decision making session were discussion of methods for collecting and analyzing data, sharing of similar struggles, creative uses of data, and ideas for moving forward. In responding to what worked well, principals felt the discussions, collaboration, presenter preparation, and format of the meeting worked well. Suggested improvements for the next meeting included changing the start time for the morning session, more people, more time, and more definition as to what would be discussed. Most principals responded with no suggestions (N=8). Suggested improvements also included comments about continuing to showcase what schools are doing.

Based on these responses, the design team believed that the meeting stayed focused on data-based decision making and that principals were appreciative of the meetings in providing time for principals to collaborate and learn from each other. The design team discussed the suggested improvements of more people and more time and if there were ways to attract more principals or extend the meetings. The design team considered an upcoming optional workday as a possible time for principals to meet in lieu

of after school or meeting on days students were in school. Time would be less of an issue with students out of the building and perhaps more principals could attend.

Balancing Measures – Perception of Effectiveness. Principals continued to complete the balancing measure weekly surveys during the second PDSA Cycle. Nineteen principals responded to the perception of effectiveness survey for Week 6 for a response rate of 73%. Two of the four beginning principals were part of the nineteen who responded for Week 6. Week 6 had the highest response rate of Weeks 6 through 9. Weeks 7, 8, and 9 had the following number of responses: 13 (50%), 18 (69%), and 16 (62%). For Weeks 7-9, there was only one response each week from the beginning principals.

The design team reviewed the average weekly ratings by task and compared each of the four weeks of PDSA Cycle 2. As with PDSA Cycle 1, the data were charted using the categories of beginning principals and more experienced principals, those principals with four or more years of experience (Figures 10 and 11). Each task was rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not well at all and 5 being extremely well. For beginning principals, completing classroom observations was rated the highest or tied for the highest each week. Beginning principals rated communicating with parents and/or the community the lowest for Weeks 6, 7, and 8 and then rated completing required paperwork the lowest for Week 9. The design team notes that these ratings were almost the complete opposite as to how beginning principals rated these same tasks in Weeks 1-5. For experienced principals, the highest ratings during Weeks 6 through 9 were communication with parents or the community (Weeks 6 and 7) and handling student discipline (Weeks 8 and 9). The lowest ratings were completing teacher observations

(Weeks 6 and 9) and completing required paperwork (Weeks 7 and 8). The design team noticed how these results from PDSA Cycle 2 were also similar to the results from the first PDSA Cycle.

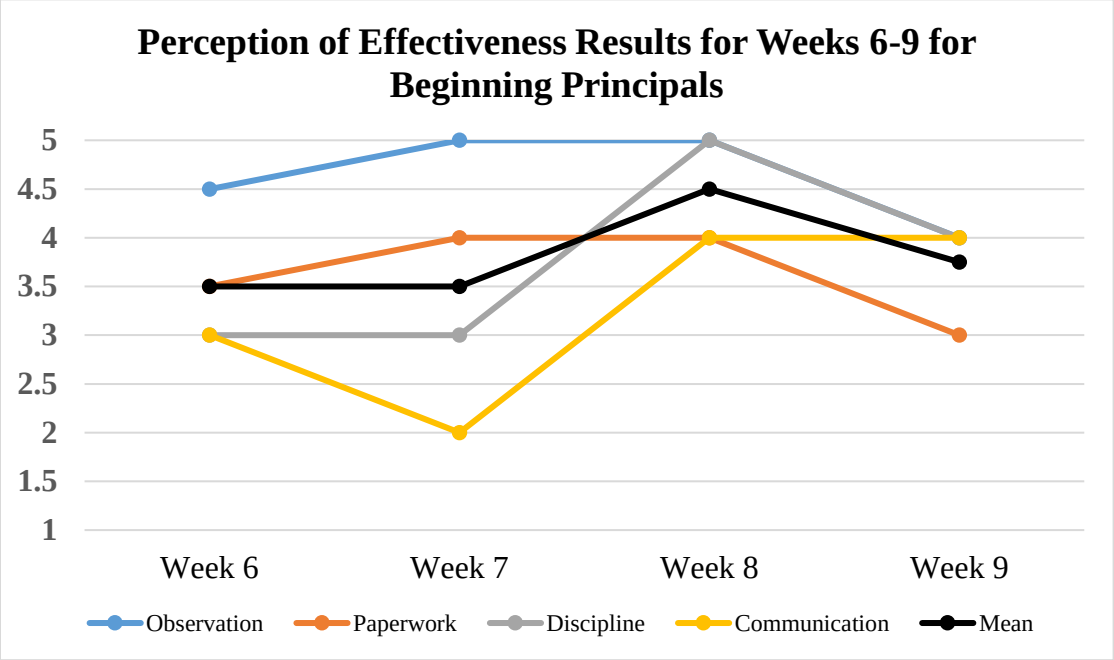

Figure 10. Run chart of Beginning Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 6-9

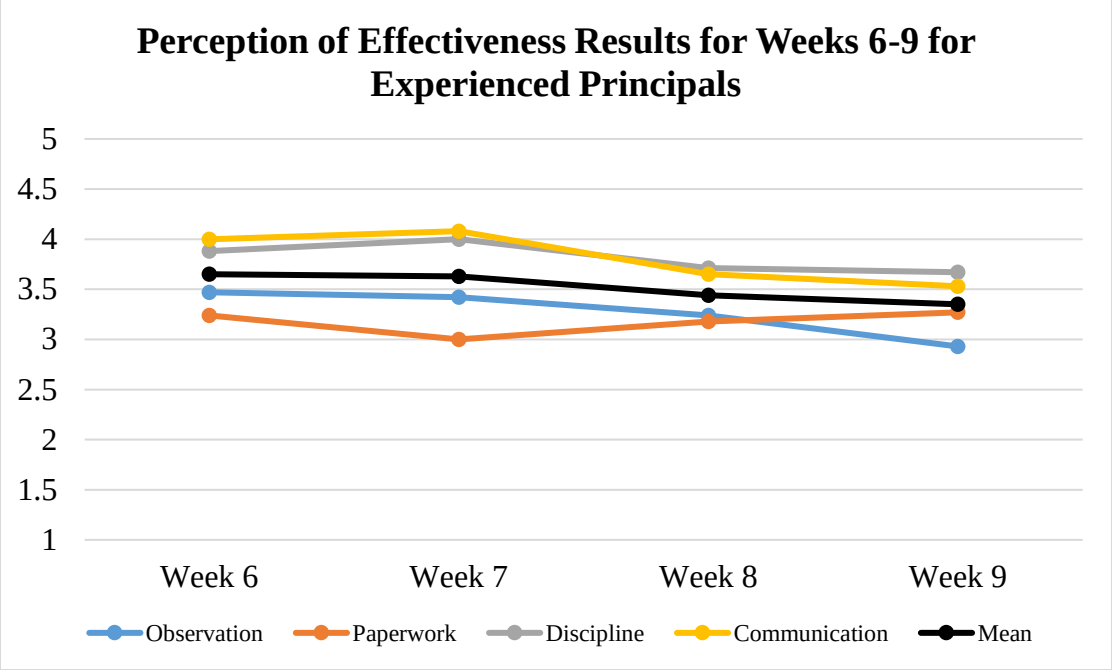

Figure 11. Run chart of Experienced Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 6-9

In addition to analyzing the tasks each week, the design team made comparisons between weeks without a professional learning network meeting (Week 6, 7, and 9) and the week with the professional learning network meeting (Week 8). When looking at the ratings of each task and the average of the four ratings for Week 8, the design team perceived that Week 8 was the highest rated week for beginning principals. The design team also noted the difference for experienced principals, and how Week 8 was the third highest of the four weeks. Based on these responses and ratings, the design team felt that participation in the professional learning network meeting and beginning principal program had not significantly affected the way principals performed their responsibilities.

Balancing Measures – Stress Level Check. Another balancing measure that the design team reviewed were ratings on the stress level check. In comparing the average

stress level of beginning principals to the experienced principals for PDSA Cycle 2, the design team noticed that the beginning principals had a lower average stress level in Weeks 6 and 7 and a higher average stress level in Weeks 8 and 9 than experienced principals. When comparing the week of the professional learning network meeting to the weeks without the professional learning network meeting, the average stress rating for Week 8 for the beginning principals was tied for highest with a rating of 10. However, the design team felt that with only one response from the four beginning principals, it was difficult to say if the one rating was representative of the group. The design team noted that the Week 8 average stress rating for experienced principals was the third highest rating, similar to the results from the perception of effectiveness survey. The design team also discussed how the time of year could be affecting the stress level of principals. Week 9 is the last week of the first grading period for principals and also a deadline for completing the first round of teacher observations. These factors could be affecting the stress level of principals, too.

Table 5

Comparison of Stress Levels between Beginning Principals and Experienced Principals for Weeks 6-9

	Beginning Principals		Experienced Principals	
Week	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*	*M (SD)*
6	2	4.5 (0.71)	17	6.06 (2.66)
7	1	3 (*)	12	5.92 (2.81)
8	1	10 (*)	17	6.18 (2.10)
9	1	10 (*)	15	6.93 (2.25)

Note: N=number completing the stress check each week; *M*=average of the stress level check for that week; *SD*=standard deviation. *-Only one response so there is no standard deviation.

Act. For the professional learning network meetings, the design team looked at the attendance data and evaluation ratings. While attendance dropped slightly, there were still over half the principals participating in the meetings. The attendance was highest at the northern location in the district for the second PDSA Cycle, mirroring the first PSDA Cycle. All levels were represented at the meetings – elementary, middle, and high school. Based on the meeting evaluations, principals seemed to appreciate the format of the meetings and how the format allowed for collaboration and discussion among the principals. The design team would continue to look at ways to structure the format of the meetings to ensure there were ways for principals to collaborate and share best practices for the next meeting. In looking at the school calendar, the design team wanted to try having the next professional learning meeting in Lenoir, the northern end of the district,

and on an upcoming optional planning day to see if more principals could attend on a planning day versus a regular day of school.

Professional Learning Network: Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle 3

The third PDSA Cycle represented weeks 10 through 15 of the principal leadership academy.

Plan. For the professional learning network meetings, the design team chose to combine the two meetings into one meeting in the northern end of the district for the next meeting as more principals had attended the northern meeting during the past two PDSA Cycles. The meeting was scheduled for an optional planning day in early November (Week 11). By scheduling the meeting on an optional planning day, the design team felt more principals may attend as they did not have to be in their building while school was in session and students were in the building. The November meeting was originally slated to be held at the public library in Lenoir but had to be moved two weeks prior to the date because the library was a voting site and could not accommodate the meeting and meet the requirements of the North Carolina Election Board.

The design team reviewed data from the pre-survey and feedback from the first and second sets of professional learning network meetings in order to determine the topic for the November session. The design team chose finance and budgeting as the topic for November. Not only was finance listed as a possible topic for discussion, there was a district budget deadline in December so this session topic was timely in helping principals to prepare for that deadline. The design team chose the Wagon Wheel Brainstorm protocol (https://www.nsrfharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/wagon_wheels_0_0.pdf) from the National School Reform

Faculty Harmony Education Center as a way to facilitate discussion about how principals manage the various budget accounts.

The design team asked for a volunteer to facilitate the November session. A principal from one of the four K-8 schools asked to lead the session. Due to the location issue with the public library, the K-8 principal was asked to host the session at her school, and she agreed to do so. The school was in the northern end of the district but not as centrally located as the public library. I met with the principal the week prior to the meeting to determine logistics and help her to feel comfortable in leading the session. We created a graphic organizer (Appendix L) to assist principals in taking notes while they discussed the various school budget accounts and how principals manage their school's budget.

Do. For the November professional learning network meeting, a K-8 principal facilitated a session on finance and budgeting. This month, only one meeting was scheduled, and eight principals attended the session, an attendance rate of 30.78%. The session was held in the morning of an optional planning day in an effort to better accommodate principals' schedules. In attendance were three elementary principals, three K-8 principals, and two high school principals. The session lasted an hour and a half.

For the finance and budgeting professional learning network, the facilitator hosted the meeting at her school. She welcomed the principals as they arrived, had them sign in to record attendance, and distributed the graphic organizer to each principal (Appendix L). The facilitator introduced the topic and then the protocol, Wagon Wheel Brainstorm, to the group. Through the protocol, principals discussed in pairs one account in a school

budget such as instructional supplies (Fund 031), Title I, and at-risk student funding (Fund 069). Principals would switch partners for each different fund or fund source, allowing collaboration and discussion with a variety of principals. After discussing the fund sources on the graphic organizer, the facilitator brought the principals together for whole group discussion. She also asked if there were other funds that principals wanted to discuss. This meeting lasted longer than previous meetings as principals continued to ask questions and sought advice from other principals.

After the November session, the design team met briefly to discuss the logistics for the December professional learning network meeting. The team reviewed the attendance from the November meeting and then decided to go back to hosting two meetings – one in the northern end and one in the southern end of the district – for December. The meetings were scheduled the first week in December (Week 15) in an effort to avoid the school events scheduled later in the month. The afternoon session was scheduled in Lenoir, and the morning session was scheduled in Granite Falls.

The topic for the December professional learning network meetings was scheduling. This topic was mentioned in the pre-survey as well as in feedback collected from previous professional learning network meetings. The design team decided to use the protocol, The Feedback Carousel (https://www.nsrfharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/feed_back_carousel.pdf), from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center. This protocol would allow principals to share something, in this case their school's schedule, and gather feedback from other principals. An elementary principal volunteered to lead the sessions on scheduling. I met with the elementary principal the week prior to the professional learning network

meetings to review the ideas of the design team, solicit her thoughts, and finalize the logistics for the meetings.

For the December professional learning network meeting, the focus was scheduling, and principals were asked to bring to the meeting either their school's current schedule or a schedule they were considering for their school. Nine principals attended the December meetings for an attendance rate of 34.62%. The sessions were held on back-to-back days in early December. Eight principals attended the afternoon session in the northern end of the district, and one principal attended the morning session in the southern end of the district. Of the nine principals, three were elementary principals, two K-8 principals, one middle school principal, and three high school principals. The afternoon session lasted one hour and ten minutes, and the morning session lasted one hour.

At the meetings, the elementary principal serving as facilitator welcomed the principals, had them sign in to record attendance, and then asked principals to begin posting the schedule they brought with them on the walls in the room. Using the Feedback Carousel protocol, the facilitator had large poster paper on the walls around the room for principals to provide feedback using the protocol. Each poster paper was divided into four quadrants – probing questions, clarifying questions, recommendations, and useful resources. Throughout the activity, principals circulated looking at the various schedules. For each schedule, a principal was asked to pick one of the quadrants and either write a question on the poster paper or provide recommendations or resources for that particular schedule on the poster paper and in the appropriate quadrant. After about 15 to 20 minutes of looking at schedules and posting questions or recommendations, the

facilitator brought the group together to comment on what they saw and ask questions and collaborate as a large group.

With the second December professional learning network meeting having only one participant, the facilitator and participant sat together and discussed scheduling. Both principals were elementary principals and had the opportunity to ask questions about each other's schedule and scheduling issues and concerns at the elementary level.

Study. The design team reviewed data from the evaluation form for the November professional learning network meeting. Five of the eight principals who attended the meeting completed the evaluation form, a response rate of 62.5%. The meeting was rated as either extremely appropriate (N=3) or slightly appropriate (N=2). Four out of five felt the meeting was neither too long nor too short, and one principal rated the meeting as slightly too long. Four principals felt the meeting was very beneficial, and one principal felt the meeting was moderately beneficial. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating was 3.8 for how beneficial the meeting was. The design team talked about how these ratings seemed slightly lower than the previous two professional learning network meetings.

Other responses from the evaluation form were coded and shared with design team members. When asked to describe the topic of the meeting, principals' responses included budget, spending, finance, and problem-solving. Principals felt their biggest takeaways from the session were sharing of best practices across schools and guidance on budget planning. The design team notes that what worked well for the November session replicated previous statements from other professional learning network meetings. Principals felt the collaboration, discussion, and format of the event worked well. No

improvements were noted, and one principal asked that discussions continue in future meetings. The design team was concerned about the lower attendance in November. The team wondered how much a second date, even on a student day, would have increased principal attendance.

For December, the design team went back to the two scheduled meetings. Of the nine principals that attended the December professional learning network meetings, seven principals completed the evaluation form, a response rate of 77.8%. All respondents rated the meeting as extremely appropriate and neither too long nor too short. When asked how beneficial the meeting was, respondents rated the meeting as moderately beneficial (N=2), very beneficial (N=3), and extremely beneficial (N=2). On a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating was 4 for how beneficial the meeting was. The design team noticed a slight increase in ratings from the November meeting; however, there were still concerns about the attendance rate.

The remaining responses on the evaluation form were coded and then shared with the design team. When principals were asked to describe what was discussed in the professional learning network meeting, respondents stated: scheduling, challenges in scheduling, and scheduling complexities. Principals felt their biggest takeaways were the complexity of scheduling at all levels, the need to work together, and sharing of best practices. Principals believed that the collaboration, discussion, format, and people who attended worked well for the December professional learning network meetings. Suggested improvements were mixed in that four principals had no suggestions, one principal asked for more people, and another principal asked to continue the small group. Another principal asked for more time to do the activity. The design team felt that trying

to find the "right" size of people would be difficult as each person may have a different number as to what the "right" size was. Despite the number of people, the design team was encouraged by the degree of collaboration and discussion that was taking place in the professional learning network meetings.

Balancing Measures – Perception of Effectiveness. The weekly perception of effectiveness surveys offered additional data to review. Response rates for the weekly surveys were as follows: Week 10: 13 respondents (50%), Week 11: 19 respondents (73%); Week 12: 17 respondents (65%); Week 13: 12 respondents (46%), Week 14: 17 respondents (65%), and Week 15: 12 respondents (46%).

The design team looked at the comparison of the average weekly ratings by task for each of the six weeks of PDSA Cycle 3. As with the previous two PDSA Cycles, the data were charted using the categories of beginning principals and more experienced principals, those principals with four or more years of experience (Figure 12 and 13). Each task was rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not well at all and 5 being extremely well. For beginning principals, the design team noted that handling student discipline was rated the highest or tied for the highest for five of the six weeks. Beginning principals rated communicating with parents and/or the community the lowest or tied for lowest for four of the six weeks. Completing required paperwork and completing required classroom observations were the lowest areas for the other two weeks. These ratings were similar to how beginning principals rated these same tasks in Weeks 6-9. For experienced principals, the highest ratings during Weeks 10 through 15 were handling student discipline (Weeks 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). The lowest ratings were completing teacher observations (Weeks 10. 13, 14, and 15) and completing required

paperwork (Weeks 11 and 12). The design team discussed how the end of this PDSA cycle was close to the end of first semester and first semester testing for high schools in the district and another deadline for completing teacher observations.

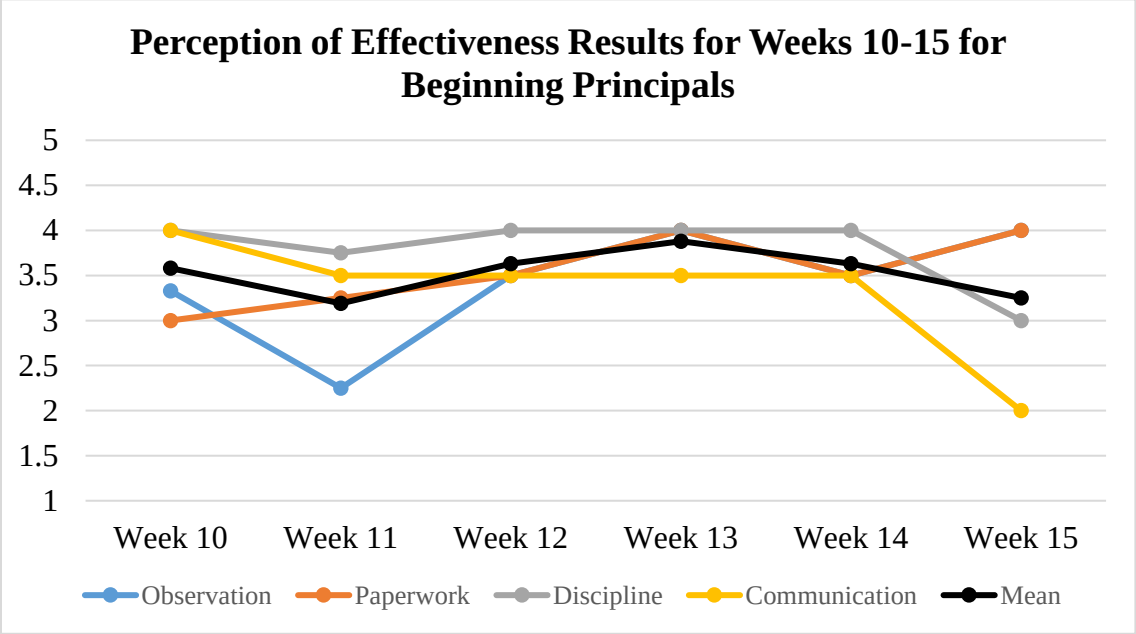

Figure 12. Run chart of Beginning Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 10-15

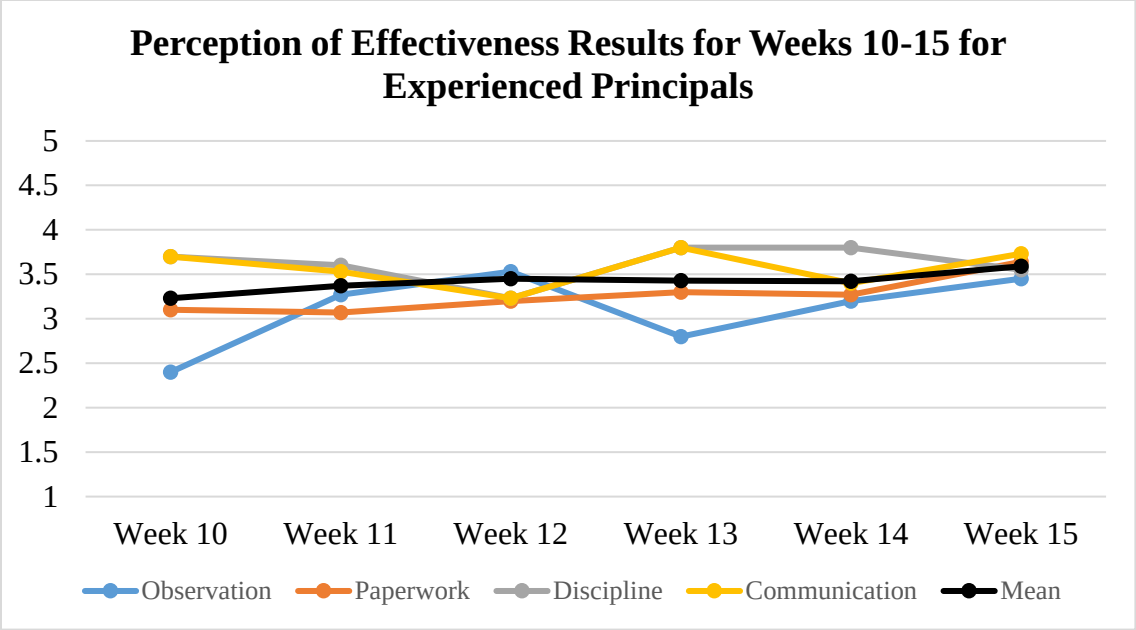

Figure 13. Run chart of Experienced Principals' Perception of Effectiveness Results – Weeks 10-15

Professional learning network meetings were held in Weeks 11 and 15. When comparing the weeks with professional learning network meetings to the weeks without a professional learning network meeting, the design team noticed that the two weeks with professional learning networks had the lowest average ratings of the four tasks for beginning principals. This was the opposite of the previous PDSA Cycle. In comparison, for experienced principals, Week 15 had the highest average rating of all the weeks and Week 11 had the second lowest average rating of the six week period. The design team was surprised with the rating for Week 15 for experienced principals and had expected it to be closer to the ratings of beginning principals.

Balancing Measures – Stress Level Check. The second balancing measure that the design team reviewed were the weekly stress level checks. In comparing the average stress level of beginning principals to the experienced principals for PDSA Cycle 3, the

design team noticed the weeks were split. For three weeks, the beginning principals had a lower average stress level, and in the other three weeks, the beginning principals had a higher average stress level than experienced principals. When comparing the week of the professional learning network meeting to the weeks without the professional learning network meeting, the average stress rating for beginning principals for Week 11 was the third lowest of the six weeks and for Week 15, the average stress level was tied for highest with a rating of 8. For experienced principals, the average stress rating was the second and third highest weeks during the six week period.

The design team discussed if the time of the year could have affected attendance as well as the ratings on the weekly effectiveness survey and stress level checks. There may be months of the year when principals are busier with school duties and responsibilities and have less time to attend to their own needs of professional development.

Table 6

Comparison of Stress Levels between Beginning Principals and Experienced Principals for Weeks 10-15

	Beginning Principals		Experienced Principals	
Week	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*	*M (SD)*
10	3	6 (1.73)	10	7.4 (1.90)
11	4	6.25 (2.22)	15	6.4 (1.99)
12	2	6.5 (3.54)	15	5.93 (2.02)
13	2	4.5 (2.12)	10	5.9 (2.96)
14	2	8 (2.83)	15	6.2 (2.51)
15	1	8 (*)	11	6.64 (2.62)

Note: N=number completing the stress check each week; *M*=average of the stress level check for that week; *SD*=standard deviation. *-Only one response so there is no standard deviation.

Act. The design team had noted how attendance dropped at both the November and December meetings compared to the attendance from PDSA Cycle 1 and PDSA Cycle 2. The design team discussed how the time of the school year could have affected attendance and balancing measure ratings. The design team also discussed the need to continue to find the right balance in scheduling the locations and times of the meetings. The meetings held in the northern end of the district were better attended for each of the PDSA Cycles. Based on this data, the design team plans to schedule two meetings in the

northern end of the district for the next PDSA Cycle to see how that may affect attendance.

Summative Evaluation Process

In addition to the formative evaluation completed throughout the implementation of the principal leadership academy, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to complete the summative evaluation of the improvement initiative. Summative evaluation allows scholar-practitioners to evaluate the improvement initiative *after* initial implementation, examining progress toward goal achievement, as well as, the perceptions of relevant stakeholders. In this case, summative evaluation occurred after a five-month period of time.

The overall focus and long-term goal of the principal leadership academy was to reduce the principal turnover rate as measured by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and reported annually through the NC Report Card. The timing of the release of the NC Report Card varies from year to year, and due to the timing of this initiative, the long-term effects on principal turnover cannot be measured and included in this disquisition. Also, the timing of the implementation of the principal leadership academy will impact principal retention beginning with the transition from the 2018-2019 school year to the 2019-2020 school year and therefore not be published publicly via the NC Report Card until winter of the 2019-2020 school year.

Summative evaluation components for the principal leadership academy included a pre and post-survey, measurement of a leadership goal, and focus groups. The pre and post-survey included questions relating to self-efficacy, connectedness and job satisfaction. For the leadership goal, principals were asked to write one professional

leadership goal, describe it, and rate their performance in August and then in December describe and rate their performance for a comparison. Focus groups of mentors, beginning principals, participants in the professional learning network, and non-participants in the professional learning network provided qualitative data to evaluate the components of the principal leadership academy.

Pre-implementation and post-implementation survey. The pre-implementation and post-implementation survey contained a variety of questions including demographic questions, background information, questions about self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction. The demographic questions, professional development questions, Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES), job satisfaction, and connectedness questions were combined to create one survey to be administered to principals before and after implementation of the principal leadership academy (Appendix M).

Administering the survey in a pre/post design allowed for a baseline to be determined from the initial completion of the PSES, job satisfaction, and connectedness questions. The completion of the survey at the end of the 90 day cycle allowed for a within group comparison of data. A paired sample t-test design was used to show if changes in the principals' ratings of efficacy per task and average ratings were statistically significant and if changes in the principals' sense of job satisfaction and connectedness were statistically significant from the initial baseline collection taken prior to implementation of the improvement initiative (Tanner, 2012). By collecting demographic and background data, analysis was able to look at results by gender, years

of experience, level (i.e. elementary, middle, or high school), and previous professional development experiences.

All twenty-six principals in the school district completed the pre-implementation survey. Of the twenty-six principals, 12 were males, and 14 were females. The principals represented all levels of schools within the district – elementary, K-8, middle, and high schools. Total years in education of the principals ranged from 12 years to 38 years. Years of experience as a school principal ranged from none (first year principal) to 18 years. The longest that any principal had been at their current school was 9 years. Over half of the principals had three years or less of experience at their current school. Fifteen percent were beginning their first year at their current school, one first year principal and three experienced principals. Twenty-three percent of the principals had four to six years of experience at their current school, and the remaining 23% had seven to nine years of experience at their current school.

On the survey, there were questions about previous professional development experiences as well as areas where principals may need additional support (Figure 14). Of the professional development that principals had participated in over the past two years for at least 10 hours (1 Continuing Educational Unit or CEU), areas with the highest number of yes responses were instructional leadership (N=23), school improvement planning (N=22), and teacher evaluation (N=22). Professional development topics with the least amount of yes responses were budgeting (N=2), school scheduling (N=2), working with parents and the community (N=4), and teacher remediation/ coaching (N=6).

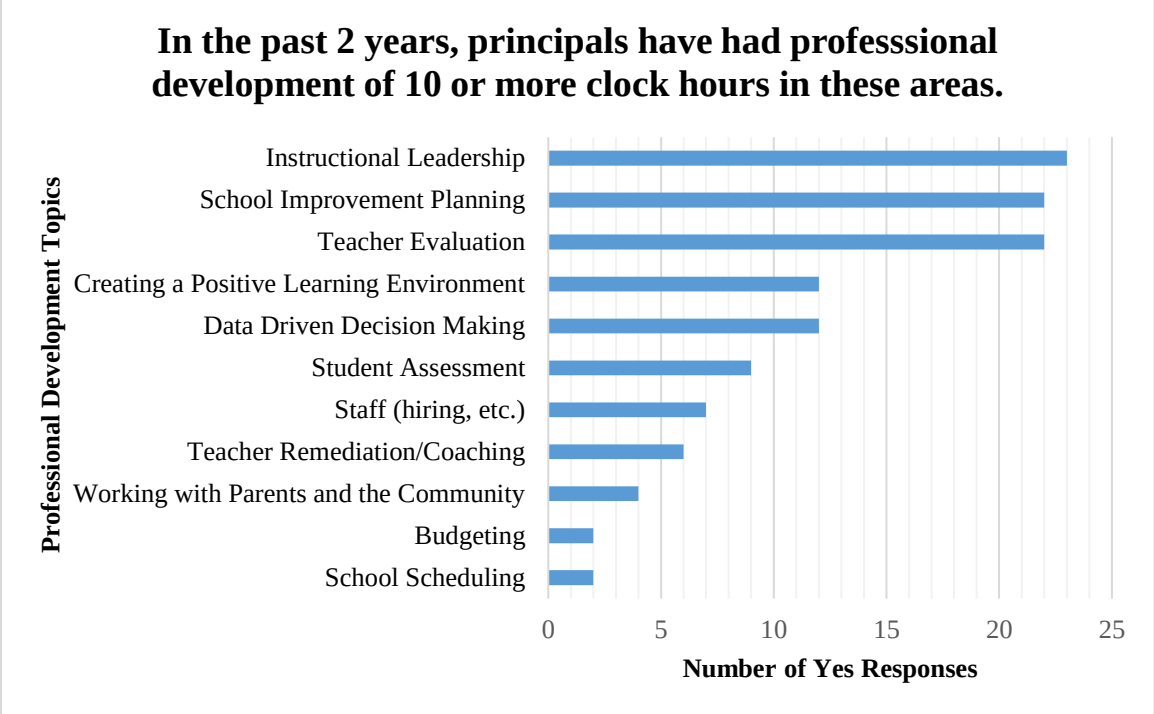

Figure 14. Bar graph of how many principals have participated in at least 10 hours of professional development by specific areas over the past two years.

Areas where principals indicated they needed additional support were teacher remediation/coaching (N=19), instructional leadership (N=15), student assessment (N=14), and school improvement planning (N=14). Areas of professional development where principals indicated the lowest need for additional support were staff, such as hiring, (N=2) and teacher evaluation (N=5).

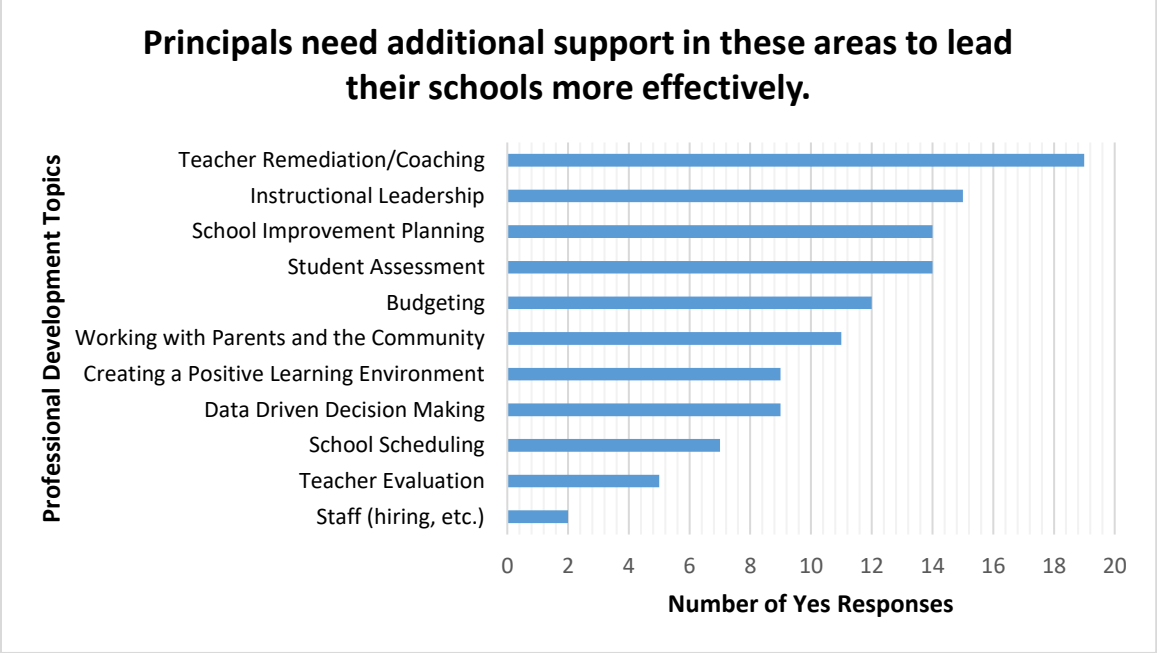

Figure 15. Bar graph of how many principals need professional development by specific areas.

The last question on the pre-implementation survey asked principals about their level of agreement with the statement, "Principal professional development is a priority in this district." No principal strongly agreed with the statement. Half of the principals somewhat agreed with the statement; however, the other half of principals neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 16).

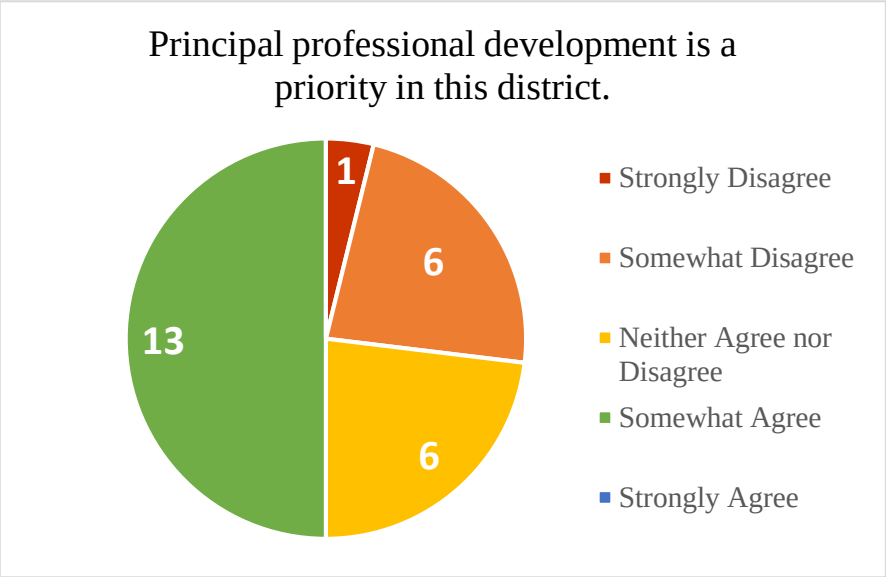

Figure 16. Pie chart of how principals agreed or disagreed with the statement about the priority of principal professional development in the district.

The pre-implementation survey was completed by principals in June and July prior to the introduction of the principal leadership academy. Principals completed the post-implementation survey in mid-to-late December. Twenty-one principals completed the post-implementation survey for a response rate of 81%. Of the 21 principals, 13 were female, and eight were male. The years of experience in education for the principals ranged from 12 years to 39 years. Years of experience as a principal for the respondents ranged from one to 18, and years of experience as a principal at their current school ranged from half a year to nine years. The principals completing the post-implementation survey represented all levels – 10 elementary schools, 2 K-8 schools, 4 middle schools, and 5 high schools.

Progress Toward Goal Achievement

Goal 1: Principals' overall sense of self-efficacy will increase by 25% from the pre-survey results to the post-survey results.

The questions related to self-efficacy on the pre and post-implementation survey were questions from the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES), an 18-item questionnaire, to measure self-efficacy. The items included in this scale were representative of work that principals do and were designed based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) professional standards (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The PSES was copyrighted by the authors; however, there were no restrictions on use of the instrument for scholarly research or non-profit educational purposes. Questions on the survey about self-efficacy asked principals to rate the extent to which they could perform 18 specific tasks related to their position as school principal. Principals rated their extent to perform each task on a scale of 1, none at all, to 9, a great deal. The mean for each task was listed in Table 7.

The top three tasks as determined by the means were handle effectively the discipline of students (M=7.54; SD=0.86), generate enthusiasm for a shared vision (M=7.42; SD=1.30), and promote acceptable behavior among students (M=7.38; SD=0.98). The three tasks with the lowest means were maintain control of own daily schedule (M=6.19: SD=1.81), cope with stress of the job (M=6.35; SD=1.57), and handle the required paperwork required of the job (M=6.58; SD=1.36).

Table 7

Summary of Means for Principal Tasks as Rated by Principals on the Pre-Implementation Survey

	Pre-Implementation Survey Rating		
Instructional Tasks	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Facilitate student learning	26	6.65	1.129
Create a positive learning environment in your school	26	7.00	1.575
Raise student achievement on standardized tests	26	5.62	1.602
School Improvement Tasks	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision	26	7.42	1.301
Manage change in your school	26	7.04	1.612
Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school	26	6.65	1.623
Motivate teachers	26	6.81	1.443
School Climate Tasks	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population	26	6.73	1.638
Promote a positive image of your school with the media	26	6.88	1.505
Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school	26	6.62	1.388
Promote acceptable behavior among students	26	7.38	0.983
Promote ethical behavior among school personnel	26	7.31	1.011
Managerial Tasks	*N*	*M*	*SD*

Handle the time demands of the job	26	6.69	1.490
Maintain control of your own daily schedule	26	6.19	1.812
Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school	26	7.54	0.859
Handle the paperwork required of the job	26	6.58	1.362
Cope with stress of the job	26	6.35	1.573
Prioritize among competing demands of the job	26	6.65	1.413

Note: N = Number of responses; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation

Results of the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys were paired to compare the results of the 21 principals who completed both the pre-implementation survey and the post-implementation survey. From the paired results of the specific self-efficacy tasks of principals, the task that had the highest mean in the post-implementation survey was to generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school (M=7.62; SD=1.16) compared to the task with the highest mean from the pre-implementation survey, handle effectively the discipline of students in your school (M=7.57; SD=0.93). The task with the lowest mean from the post-implementation survey was maintain control of own daily schedule (M=5.57; SD=2.23), whereas for the pre-implementation survey, raise student achievement on standardized tests had the lowest mean (M=5.43; SD=1.72).

The task that showed the largest positive difference from pre-implementation to post-implementation was to promote school spirit among a large population of the student population (Δ=0.72). The task that had the largest negative difference from pre-implementation to post-implementation was to maintain control of own daily schedule (Δ= -0.76). Paired sample t-tests were used to determine if there was any significance in

the change of means for the tasks related to self-efficacy from the pre-implementation survey results to the post-implementation survey results. None of the differences were found to be statistically significant.

Table 8

Comparison of Means for Principal Tasks as Rated by Principals on the Pre and Post-Implementation Surveys

Instructional Tasks	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Facilitate student learning	6.67	6.95	0.28	0.826	20	0.419
Create a positive learning environment in your school	6.86	7.43	0.57	1.351	20	0.192
Raise student achievement on standardized tests	5.43	6.05	0.62	1.173	20	0.647
Instructional Tasks Average	6.32	6.81	0.49	4.623	2	0.044
School Improvement Tasks	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision	7.43	7.62	0.19	0.545	20	0.592
Manage change in your school	6.86	7.14	0.28	0.719	20	0.480
Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school	6.67	6.81	0.14	0.301	20	0.766
Motivate teachers	6.76	6.71	-0.05	-0.123	20	0.903
School Improvement Tasks Average	6.93	7.07	0.14	2.010	3	0.138
School Climate Tasks	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population	6.52	7.24	0.72	1.576	20	0.131

Promote a positive image of your school with the media	6.76	7.00	0.24	0.466	20	0.647
Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school	6.71	6.67	-0.04	-0.114	20	0.910
Promote acceptable behavior among students	7.38	7.48	0.1	0.336	20	0.741
Promote ethical behavior among school personnel	7.29	7.43	0.14	0.449	20	0.658
School Climate Tasks Average	6.93	7.16	0.23	1.784	4	0.149
Managerial Tasks	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Handle the time demands of the job	6.81	6.48	-0.33	-0.681	20	0.504
Maintain control of your own daily schedule	6.33	5.57	-0.76	-1.251	20	0.225
Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school	7.57	7.29	-0.28	-1.064	20	0.300
Handle the paperwork required of the job	6.62	6.24	-0.38	-0.857	20	0.401
Cope with stress of the job	6.38	6.90	0.52	1.372	20	0.185
Prioritize among competing demands of the job	6.76	6.76	0	0.000	20	1.000
Managerial Tasks Average	6.75	6.54	-0.21	-1.166	5	0.296

Note: M_1 = Pre-Implementation Mean; M_2 =Post-Implementation Mean; Δ=Change between pre-implementation survey mean and post-implementation survey mean.

When examining the ratings of the self-efficacy tasks by categories – instructional tasks, school improvement tasks, school climate tasks, and managerial tasks, the instructional tasks category saw the greatest increase in ratings between the pre and post-implementation survey. The post-implementation average rating for the instructional

tasks increased by 8% from the pre-implementation average rating. A paired samples t-test of the average of the means of the instructional tasks was statistically significant, $t(2)=4.623$, $p=.044$). In contrast, the average of the ratings of the managerial tasks dropped between the pre and post-implementation surveys. The drop was by 4% and was not statistically significant, $t(5)=-1.166$, $p=0.296$.

Goal 2: Principals' overall sense of connectedness and job satisfaction will increase by 25% from the pre-survey results to the post-survey results.

To measure job satisfaction, I used job satisfaction questions from the Qualtrics library and added to those questions a set of questions about connectedness. The Classroom Community Scale (Rovai, 2002) was the basis for developing ten questions to measure how principals relate within the district – their connectedness. The Classroom Community Scale, a 20 question survey, was proven reliable and valid for measuring connectedness within a classroom community (Rovai, 2002). From the original twenty questions on the Classroom Community Scale, I chose ten questions that I felt most represented connectedness and then changed the wording to reflect the context of principals within a district instead of students in a classroom setting.

The pre and post-implementation survey contained ten questions about connectedness, asking principals to rate their level of agreement with statements. Some statements were phrased in a positive manner like "I feel that principals in this district care about each other," while other questions were phrased in a negative manner such as "I feel isolated in this district." Answers of agreement were converted to a scale of 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. The statistics related to these statements were included in Table 9.

Of the positively phrased statements, the statement with the highest mean was "I feel that principals in the district care about each other." Twenty-four of the 26 principals agreed somewhat or strongly with the statement. Of the positively phrased statements, the statement with the lowest mean was "I feel that members of the district depend on me." Nine principals somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement. Of the negatively phrased statements, the statement with the highest mean was "I feel reluctant to speak openly in meetings," with 16 of 26 principals either somewhat agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The negative statement with the lowest mean was "I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question" with 5 principals agreeing somewhat or strongly with the statement.

Table 9

Summary of Principals' Responses to Connectedness Statements in the Pre-Implementation Survey

	Summary of Principals' Responses			
Affirmative/Positive Statements	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N Agree*
I feel that principals in the district care about each other.	26	4.23	0.587	24
I feel this district is like a family.	26	3.62	0.852	16
I trust others in this district.	26	3.65	0.846	15
I feel that I can rely on others in this district.	26	3.92	0.628	22
I feel that members of the district depend on me.	26	3.31	0.788	9
I feel confident that others will support me.	26	3.85	0.784	18
Negative Statements	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N Agree*
I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question.	26	2.27	1.116	5
I do not feel a spirit of community in this district.	26	2.81	1.059	8
I feel isolated in this district.	26	2.54	0.989	5
I feel reluctant to speak openly in meetings.	26	3.31	1.011	16

Note: N = Number of responses; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *N Agree* = Number of responses that somewhat agree or strongly agree.

Comparisons were also made between the statements related to connectedness on the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys. Of the positively phrased statements, the statement, "I feel that principals in the district care about each other," had the highest mean for both the pre-implementation (M=4.19; SD=0.60) and post-

implementation surveys (M=4.24; SD=0.63). The statement with the lowest mean was different on the pre-implementation survey versus the post-implementation survey. On the pre-implementation survey, "I feel that members of the district depend on me" was rated the lowest (M=3.29; SD=0.78). On the post-implementation survey, "I feel this district is like a family" was rated the lowest (M=3.48; SD=0.93), a drop from the pre-implementation rating (M=3.62; SD=0.81).

Of the negatively-phrased statements, "I feel reluctant to speak openly in meetings" had the highest mean, most agreement, for both the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys. The mean for this statement dropped from 3.29 pre-implementation to 2.71 post-implementation. This meant that principals felt slightly less reluctant to speak openly in meetings after initial implementation of the principal leadership academy. The statement, "I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question" had the lowest mean pre-implementation (M=2.24; SD=1.04) and tied for the lowest mean post-implementation (M=2.38; SD=0.97). Again, paired sample t-tests were used to compare the difference in the means between the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys for the connectedness statements. None of the differences in the means of the connectedness statements were statistically significant.

Table 10

Comparison of Means for Connectedness Statements as Rated by Principals on the Pre and Post-Implementation Surveys

Connectedness Statements	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
I feel that principals in the district care about each other.	4.19	4.24	0.05	0.237	20	0.815
I feel this district is like a family.	3.62	3.48	-0.14	-0.530	20	0.602
I trust others in this district.	3.62	3.71	0.09	0.491	20	0.629
I feel that I can rely on others in this district.	3.90	4.00	0.10	0.418	20	0.680
I feel that members of the district depend on me.	3.29	3.62	0.33	1.919	20	0.069
I feel confident that others will support me.	3.81	3.76	-0.05	-0.237	20	0.815
Negatively Phrased Statements	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question.	2.24	2.38	0.14	0.460	20	0.651
I do not feel a spirit of community in this district.	2.76	2.43	-0.33	-1.323	20	0.201
I feel isolated in this district.	2.48	2.38	-0.10	-0.302	20	0.766
I feel reluctant to speak openly in meetings.	3.29	2.71	-0.57	-1.783	20	0.090

Note: M_1 = Pre-Implementation Mean; M_2 =Post-Implementation Mean; Δ=Change between pre-implementation survey mean and post-implementation survey mean.

The last section of the pre and post-implementation survey contained questions specific to job satisfaction. Principals rated the nine statements on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. As with the previous set of statements, answers were converted to a scale of 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Results for all

statements were listed in Table 12. The statement with the most agreement from principals and the highest mean was "My job makes a difference in the lives of others." The second highest rated statement with 25 principals either agreeing somewhat or strongly was "My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment." By contrast, the statement with the lowest mean and ten principals either somewhat or strongly agreeing was "District leadership looks to me for suggestions and leadership."

Table 11

Summary of Principals' Responses to Job Satisfaction Statements in the Pre-Implementation Survey

	Summary of Principal Responses			
Job Satisfaction Statements	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N Agree*
I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.	26	3.50	0.812	16
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	26	4.42	0.857	25
I have the tools and resources to do my job well.	26	3.46	0.859	17
On my job, I have clearly defined quality goals.	26	3.81	0.749	18
District leadership looks to me for suggestions and leadership.	26	3.12	0.909	10
Supervisors encourage me to do my best.	26	4.04	0.871	21
I am valued by district leaders.	26	3.69	0.788	18
My job makes a difference in the lives of others.	26	4.62	0.496	26
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	26	4.19	0.895	23

Note: N = Number of responses; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *N Agree* = Number of responses that somewhat agree or strongly agree.

Comparisons were made between the ratings of the job satisfaction statements on the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys. The statement, "My job makes a difference in the lives of others," had the highest mean of all statements pre-implementation and post-implementation (M_1 and M_2=4.62; SD_1=0.50; SD_2=0.59). The statement was one of three statements that had the same mean for both the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys. The statement with the lowest mean both pre-implementation and post-implementation was "district leadership looks to me for suggestions and leadership." Analysis with a paired samples t-test showed the difference between the pre-implementation and post-implementation ratings of "On my job, I have clearly defined quality goals" was statistically significant, $t(20)=3.508$, $p=.002$).

Table 12

Comparison of Means for Job Satisfaction Statements as Rated by Principals on the Pre and Post-Implementation Surveys

Job Satisfaction Statements	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.	3.48	3.52	0.04	0.237	20	0.815
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	4.33	4.48	0.14	0.591	20	0.561
I have the tools and resources to do my job well.	3.52	3.71	0.19	0.677	20	0.506
On my job, I have clearly defined quality goals.	3.81	4.38	0.57	3.508	20	0.002
District leadership looks to me for suggestions and leadership.	3.10	3.24	0.14	0.568	20	0.576
Supervisors encourage me to do my best.	4.19	4.10	-0.09	-0.462	20	0.649
I am valued by district leaders.	3.81	3.81	0.00	0.000	20	1.000
My job makes a difference in the lives of others.	4.62	4.62	0.00	0.000	20	1.000
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	4.19	4.19	0.00	0.000	20	1.000

Note: M_1 = Pre-Implementation Mean; M_2 =Post-Implementation Mean; Δ=Change between pre-implementation survey mean and post-implementation survey mean.

Goal 3: Using each principal's leadership performance goal as a measure, principals will rate their performance of the selected goal 25% higher in December than in August.

To measure leadership performance, principals were asked to complete a survey listing one leadership performance goal for the 2018-2019 school year in August

(Appendix N). Principals had to categorize the goal using the seven leadership standards from the North Carolina professional standards for school executives (McREL, 2009). In addition to categorizing the goal, principals were asked to describe how they would measure achievement of their specific goal and then rate their current level of performance on a scale of one to ten. In December, principals were sent a follow up survey referencing their chosen goal, asking them to describe in words their progress on achieving their goal, and asking them to rate their current level of performance related to their goal on the same one to ten scale (Appendix O). Analysis of the leadership performance goal included comparison of the principals' self-assessment of their goal performance from the beginning of the school year to December using a paired sample t-test design (Tanner, 2012). Principals' descriptions of the leadership performance goals, how they would measure their goal, and their progress toward their goal were coded using descriptive, In Vivo, and evaluation coding (Miles et al., 2014) looking for themes among the principals' goals, their measurement measures, and their progress toward achieving their stated performance goal.

Twenty of the twenty-six principals completed the survey in August or September detailing one leadership goal for the 2018-2019 school year. Of the seven leadership standards from the North Carolina professional standards for school executives (McREL, 2009), five of the seven standards were represented among the chosen goals – Instructional Leadership (N=8), Cultural Leadership (N=5), Human Resource Leadership (N=3), Strategic Leadership (N=3), and Managerial Leadership (N=1).

Leadership performance goals were coded looking for themes in what the principals chose. The majority of goals were focused on teacher coaching (N=10).

Principals wanted to increase the amount of feedback that they were providing to teachers and to have "critical conversations" with teachers to help teachers improve their instruction in the classroom. Other goals focused on school improvement (N=4). Principals wanted to increase student achievement and better utilize tools and resources within their school to best serve students. Three principals chose goals focused on self-improvement and wanted to become better instructional leaders. One principal's goal was to "become a better instructional leader through a better understand(ing) of materials and strategies." The last three principals chose goals aligned to improving school culture. Two of the three goals focused on better communication within the school, and the third goal dealt with empowering staff and supporting the traditions of the school community.

When principals rated the leadership performance goal in August or September, the range of the ratings were from 1 to 10. The mean rating for the leadership performance goal was 5.43 (SD=1.72). The mode and median were 5.

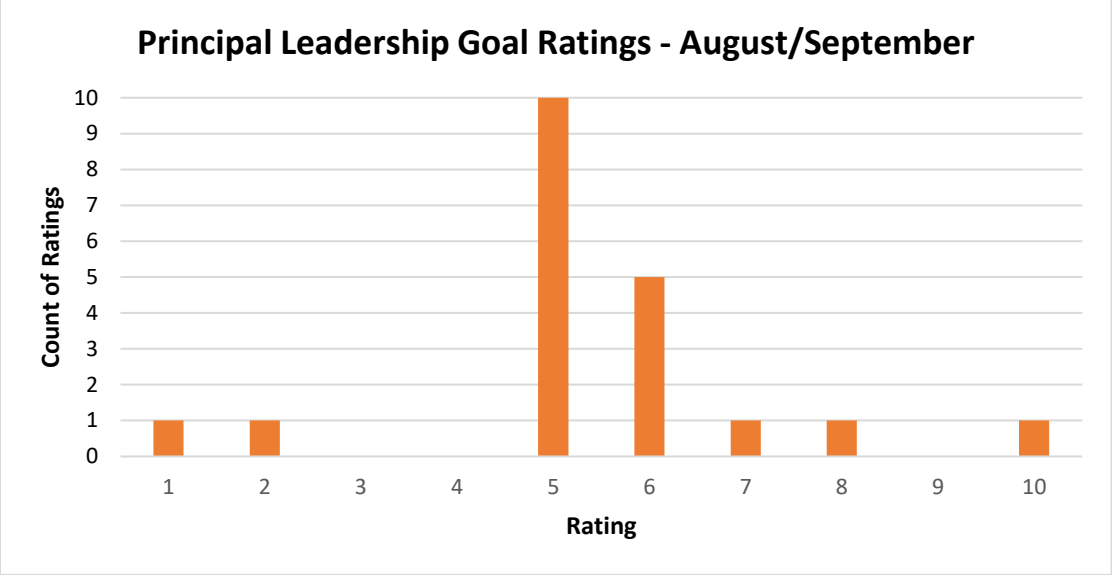

Figure 17. Ratings of selected leadership goal by principals early in the 2018-2019 school year.

In December, principals completed a second survey about their leadership performance goal. Principals had to describe their current progress toward their goal and then rated their current performance as of mid-to-late December. Fifteen of the twenty principals who completed the survey in August or September also completed the survey in December, a response rate of 75% of the initial group. Of the fifteen principals and respective leadership performance goals, eight goals were categorized as teacher coaching, and four goals were school improvement goals. Two goals were self-improvement goals where the principals wanted to become stronger instructional leaders, and one goal was categorized as school culture.

Responses describing progress ranged from brief one sentence responses such as "I am making progress but there is still more work to be done" to paragraphs about what the principal had done since August. Principals who had teacher coaching goals discussed professional development opportunities they were able to provide for their

staff. Observations of teachers were mentioned in three responses. One principal described how he had revised a "peer peek-in program" and had recently "clarified my expectations" of the program to ensure teachers understood the goal.

For principals who had school improvement goals, three of the four principals described ways they had restructured programs, procedures, or staff assignments within the school. The two principals who wanted to increase their instructional leadership skills had created or attended professional development and had analyzed data, processes, and frameworks within the school looking for ways to improve the school as related to school improvement goals established earlier in the school year. For the principal who wanted to improve school culture, he was noticing a change in the attitude of students, staff, and parents. He was making a point to be visible, both in classrooms and at all school events.

Principals' ratings on the leadership performance goal in December ranged from 3 to 9. The average of all the ratings was 6.8 (SD=1.52), and the median and mode were 7. When comparing the ratings of the leadership performance goal from the two points in time, ratings increased from August to December for eleven principals, ratings decreased for two principals, and ratings stayed the same for two principals (Figure 18).

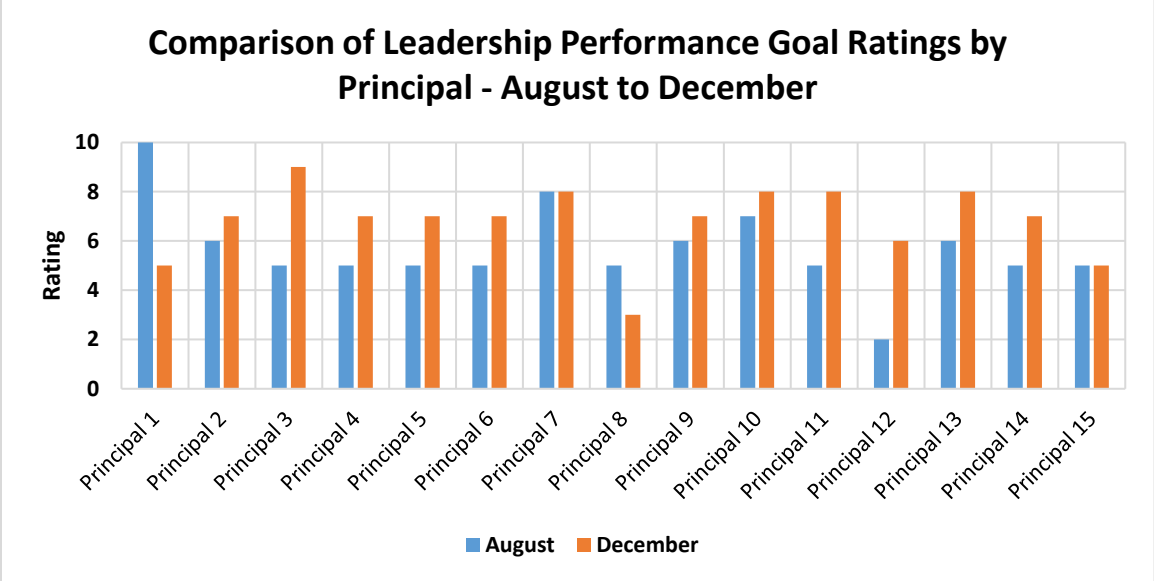

Figure 18. Comparison of how principals rated their leadership performance goal from August to December.

In addition to comparing the ratings of the leadership performance goal, a paired samples t-test between the August and December ratings of the leadership performance goal indicated no statistical significance, t(14)=1.718, p=.108).

Table 13

Comparison of Means for Leadership Performance Goals as Rated by Principals in August and December

	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Leadership Performance Goal Rating	5.60	6.80	1.200	1.718	14	0.108

Note: M_1 = August Rating Mean; M_2 =December Rating Mean; Δ=Change between August mean and December mean.

Principal Professional Development. One question on the principal self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction survey asked principals to rate their

agreement with the statement that principal professional development was a priority in the school district. The mean of this statement increased from the survey administered before the principal leadership academy started to the post-implementation survey in December. Analysis with a paired samples t-test showed the difference between the pre-implementation and post-implementation ratings of this statement was statistically significant, t(20)=2.609, p=.017).

Table 14

Comparison of Means for Professional Development Statement as Rated by Principals on the Pre and Post-Implementation Surveys

	M_1	M_2	Δ	*t*	*df*	*p*
Principal professional development is a priority in this district.	3.10	3.86	0.76	2.609	20	0.017

Note: M_1 = Pre-Implementation Mean; M_2 =Post-Implementation Mean; Δ=Change between pre-implementation survey mean and post-implementation survey mean.

Perceptions of Relevant Stakeholders

Focus Groups. In addition to the pre/post survey and the leadership performance goal as summative evaluation measures, focus groups were used as an outcome measure and allowed for the collection of qualitative data from participants. Focus groups allow the researcher to collect data through group interaction (Morgan, 1996). There were four focus groups: 1) beginning principals, 2) mentors, 3) principals who participated in the professional learning network, and 4) principals who did not participate in the professional learning network.

The focus groups comprised of the beginning principals and mentors allowed the collection of specific feedback and comments related to the beginning principal mentor

program component of the principal leadership program. Mentors and beginning principals were asked to describe their experiences throughout the program, what they liked best, what didn't work for them, how they feel like they have changed from the beginning to the end of the program, and how to improve upon the mentor program for the future. Focus group questions for the beginning principals were listed in Appendix P, and questions for the mentors were listed in Appendix Q.

Data analysis for the beginning principal mentor program included the focus group questions for both groups and an additional four question survey. Focus group meetings were audio-recorded with participants' prior approval. Audio recordings were transcribed and then coded. Both evaluation coding and In Vivo coding were used to determine how participants viewed the beginning principal mentoring program (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Like the beginning principal and mentor focus groups, the focus groups comprised of 1) participants and 2) non-participants in the professional learning network provided specific feedback about the professional learning network component. Questions included why principals chose or did not choose to participate in the professional learning network, what they liked best about the network, what they didn't like about the network, what changes they have noticed in their own behavior or attitudes since participating, and what could be improved in the network. See Appendix S for the focus group questions for participants in the professional learning network and Appendix T for questions for non-participants.

As with the beginning principal mentor program focus groups, discussions from the professional learning network focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed, and

then coded. Coding methods included descriptive, In Vivo, and evaluation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). For descriptive coding, responses from the focus groups were summarized, looking for themes that emerge from the descriptions. In Vivo coding allowed phrases to be pulled directly from the respondents as codes. Evaluation coding supplemented the descriptive and In Vivo coding and denoted positive and negative opinions from the respondents. To increase validity of the coding, respondents were asked to review the interpretation of what they said for accuracy.

Beginning principal mentor program. I was able to interview all beginning principals as one focus group and all principals who served as mentors in the beginning principal mentor program as another focus group. In the focus group for beginning principals, principals were asked about their experiences in the beginning principal program, both positive and negative. Answers were coded descriptively and In Vivo. Based on responses from the four beginning principals, two principals had positive experiences working with their mentor principals. One principal stated, "I felt like my experience was one that really flowed naturally." This principal appreciated having a designated person to call or to ask questions. Her mentor was a great resource for her. Another beginning principal, described his relationship with his mentor as "casual." He went on to say that "the phone calls, regular check-ins were nice."

Experiences for the other two beginning principals were not as positive. The first year principal felt that his relationship started strong and "then fell off quickly." The beginning principal felt like he initiated the contact with his mentor and expressed the desire to have wanted more contact from his mentor. As a first year principal, he also felt overwhelmed with all of the demands of the principalship and believed he didn't have

much time to spend with a mentor. The last beginning principal's relationship with her mentor was not formalized. During the focus group session, the beginning principal accepted some responsibility for the fact that there wasn't more of a relationship.

One of the most positive experiences described by the beginning principals was when the mentor of one of the beginning principals visited the beginning principal at his school. The beginning principal described the visit as "powerful" for both the beginning principal and the mentor. It gave the mentor a better understanding of the environment and culture at the beginning principal's school.

When asked what the beginning principals liked the most about the program, themes that emerged were having a designated person and the reflection part of the program. The weekly journals forced the principals to pause, think, and reflect about their week. As one beginning principals stated, "That weekly submission helped me, forced me to take two minutes for myself to say: OK. What did you do different? Do good? Are you stressed? There were some days that I pushed the bar to the top, but you know, it forced me to take a breath where we don't always take a breath." Another principal shared that the reflection helped him to think about his work-life balance.

The most challenging part of the program for all beginning principals was time. Finding time to meet and talk and visit their mentor was hard. The beginning principals felt that more requirements may have helped them to place more priority on meeting with their mentor. They recommended that if the program were to be continued that beginning principals and mentors be required to visit their partner's school. They also requested time to meet periodically as a large group – both beginning principals and mentors – and a small group – beginning principals only – as was done at the beginning of the program.

The four mentors were interviewed as part of the second focus group. The mentor principals were asked to describe their experiences with their assigned beginning principal, what worked well, what was most challenging, what changes they may have noticed in their assigned principal, and suggested improvements for the program. Like the beginning principals, the mentors had varying experiences through the program. Two principals felt that they had good relationships with their assigned beginning principal. Of the other two principals, one principal repeated what the beginning principal said in that it started strong and then "got harder." The last mentor stated that contact was very minimal because the beginning principal "was very busy doing other things."

For the mentor principals, the beginning principal mentor program gave them the opportunity to hear a different perspective. Each of the four mentor principals valued that part of the program. Other parts of the program that the mentors liked were the summer introductory meeting and the self-reflection part of working with another individual. One principal shared, "I think sometimes it makes you question why you do what you do." Another principal was able to visit the school where his assigned principal worked and that was "invaluable" for him. He felt that he "gleaned as many ideas as my mentor did." One piece of the program that was praised repeatedly throughout the questioning was the summer retreat that started the program. A principal stated, "The summer meeting where we got to sit down and talk and ask questions and get to know each other was one of the more valuable things that I have done since I've been in this county."

Mentors struggled with finding time to meet with their beginning principals. The mentor principals also did not like the paperwork of having to log their contact with their

beginning principal. One of the mentor principals stated, "When it's like a natural relationship, you forget to track it." Another principal spoke about the importance of commitment from both the mentor and the beginning principal. The principal shared, "When we all commit to being a mentor or mentee, I think that's important because if one doesn't commit and the other does, it makes it difficult."

Changes noted in the beginning principals by the mentors from the beginning of the program until now included more confidence, helping beginning principals to find the work-life balance, and helping beginning principals to prioritize what needs to be done and when. Suggestions for changes to the program itself included time to meet periodically as a group and to require visits to the assigned principal's school. The mentor principals asked that participation be required by the district to place more importance on the program. Another suggestion was to check with the principals about the status of the relationship and give principals – both mentors and mentees – the opportunity to switch to a different mentor or mentee within the district or to exit the program as needed.

Professional learning network. For the principal leadership network, I interviewed both participants and non-participants. I was able to interview one focus group of participants as well as three people individually. Two of the three principals interviewed individually had not participated in the professional learning network. The other principal could not attend the focus group session for professional learning network participants but wanted to share his thought and opinions.

I was able to speak with seven principals who each participated in at least two of the four professional learning network meetings. Three of the seven principals attended

all four professional learning network meetings. Six of the seven principals interviewed in one focus group session together, and the other principal was interviewed individually. Both the focus group session and the individual interview were recorded, transcribed, and coded.

The first question asked principals why they participated in the professional learning network meetings. Responses included that the meetings were "fresh and new," and that principals attended because they wanted to improve as a school leader. The meetings allowed for principals to talk as well as to interact with principals from all levels. One principal shared that the most valuable part was "learning from each other." That sentiment was echoed by the other principals in the room. Another principal shared, "I think it's important to hear different levels, having the blend of an elementary, a middle, a high school...because you may not be at the same level next year, and that's going to help us grow as administrators probably more than you realize in providing this opportunity for us."

Principals were asked about their experiences and what they liked best about the professional learning network meetings. Principals liked having topics for meetings because that allowed them to decide if that was a meeting they wanted to attend. Principals also liked having the option of two different times from which to choose to attend a meeting. Principals agreed that the collaboration was one of the best parts of the meetings. Principals felt more connected to other principals in the district and were now more willing to call other principals to ask questions. One veteran principal stated, "I go to a lot of these things. I'm skeptical about them. Am I going to get anything out of this? I was no different about this, but I really feel like the time that I spend with you all has

been valuable. It's been fun, and I think the degree of respect that I have for all my colleagues has increased exponentially. I've learned from everyone of you."

Principals were asked about what changes could be made to improve the professional learning network meetings moving forward. While principals noted that there were principals who attended the professional learning network meeting that had not attended other principal-only meetings, they wished that more principals would have attended these meetings. Principals suggested incorporating time in the district administrative retreat held each summer for all principals to experience a professional learning network meeting because they thought the meetings were that valuable. Principals wanted to continue to restrict the audience to principals as it allowed for relationship building, and these meetings were seen as a safe environment for all principals. Principals also suggested changing the host sites to schools instead of the public places used during the program.

Of the principals in the district, there were two high school principals and two elementary principals who did not attend any of the four professional learning network meetings. I interviewed two of the four principals who did not attend any of the professional learning network meetings. Interviews were one-on-one meetings held at the principal's school and were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Principals were asked to describe what they knew about the professional learning network meetings, why they chose to not participate, and what could have been done to encourage them to attend.

Principals had heard about the meetings through electronic communication and discussions with other principals. They saw the meetings as opportunities for principals to network and increase communication among their peer group. The largest factor in not

attending the meetings was time. In addition, the principals either did not see the topics as relevant for them at the current moment or thought the sessions would focus on other levels and not be as applicable to their own level as the sessions were facilitated by principals at other levels. The longer that I spoke with one principal, the more he reflected upon the notion that while he may not have needed to learn anything per se, he realized that he could have been a resource and helped others by adding to the conversation.

Both principals expressed appreciation for me having created opportunities even though they did not participate. One principal noted, "It's kind of lonely in the principal's chair. Sometimes you don't always know where to turn, so I think it's good to have any opportunities for principals to get together and work with each other and lean on each other." The other principal commented that he liked the surveys each week. The surveys were a reflection tool for him and, as he stated, "helped me to reflect and think about what I need to do differently for the upcoming week."

Beginning Principal Surveys. After the beginning principal focus group, beginning principals were asked to complete a four question survey describing their mentor program experience (see Appendix R). The questions were taken directly from the North Carolina Principal Survey specifically addressing principal mentor programs (https://ncteachingconditions.org/uploads/File/NC16_survey_ponly.pdf). The North Carolina Principal Survey was aligned to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and was designed by the New Teacher Center. The questions provided a summative evaluation rating of how effective they felt their mentor was in providing support in specific areas and how often they engaged in certain activities. The

support by the mentor principal was rated on a scale of 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Figure 19 illustrated how beginning principals rated their mentor's support in the following areas: instructional leadership (M=3.25; SD=0.5), school improvement planning (M=3; SD=0), budgeting (M=3.25; SD=0.5), scheduling (M=3.25; SD=0.5), staffing (M=3; SD=0), teacher evaluation (M=3.5; SD=0.58), teacher remediation (M=3.25; SD=0.5), data-driven decision making (M=4; SD=0.82), and working with parents and the community (M=3.25; SD=0.5). Data-driven decision making had the highest mean, and school improvement planning and staffing tied for the lowest mean.

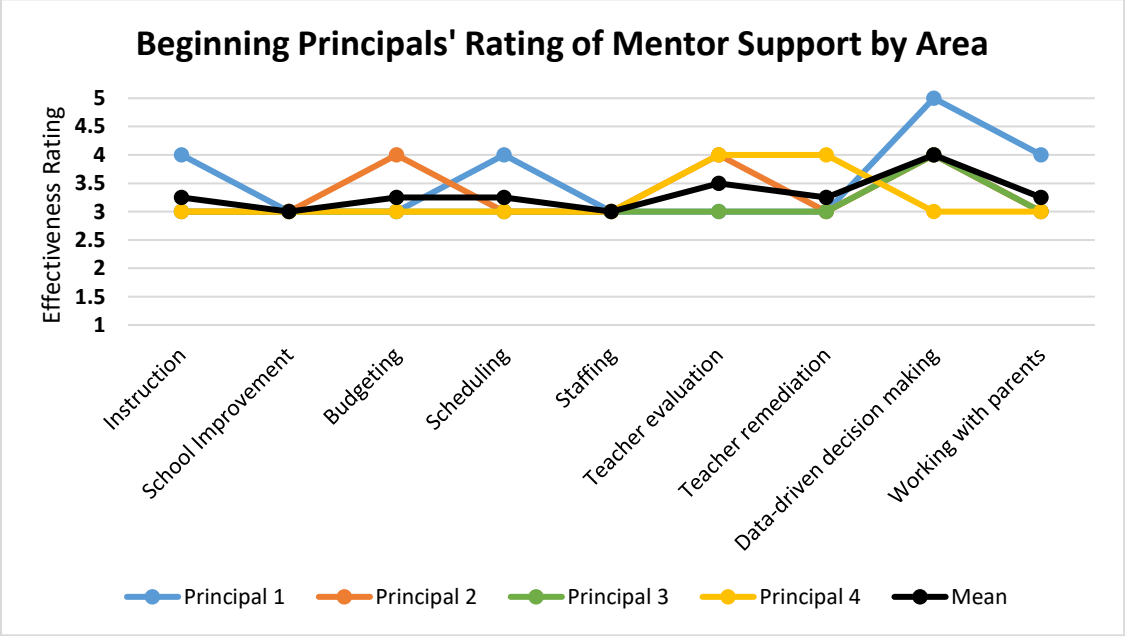

Figure 19. Comparison of ratings of mentor support as rated by beginning principals in December.

Beginning principals were also asked how often they engaged in certain tasks with their mentor. Response choices were almost daily, once per week, several times per

month, once per month, less than once per month, and never. Coaching conversations and discussion about leadership happened the most often of the five activities. Being observed in the beginning principal's school happened least often of the activities.

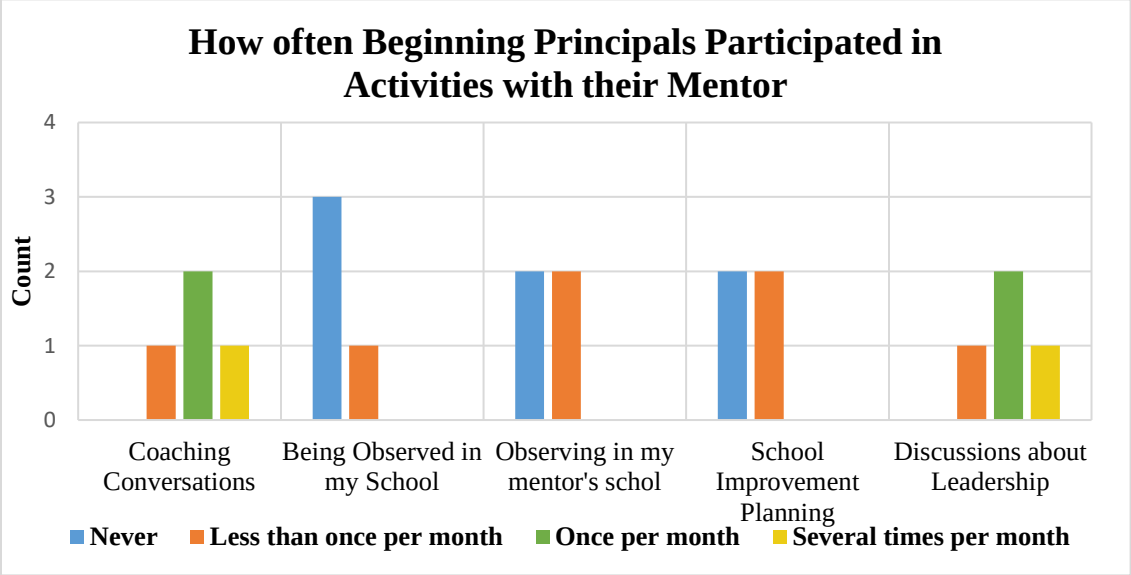

Figure 20. Graph showing how often beginning principals participated in specific activities with their assigned mentor.

The last section of the summative evaluation for the beginning principals asked principals to rate their agreement with two statements about their mentoring experience. Responses were recorded in Table 15. The first statement linked the mentoring experience to remaining as a school principal. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean was 3 (SD=0.82) – neither agree nor disagree with the statement. One of the four beginning principals somewhat agreed with the statement. The second statement indicated the mentoring experience was important in the effectiveness of the beginning principal. The

mean for this statement was 3.75 (SD=0.5). Three of the four principals agreed somewhat with this statement.

Table 15

Summary of Beginning Principals' Responses to Statements about their Mentoring Experience.

	Summary of Principals' Responses			
Statements	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N Agree*
Overall, my mentoring experience has been important in my decision to remain as principal in this school.	4	3.00	0.82	1
My mentoring experience has been important in my effectiveness as a school leader.	4	3.75	0.50	3

Note: N = Number of responses; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *N Agree* = Number of responses that somewhat agree or strongly agree.

Findings

The short-term goals of this improvement initiative were to increase the self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction of the principals in the district leading toward long-term retention of the principals. When considering all the data from the various formative and summative evaluation measures and the goals of the improvement initiative to increase the average rating in each area by 25%, the results of the principal leadership academy were mixed. Considering the goals for self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction, none of the areas met the 25% increase in ratings between the pre-implementation and post-implementation surveys. There were particular tasks or

statements that saw increases in means as well as statements that saw decreases in means for each of the areas – self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction.

Consistent with research, principals struggled the most with managerial tasks such as maintaining control of their daily schedule, completing required paperwork, and handling the time demands of the principalship. This struggle manifested itself in the formative balancing measures as well as the post-implementation rating of self-efficacy. Only one principal had a leadership performance goal related to managerial leadership, but there was no December rating to compare the work of this individual from August to December. Focus group responses also indicated the challenge principals face in finding time and prioritizing how they spend their time. Time was mentioned by beginning principals and mentors as an impediment when trying to meet with each other and was also mentioned as a reason for not attending the professional learning network meetings.

Regarding connectedness, triangulation of the data was mostly positive and this was the strongest area of growth for principals who participated. Although the difference in ratings before and after implementation of the principal leadership academy did not meet the goal of a 25% increase, principals indicated they were less reluctant to speak openly in meetings and felt less isolated post-implementation. Focus group responses from the professional learning network participants correlated this sentiment and echoed a sense of community and being more willing to reach out to other principals to ask questions or seek advice. Two of the four beginning principal-mentor pairings had positive experiences as well.

One potential area of growth for connectedness and job satisfaction would be to improve relationships between principals and district-level staff. Ratings for “this district

is like a family" and "my supervisors encourage me to do my best" dropped from pre-implementation to post-implementation. Other statements saw no change from before and after implementation such as "I am valued by district leaders." How principals relate to the district was not a focus of the principal leadership academy directly; however, the goals of principal retention and working to provide targeted professional development to principals necessitate and benefit by a positive working relationship between principals and district staff.

One of the statements from the principal self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction survey that showed statistical significance was "Principal professional development is a priority in this district." As an individual statement, the difference between pre and post-implementation was 0.76, which was close to the 25% increase of 0.775. The implementation of the principal leadership academy provided more opportunities for principals to participate in professional development than have been offered in the past. I cannot prove that the principal leadership academy is the cause of the increase in the ratings about principal professional development before and after implementation; however, I would like to believe that the beginning principal mentor program and the professional learning network did have some effect on the ratings.

Beginning principal mentor program

Between the answers to the pre/post survey and the focus group data, all data points were used to triangulate trends and draw a conclusion to determine if the beginning principal mentor component was beneficial.

Based on the formative evaluations in addition to the summative evaluations, two of the four beginning principal-mentor pairings seemed to be good matches, and the

principals had positive experiences through the program. The other two pairings were not as well matched, and the beginning principals and mentors struggled in connecting with each other. No matter the status of the relationship between beginning principals and mentors, everyone who participated seemed to appreciate the perspective that they gained through the program. It did not matter if you were the beginning principal or the mentor in the relationship, both principals were able to learn from each other. Finding and dedicating time to meet was the largest challenge of the program, confirmed by both beginning principals and mentors.

Professional learning network

The professional learning network's goal was to provide principals with dedicated time to discuss pertinent topics related to the needs of principals in the district. Attendance at the meetings started strong and then decreased throughout the implementation; however, those who participated spoke highly of the meetings through the electronic meeting evaluations and the focus group session. Principals who attended the sessions were able to collaborate with other principals about various topics. Principals praised the camaraderie they gained through participation and wished more principals could have been a part of the network. Time was also a factor in whether or not a principal could attend a session. For principals who did not attend, there was some misconception about the content of the sessions and how it could help them as a school leader.

Leadership Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The principal leadership academy was a program designed to increase the self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction of principals with the ultimate long-term

goal of increasing principal retention. The following section identifies *leadership lessons learned* gleaned from the data, results, and findings of this disquisition. It is hoped that these lessons and the recommendations embedded within may inform the work of educational leaders seeking to address principal retention through intentional, research-informed induction programs like the principal leadership academy.

Lesson #1: Mentor-Mentee "Fit" Matters

One of the most important aspects when implementing formal mentoring is matching of mentors and mentees (Blake-Beard, O'Neill, & McGowan, 2007). As evidenced by the results from the formative and summative evaluation measures for the principal leadership academy, some of the principal matches worked better than others. Blake-Beard, O'Neill, and McGowan (2007) identified three ways to match mentors and mentees – administrator-assigned, choice-based, and assessment-based. The beginning principal mentor program used a choice-based method when assigning mentors and allowed beginning principals a role in the selection of their mentors. Kram (1985) shared that "when mentors and proteges are assigned to each other, the likelihood of the relationship evolving into one that provides a variety of developmental functions is small." The design team wanted beginning principals to have options when selecting a mentor. The goals were to create a pair that worked well together by allowing beginning principals choice in the process and to create a relationship in which both the mentor and mentee benefited.

The characteristics of each participant – mentor or mentee – affect the way participants are matched (Blake-Beard et al., 2007). An effective principal mentor should have experience as an effective school administrator, have good communication and

interpersonal skills, understand there are multiple ways to accomplish tasks, model continuous learning and reflection, and have a desire to see their mentee be successful (Daresh & Playko, 1990). Grover (1994) adds that mentors should also be accessible and trustworthy. When selecting mentors to participate in the program, these skills and characteristics should be considered. The narrowed list of mentors given to beginning principals allowed me to steer the beginning principals toward more effective administrators in the district.

Not all mentor relationships are positive. In the beginning principal mentor program, two of the mentor-mentee pairs were not successful in forming a mentor-mentee bond. "Relationships in which either individual feels uncomfortable and inadequate evolve into destructive experiences where resentment, anger, and frustration, or at best, superficial interaction develop." (Kram, 1985, p.184). If mentors and mentees cannot connect, the mentor relationship will not be able to survive. However, if mentees have a positive relationship, mentees experience a greater commitment to their career and organization, higher job satisfaction, higher self-esteem, and lower intentions to leave their job (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007).

Moving forward, I recommend the following actions to improve the beginning principal mentor program.

- *Design the mentor program to allow choice in the selection process of mentors*. Because mentor-mentee fit is so important to the success of the mentor relationship, there needs to be an element of choice in the selection process. Choice-based programs experience the benefits of "greater commitment to the relationship, more willingness to spend time together,

and greater ability to work through conflictual issues" (Black-Beard et al., 2007).

- *Design the mentor program to allow mentees to work with more than one mentor*. Instead of reliance on one mentor, multiple mentors or a network of mentors would allow beginning principals to work with principals who have a variety of viewpoints, skills, and expertise. An increase in the number of mentors would expand the support network for the beginning principal and would increase the possibility of finding the "fit" among the multiple personalities. Also, with multiple mentors, individuals are "less affected by a dysfunctional or unavailable mentor" (de Janasz, Sullivan, Whiting, & Biech, 2003).
- *Design a path for mentors or mentees to exit the mentor relationship.* The mentor relationship is not always a positive experience for those participating (Kram, 1985). There needs to be a way for participants to leave mentor relationships that participants feel are not beneficial. A formal check-in time a few weeks into the beginning principal program may have made it easier to see the dynamics of the pairings and either make adjustments or clarify roles with the pairings.

Lesson #2: Clearly Define the Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentees

In listening to the feedback of the focus groups of both the beginning principals and the mentor principals, there seemed to be some confusion and hesitation as to what each person should do in their role of either mentor or mentee. This confusion could have been addressed with additional formal training from the onset of the program.

Kram (1985) recommends education for mentors to "increase individuals' understanding of mentoring functions and interpersonal skills so that self-confidence is strengthened." (p.185)

Both individuals, mentor and mentee, benefit from training to fully understand roles and expectations within the mentor relationship. According to Daresh and Playko (1992), mentor training should include a) orientation; b) instructional leadership skills; c) human relations skills; d) process skills such as problem solving, reflection, and observation; and e) understanding the realities and needs of the district. Each of these domains is interdependent and of equal importance (Daresh & Playko, 1992). Program participants need to know about learning processes and learning styles and receive training in interpersonal skills and how to clarify goals and expectations (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). As with other professional development, the quality of the training is more important than providing the training to participants (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007).

In addition to training at the beginning of the program, periodic meetings, whole group and individual pairings, should be scheduled. Grover (1994) recommends scheduling meetings every month and rotating sites. Meeting size should be kept to a size where all members can actively participate (Grover, 1994). There should also be an understanding that discussions will be confidential (Grover, 1994). Just as with the mentor relationships, there needs to be an element of trust when the group meets together for participants to truly benefit from the monthly meetings.

Within the training, discussions could also include a review of the various forms of communication that could benefit the mentor-mentee relationship and be used to make

contact with each other. In the beginning principal mentor program, the majority of contacts were face to face or phone calls between the pairs. In today's world, "individuals routinely rely on technology and the internet for personal and professional connectivity" (Butler, Whiteman, & Crow, 2013). Technology could easily be incorporated in the mentoring model allowing principals to communicate via email, chats, discussion boards, and video-conferencing in addition to the more traditional method of face to face interaction.

- *Plan extensive quality training to ensure all parties are aware of expectations and responsibilities as part of the beginning principal mentor program.* The amount of time scheduled to discuss roles, responsibilities, and expectations at the beginning of the principal mentor program was not near enough to provide the mentors and beginning principals with the most accurate understanding of what was coming. Research shows that mentors and mentees benefit from a structured and well-planned training program (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Grover, 1994). Training should include an orientation, sessions about leadership skills, human relation skills, and problem-solving skills as well as sessions about adult learning (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Grover, 1994). These sessions would provide foundational knowledge at the beginning of the program to help mentors and mentees as they face challenges in their mentor relationships.
- *Schedule small group and large group meetings for mentors and beginning principals periodically.* Following research by Grover (1994), I

suggest scheduling a meeting for the beginning principals and mentor principals to meet separately as well as scheduling a meeting where both beginning principals and mentor principals meet together as a large group in addition to the training that happens at the beginning of each year. This would allow for like-group meetings as well as whole group meetings, and principals could discuss relevant topics and issues as well as highlight upcoming events in the calendar. A secondary benefit of the regular meetings is that the meetings would allow the coordinator to take stock of what is happening and intercede where it may be needed to assist pairs or make adjustments in pairings of beginning principals and mentors. Meetings would need to be structured and scheduled well in advance to ensure that all participants could attend the meetings.

- *Require one of the two contacts per month to be school visits by participants in the mentor program.* When scheduling meetings with each other, the beginning principals and mentor principals would need to ensure that at least one contact per month was made at a school site, either the beginning principal's school or the mentor principal's school. This would incorporate the recommendation from Grover (1994) to host meetings at different sites. It would be recommended that the pair alternate which site is visited so that both principals are visiting the other principal's school at least every other month, and that meetings were scheduled well in-advance. As noted by one of the mentor principals in the beginning principal mentor program, the visit to the beginning principal's school

provided a beneficial understanding of the situation of the beginning principal. He gained a perspective from which to better help the beginning principal.

- *Encourage the use of technology as another method for making contact between mentor and mentee.* In the initial training of mentors and mentees elaborate on the possibility to use today's technology as a way to make contact with each other. Technology "extends traditional mentoring to boundaryless, asynchronous electronic environments" (Butler et al., 2013). With technology, principals could connect virtually via online meeting software and applications as well as through emails and messaging. Through the use of technology, pairs would be able to make more contacts per month, and more support could be provided to the beginning principal.

Lesson #3: Dedicate Sufficient Time and Resources to the Principal Leadership Academy

Fullan (1991) explains change as not innovating the most but more about reculturing an organization. Reculturing cannot happen overnight. It's about developing capacity to solve problems and the commitment to do so (Fullan, 1991). For the principal leadership academy to be incorporated in the culture of the school district, support will be needed at the district level. Support can be in the form of dedicated time and resources to prioritize principal professional development. Finding time was a challenge for principals. This was mentioned time and time again in the focus group sessions with principals. Principals wanted to participate in both components but had a hard time controlling their schedule and making the time to meet either with their paired principal

or with other principals in a professional learning network meeting. For the beginning principal program, having principals to map out their meetings for the year prior to the school year starting may have helped the principals to meet on a more regular basis. For the professional learning network, scheduling the meetings early and sharing the schedule for dates, times, locations, and topics as early as possible and for the entire school year may lead to more success in participation.

District support could also take the shape of soliciting principals to continue involvement in the design of the principal leadership academy. Principals had to be an integral part of the process to ensure that what we were designing met what they wanted. Professional learning network meetings were led by principals for principals. That was a conscious choice on the part of the design team as it allowed principals opportunities to lead among their peers as well as ensure that what happened in that meeting was beneficial for principals. More explanation could have been distributed prior to the professional learning network meetings to dispel misconceptions about what would happen in meetings.

Support for the principal leadership academy needs to come from district leaders as well. All district leaders need to be aware of the program and its components and provide input from their various perspectives about what they believe could assist principals in growing as school leaders. For example, district leadership may notice certain difficulties that are common to all principals or a subset of principals and recommend the incorporation of that topic in the professional learning network meetings. Or the Superintendent or Associate Superintendent of Human Resource Services has the authority to require participation of first and second-year principals in the beginning

principal mentor program. One of the guidelines from the Wallace Foundation (2007) about mentoring stated that, "Mentoring should be provided for at least a year, and ideally two or more years." The participating principals – beginning principals and mentor principals – in the beginning principal mentor program felt they would have prioritized their contacts with each other more had it been a requirement from the district. "Organizations that sponsor the development of formal mentoring relationships will see benefits resulting from their investment" (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007).

- *Align professional learning network meeting topics to the current needs of principals in the district.* Tailoring topics of meetings to the needs of principals is in line with adult learning theory. Adults need ownership in what they are learning, and the learning needs to be appropriate to what they need (Zepeda, 2007). Scheduling topics important to principals and in a timely manner may increase participation in the professional learning network meetings.
- *Mandate participation in the beginning principal mentor program for first and second year principals*. The district will benefit as an organization from the pairing of first and second-year principals in addition to the benefits for the first and second year principals and mentors (Wallace Foundation, 2007). As participants stated in the focus group sessions, requiring participation would assist beginning principals and mentor principals making the program a priority. For third year principals, the program could be optional. If principals want to continue the program into the third year, then that would be the joint decision of those two

principals. However, it would only be required for the first two years as principal. Mandating participation would place more emphasis and priority on the program and perhaps assist principals in ensuring they met the required number of times per month.

- *Host the professional learning network meetings at school sites within the district.* In our district, we started the network by hosting the meetings at public venues to avoid the district office and ensure the meetings were viewed as optional, not required. After listening to feedback from principals during focus group sessions, principals wanted to see other schools in the district and rarely have that opportunity due to time constraints. By having the schools to host the meetings, principals would be able to showcase something within their school if they desired to do so as well as lead a discussion about a relevant topic. Hosting the professional learning networks at school sites also follows adult learning theory of allowing principals to have responsibility and be self-directed in their learning (Knowls, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Lawson, 2015).
- *Schedule the professional learning network meetings at various times and throughout the school year.* Principals value their time, and, as the school year, they start to become inundated with the required tasks, paperwork, observations, etc. that have to be done. One of the reasons for principal turnover is the sense of being overwhelmed, pulled in multiple directions, and lacking time to accomplish daily tasks (Optlaka, 201; Ricciardi & Petrosko, 200). Professional learning network meetings need to be spread

across the entire calendar year, including the summer months. In the focus group sessions, principals indicated that they often felt as if they have more freedom during the summer and more time to meet with their peers. I would suggest avoiding the busier months of the year based on deadlines, testing, etc. I would also suggest continuing to schedule meetings with alternate times so that principals can pick the best date and time that fits their schedule.

Lesson # 4: Provide Opportunities for Reflection

What surprised me the most in the implementation and collection of data for the principal leadership academy was the impact of the weekly effectiveness surveys, stress level checks, and beginning principal journals. While I needed the weekly surveys and journals as a way to collect data and document the progress of the improvement initiative, the principals viewed the surveys as a reflective tool. This was an unintended consequence of the principal leadership academy; however, it is in line with adult learning theory. Adults need to have time to reflect at the conclusion of activities (Fenwick, 2000; Zepeda, 2007). According to Learning Forward (2017), reflection helps adult learners move beyond surface-level understanding to a deeper understanding of purpose, meaning, and connection. The weekly surveys helped the principals to take a few minutes each week out of their busy schedules to think about their week and what happened and then reflect upon the week and begin to think about what they needed to do for the upcoming week.

The weekly, anonymous surveys provided an avenue for the principals to reflect in a more formalized way. "A framework for reflection can provide the structure for

looking back with the goal of moving forward" (Irvin & Daniels, 2002). The weekly surveys provided the framework for principals to think about their week, and in taking the time to answer the questions each week, principals had an opportunity to process what had happened, where they were, and where they wanted to be in a non-evaluative manner.

- *Incorporate anonymous reflection tools for principals to use as needed in their professional activities.* Part of creating a culture of change is recognizing the complexity of change (Fullan, 1991). Reflection tools through the weekly surveys allowed principals the opportunity to think about what they accomplished each week and then reflect upon if they met their goals and make goals for the following week. In addition to reflective benefit for principals, the district could benefit from gathering data about the efficacy of the principal leadership academy through examining the data collected through the anonymous reflective tools (Wallace Foundation, 2007). The intentional reflection will help principals to process information and take stock of accomplishments and struggles as well as potential next steps.

Lesson #5: Change takes time.

In hindsight, the 25% increase by area of self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction may have been a lofty goal to accomplish in a 15 week time span. It takes time to build upon relationships and increase the confidence and beliefs of individuals. Further study is needed to determine the actual and long-range impact of the principal leadership academy.

From the perspective of the beginning principal mentor program, forming a mentoring relationship with another person takes times. Kram (1985) defines four phases of a mentor relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. In a more formal pairing of mentors, there is also an orientation phase, allowing the pair to learn more about each other (Blakebeard et al., 2007). The initiation phase alone can take six to twelve months (Kram, 1985). A typical mentor relationship lasts two to five years (Kram, 1985). The work of the principal leadership academy barely scratched the surface of the amount of time that the pairs needed to begin to fully develop a mentor relationship. To truly measure the impact of the program, the beginning principal mentor program would need to continue for the next two to three years, collecting implementation and evaluation data to compare the feelings of self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction.

The professional learning network embedded with the professional development allowed principals to work through the learning process – "acquisition, application, reflection, refinement, and evaluation" (Learning Forward, 2017). While collaboration and discussion were mentioned repeatedly by program participants, to see a change of 25% in the ratings of school principals would have been extremely difficult to reach. It takes three to five years of ongoing professional development for educators to bridge the gap between knowing and doing and to integrate new ideas in their practice (Learning Forward, 2017).

Considering Leadership for Equity and Social Justice

The present system of high principal turnover has failed students, limiting their access to consistent, high-quality education via strong principal leadership. Principals are

second only to teachers in the effect they have on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004) and for the sake of our students, we need to retain principals in schools for a minimum of five to seven years to begin seeing a positive effect. Because of the impact of school principals on school climate and student achievement, we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to principals leaving schools every three to four years (Louis et al., 2010). Districts and states must take action now to ensure that every student has a qualified school principal for the sake of the students' futures and our collective future as a society.

With the increasing diversity of our nation, it is becoming even more important for schools and districts to retain principals. Unfortunately, principal turnover affects low-performing schools and schools with high numbers of economically disadvantaged, minority, or limited English proficiency students at a higher rate than other schools (Miller, 2013; Gates et al., 2006). Couple this higher principal turnover rate with the research that states that student performance drops with principal turnover (Burkhauser, et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2009), and our students who need the most stability are oftentimes experiencing the least stability. Professional development for principals through a principal leadership academy can provide necessary support for principals through research-informed processes to increase principal self-efficacy, connectedness, job satisfaction, and leadership performance.

A principal leadership academy, encompassing a beginning principal mentor program and a professional learning network, is a first step in the journey of increasing support of and for school principals on the path to increasing principal retention. If

achieved, the ultimate goal of increased principal retention would provide more opportunities for all students, especially those in low-performing schools.

Limitations

The findings included within this disquisition are not necessarily generalizable or transferable as only one school district was examined and context-specific variables contributed to results. However, the lessons learned and recommendations should be considered by districts seeking information that might inform their decision making,

Another limitation concerns the summative evaluation measures of connectedness and job satisfaction. I cannot guarantee their reliability or validity as evaluation measures. The statements used in the principal self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction survey to measure connectedness and job satisfaction were based upon instruments that were determined to be reliable and valid for either the classroom setting (connectedness) or a business or organization (job satisfaction). I altered the original statements to be more applicable to principals in a school district setting. Therefore, I cannot speak to the validity or reliability of those statements and accompanying results.

Conclusion

While the results were inconclusive about the effects of the principal leadership academy itself, principals were appreciative of the additional, tailored support provided by the district. It will be years before the true impact of the principal leadership academy will be known. Data will need to continue to be collected over the next few years to better understand how the principal leadership academy is impacting the district and the principal turnover rate. This is the beginning of a long journey toward improved support for principals and the goal of increased principal retention.

All school districts need to work to retain principals who have the capacity to lead students and teachers and manage change to improve both student and teacher outcomes. A principal leadership academy is one option to provide personalized professional development to principals in an attempt to increase their sense of self-efficacy, connectedness, and job satisfaction.

Districts cannot completely eliminate principal turnover. There will always be reasons why principals leave a school. However, as district leaders, it's important to try to reduce principal turnover as much as possible for the benefit of the students, the teachers, and the community.

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Appendix A

Design Team Charge Statement

Purpose
The purpose of the design team is to study and recommend ways to increase principals' capacities to lead schools in an effort to increase the district's support and retention of school principals.

Rationale
Principals are second only to teachers in effecting the performance of students. It's vital to provide formal support to principals, especially beginning principals, to help them be and feel successful in their leadership role.

Parameters
Recommendations must not require adding staff. The budget for principal support must be kept to a minimal.

Specific Tasks
1. Solicit feedback from principals as to their professional needs and current support provided by the district.
2. Review current research related to how to increase principals' knowledge, skill sets, and performance.
3. Review current research on adult learning.
4. Collect data from other school districts as to how they support principals.
5. Develop recommendations for increasing principals' capacities to lead schools.

Resources
Resources will be allocated as needed for the design team to research various options. For example, the district will reimburse travel as needed to collect data.

Product
A charter outlining how the district can support principals and increase their capacities to lead schools.

Timeline
July: Convene design team and solicit feedback from principals.
September: Review research about principal development and adult learning. Contact districts that have principal support programs and collect data.
November: Finalize options and make a recommendation for increasing principals' capacities to lead schools.

Appendix B

Principal Leadership Academy

Design Team Charter

General Description

Charter Description

To increase principals' capacities to lead schools through a mentoring program for beginning principals and professional learning network for all district principals. The principal leadership academy, comprised of the mentoring and the professional learning network, will provide opportunities to increase the self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and leadership performance of district principals. The ultimate aim is to increase retention of school principals by increasing their beliefs in their own skills and abilities, their love of the job, and their self-assessment of their own performance. .

Reason for the Effort

Principals are second only to teachers in effecting the performance of students. It's vital to provide formal support to principals, especially beginning principals, to help them be and feel confident and successful in their leadership role. Clark County Schools' average principal turnover rate for the past four years, 13.5%, is higher than the state average for the same time period, 9.5%. The district currently has no defined professional development program for school leaders.

Expected Results

Expected Outcomes

- **Long-term**
  - Increased principal retention rate for Clark County Schools.
- **Short-term**
  - Increased feelings of self-efficacy in principals.
  - Increased job satisfaction among principals.
  - Increased leadership performance through a measured goal.

Measurements

- **Long-term**
  - Principal turnover rate as measured on the NC School Report Card for Clark County Schools. NC Report Card is released annually in late fall.
- **Short-term**
  - Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale
  - Job Satisfaction Questions and Sense of Community Scale

- Leadership Performance Goal and Assessment
- Monthly checks of mentor logs and mentee journals
- Evaluation forms from professional learning network meetings

Boundaries

Initial Activities

- Determine and define components of beginning principal mentoring program.
- Outline plan for selecting, pairing, and training mentors and mentees.
- Determine and communicate plan for professional learning network meetings.
- Solicit volunteers to serve as facilitators for professional learning network meetings and explain expectations.

Limitations

- Resources are limited financially as there is no budget for the principal leadership program and no additional staff members can be added to the district office to lead this program. The program will focus on principal support through mentoring and the professional learning network. Assistant principal support will be the focus of a future improvement initiative.

Time Frame

- The design team will continue to meet from now through the continuation of this project. Design and preparation will take place in the spring and summer with full implementation of both programs to run from August through December. Between August and December, the design team will meet a minimum of once a month to review data analysis and recommend changes as needed.

Participation

Team Membership

Team members include district leadership and one principal representative from each level of school within the district: K-5, K-8, 6-8, and 9-12. Please see design team chart for descriptions of team members.

Sponsorship

The design team's work is being sponsored by the Superintendent and Associate Superintendent for Educational Program Services.

Appendix C

Beginning Principal Program Two-Day Orientation Schedule

Beginning Principal Program
Blue Ridge Community Room

Day 1 - July 25, 2018

Time	Description
8:45 - 9:00 am	Welcome and Getting to Know You Activity
9:00 - 9:30 am	Beginning Principal Program Goals and Expectations
9:30 - 9:45 am	Team Building Activity
9:45 - 10:30 am	Importance of Self-Care and Stress Management
10:30 - 10:35 am	Break
10:35 - 10:55 am	Team Building Activity
10:55 - 11:55 am	Goal Setting
11:55 - 12:40 pm	Lunch
12:40 - 1:00 pm	Team Building Activity
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Guest Speaker - Bill Griffin
2:00 - 2:10 pm	Break
2:10 - 3:00 pm	Scenarios
3:00 - 3:15 pm	Day 1 Debrief and Reflections

Day 2 - **July 26, 2018**

Time	**Description**
8:45 - 9:00 am	Welcome Team Building Activity
9:00 - 9:45 am	Timeline Activity
9:45 - 10:00 am	Break
10:00 - 12:00 pm	Data Driven Decision Making and Data Dive
12:00 - 12:45 pm	Lunch
12:45 - 1:00 pm	Team Building Activity
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Guest Speaker: David Johnson
2:00 - 2:10 pm	Break
2:10 - 3:00 pm	Scenarios
3:00 - 3:15 pm	Day 2 Debrief and Reflections

Appendix D

Mentor/Mentee Contact Log

Date and Time of Meeting	Length of Meeting	Location of Meeting	Type of Contact (i.e., phone, face to face, etc.)	How effective was the meeting on a scale of 1 to 5? 1 – very ineffective; 5 very effective	Topics Discussed	Other Notes

Appendix E

Mentee Journal

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

What successes did you have this week?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What challenges did you face this week?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you have contact with your mentor this week?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: Q4 If Did you have contact with your mentor this week? = Yes

Skip To: End of Survey If Did you have contact with your mentor this week? = No

Describe your contact with your mentor this week.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How effective was the contact with your mentor?

- Extremely effective (1)
- Very effective (2)
- Moderately effective (3)
- Slightly effective (4)
- Not effective at all (5)

Appendix F

Mentee Perception of Effectiveness Survey

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

How effectively did you perform each leadership task this week.

	Extremely Well (1)	Very well (2)	Moderately well (3)	Slightly well (4)	Not well at all (5)
Completed classroom observations (1)	●	●	●	●	●
Completed required paperwork (2)	●	●	●	●	●
Handled student discipline (3)	●	●	●	●	●
Communicated with parents and/or community (4)	●	●	●	●	●

Appendix G

Beginning Principal Stress Check

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, how stressed did you feel this week?

Stress Level (1)	

Appendix H

Professional Learning Network Meeting Log

Date and Time of Meeting	Length of Meeting	Location of Meeting	Format (i.e., face to face, online, etc.)	Number of Principals Attending	Topics Discussed	Other Comments

Appendix I

Professional Learning Network Meeting Evaluation

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

Choose the level where you currently serve as principal.

▼ Elementary (K-5) (1) ... High (9-12) (4)

Briefly describe the topics discussed at today's professional learning network meeting.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Page Break

How would you describe the format of today's meeting?

1) Extremely appropriate (1)
2) Somewhat appropriate (2)
3) Neither appropriate nor inappropriate (3)
4) Somewhat inappropriate (4)
5) Extremely inappropriate (5)

How would you describe the length of today's meeting?

6) Far too long (1)
7) Moderately too long (2)
8) Slightly too long (3)
9) Neither too long nor too short (4)
10) Slightly too short (5)
11) Moderately too short (6)
12) Far too short (7)

How beneficial was today's meeting?

13) Extremely beneficial (1)

14) Very beneficial (2)

15) Moderately beneficial (3)

16) Slightly beneficial (4)

17) Not beneficial at all (5)

What was your biggest take away from this meeting?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Page Break

What worked well in today's meeting?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What could be improved for future meetings?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix J

Professional Learning Network Meeting Outline – September 2018

Principal Leadership Academy
Professional Learning Network – September 18-19, 2018

Protocol: Blooming Questions

Prior to the Meeting:

- Principals need to visit classrooms and write down 3 questions that they hear during their walkthroughs. Bring the 3 questions to the PLN meeting.

During the Meeting:

- Be sure all individuals sign in.
- Today's focus is teacher coaching.
- One way to coach teachers is to have conversations about what is happening in the classroom. Today, we are going to look at the questions that you heard in classrooms in your schools, evaluate those questions, and look for ways to increase the rigor for those questions.
- Handout: Bloom's Taxonomy – This is a reference point for you as you look at questions. It is written for teachers and allows you to see the differences between the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- 1. Chart the questions that you brought.
- 2. In small groups, use these prompts to examine the questions:
    - What do you see? (Describe without evaluation.)
    - What questions does your review of this sampling raise for you?
    - What are the implications for your focus on higher order thinking?
- 3. Pick one question per chart to "tune" it. Offer at least two ways the question could be phrased to take students to a higher level of thinking.
- 4. Debrief the process and experience.
    - What are your takeaways?
    - How could you use this in your building?
- 5. Thank you for attending! Katrina will email an evaluation tomorrow. Please take time to complete the evaluation.

After the Meeting:

- Complete the log for each meeting.
- Collect all papers and sign-in sheet.
- Contact Katrina, and she will pick up paperwork.

Meeting Dates and Locations: September 18 at 3:30pm - Clark County Library Rm. 3 & September 19 at 9:00am - Civic Club Building, Granite Falls Recreation Center

Appendix K
Professional Learning Network Meeting – October 2018
Questions on Data-Based Decision Making

Questions for Data-Based Decision Making Session

Data

- What data do you use regularly?
- What data sources are most important to you?
- Do you associate particular data sources with particular administrative decisions?

Data Analysis

- Once you have the data, what do you do with it?
- What does the data mean? How do you interpret the data?
- What questions do you ask when looking at the data?

Data Management

- Do you have a system for combining multiple data for individual students?
- Do you track students' performance over time, including year-to-year? If so, what system do you use and what data do you track?
- Who inputs the data? Who should be responsible for inputting or managing the data?

Best Practices

- Share a best practice that you do or use when working with data.
- How do you juggle data-based decision making with all the other demands on your time?

Appendix L
Professional Learning Network Meeting – November 2018
Finance/Budgeting Graphic Organizer

Finance and Budgeting

031	**069**
Title 1	**Capital Outlay**
PTA	**School Funds**

Appendix M

Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) and Sense of Community Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

Page Break

Gender:

- Male
- Female

How many total years have you worked in education?

_____

How many total years have you worked as a principal?

_____

How many years have you been a principal at the school where you are currently serving?

_____

Choose the level where you currently serve as principal.

- Elementary (K-5)
- K-8
- Middle (6-8)
- High (9-12)

Page Break

In the past two years, have you had professional development of 10 or more clock hours (1 CEU) in any of the following areas?

	Yes	No
Instructional leadership	○	○
Student assessment	○	○
Creating positive learning environments	○	○
School improvement planning	○	○
Budgeting	○	○
School scheduling	○	○
Staff (hiring, etc.)	○	○
Teacher evaluation	○	○
Teacher remediation/coaching	○	○
Data driven decision making	○	○
Working with parents and the community	○	○

Page Break

In which of the following areas (if any) do you need additional support to lead your school more effectively?

	Yes	No
Instructional leadership	○	○
Student assessment	○	○
Creating positive learning environments	○	○
School improvement planning	○	○
Budgeting	○	○
School scheduling	○	○
Staff (hiring, etc.)	○	○
Teacher evaluation	○	○
Teacher remediation/coaching	○	○
Data driven decision making	○	○
Working with parents and the community	○	○

Page Break

Principal professional development is a priority in this district.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

In your current role as principal, to what extent can you ...

	None at all - 1	2	Very Little - 3	4	Some Degree - 5	6	Quite a Bit - 7	8	A Great Deal - 9
Facilitate student learning?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Handle the time demands of the job?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Manage change in your school?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Create a positive learning environment in your school?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Raise student achievement on standardized tests?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Promote a positive image of your school with the media?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Motivate teachers?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maintain control of your own daily schedule?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Promote acceptable behavior among students?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Handle the paperwork required of the job?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Promote ethical behavior among school personnel?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cope with stress of the job?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Prioritize among competing demands of the job?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Page Break

I feel that principals in this district care about each other.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I do not feel a spirit of community in this district.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that this district is like a family.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel isolated in this district.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Page Break

I feel reluctant to speak openly in meetings.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I trust others in this district.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that I can rely on others in this district.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that members of the district depend on me.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel confident that others will support me.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Page Break

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.	●	●	●	●	●
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	●	●	●	●	●
I have the tools and resources to do my job well.	●	●	●	●	●
On my job, I have clearly defined quality goals.	●	●	●	●	●
District leadership looks to me for suggestions and leadership.	●	●	●	●	●
Supervisors encourage me to be my best.	●	●	●	●	●
I am valued by district leaders.	●	●	●	●	●
My job makes a difference in the lives of others.	●	●	●	●	●
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	●	●	●	●	●

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix N

Principal Leadership Performance Goal – Pre-Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

List one leadership goal that you will work on this school year, 2018-2019.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What category best describes this goal?

- Strategic Leadership
- Instructional Leadership
- Cultural Leadership
- Human Resource Leadership
- Managerial Leadership
- External Development Leadership
- Micro-political Leadership

How will you know you have achieved your performance goal? Describe what measures you will use to know that you achieved this goal.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your current performance for this goal.

Goal Performance	

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix O

Principal Leadership Performance Goal – Post Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

*

As a unique identifier, please enter your birthdate in the following format - MM/DD/YYYY.

_____

Think back to your leadership performance goal that you selected for 2018-2019, describe your progress to date on this goal. What have you done?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your current performance for this goal.

Goal Performance	

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix P

Focus Group Questions – Beginning Principals/Mentees

1. Describe your overall experiences through the mentor program.
2. What did you like the most about the mentor program?
3. What did not work or was most challenging while you participated in this program?
4. What personal changes have you noticed since before participating in the mentor program and now?
5. If the mentor program were to be continued by district leadership, how could it be improved?
6. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Appendix Q

Focus Group Questions – Mentors

1. Describe your overall experiences through the mentor program.
2. What did you like the most about the mentor program?
3. What did not work or was most challenging while you participated in this program?
4. What personal changes have you noticed in your mentee since before they participated in the mentor program and now?
5. If the mentor program were to be continued by district leadership, how could it be improved?
6. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Appendix R

Mentor Program Survey for Beginning Principals

My mentor was effective in providing support in the following areas:

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Instructional leadership (1)	18)	19)	20)	21)	22)
School improvement planning (2)	23)	24)	25)	26)	27)
Budgeting (3)	28)	29)	30)	31)	32)
Scheduling (4)	33)	34)	35)	36)	37)
Staffing (hiring, firing, etc.) (5)	38)	39)	40)	41)	42)
Teacher evaluation (6)	43)	44)	45)	46)	47)
Teacher remediation (7)	48)	49)	50)	51)	52)
Data-driven decision making (8)	53)	54)	55)	56)	57)
Working with parents and the community (9)	58)	59)	60)	61)	62)

On average, how often did you engage in each of the following activities with your mentor?

	Never (1)	Less than once per month (2)	Once per month (3)	Several times per month (4)	Once per week (5)	Almost daily (6)
Coaching conversations with my mentor (1)	63)	64)	65)	66)	67)	68)
Being observed in my school by my mentor (2)	69)	70)	71)	72)	73)	74)
Observing my mentor's school (3)	75)	76)	77)	78)	79)	80)
School improvement planning with my mentor (4)	81)	82)	83)	84)	85)	86)
Having discussions with my mentor about leadership (5)	87)	88)	89)	90)	91)	92)

Overall, my mentoring experience has been important in my decision to remain as principal in this school.

93) Strongly agree (1)

94) Somewhat agree (2)

95) Neither agree nor disagree (3)

96) Somewhat disagree (4)

97) Strongly disagree (5)

My mentoring experience has been important in my effectiveness as a school leader.

98) Strongly agree (1)

99) Somewhat agree (2)

100) Neither agree nor disagree (3)

101) Somewhat disagree (4)

102) Strongly disagree (5)

Appendix S

Focus Group Questions – Professional Learning Network Participants

1. Why did you participate in the principal professional learning network?
2. Describe your experiences in the network meetings.
3. What worked well or what did you like best about the network meetings?
4. What did not work well or what did you not like about the network meetings?
5. What changes have you noticed in your own behavior or attitudes since participating in the network meetings?
6. What could be improved moving forward with the principal professional learning network?

Appendix T

Focus Group Questions – Non-Participants

1. How did you learn about the principal professional learning network meetings?
2. What did you think would be the focus of the meetings?
3. Why did you choose to not participate in the principal professional learning network?
4. What do you do to increase your professional knowledge?
5. What, if anything, could have been done differently to persuade or encourage you to join the network meetings?