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LEADERSHIP PREPARATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF A
DISTRICT–UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
May 2014

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ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP PREPARATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF A DISTRICT–UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Raymond L. Haynes
Old Dominion University, 2014
Director: Dr. Karen Sanzo

The aim of this study was to ascertain principals' preparedness as implemented by a Peninsula City Schools-Madison University partnership under the design constructs of planning, collaboration, internship, and mentorship. The study was framed upon research asserting that district–university partnerships are cultivating instructional leaders who can promote achievement. In this design, districts and universities partner to implement theory-based instruction and authentic practical training to expose aspiring leaders to the specific issues and challenges within the schools they will eventually lead. Using a phenomenological case study design, the researcher extracted the perceptions of Peninsula City Schools-Madison University Division Leadership Team members who taught and collaborated with university faculty and supervising principals of the novice leaders, regarding both cohort participants and noncohort participants for the purpose of ascertaining preparedness under the design constructs.

The findings were comprised of information gained from 13 individual interviews with members of PCS. The results qualified the PCS-MU partnership was driven by the leadership and learner needs of the division, and all respondents believe the partnership to be an effective and collaborative model for districts to train their aspiring leaders for the specific needs of their divisions. The themes that materialized informed on leadership

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reflections and pathways; partnership, planning, and collaboration; internships; and mentorships. The study implications assert stakeholder input is heavily Division Leadership Team (DLT) driven and provides a framework for other partnerships.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my daughter, Madison Ray Haynes who has been patient and understanding of the time and commitment it took to complete the work. I am often asked what legacy I would like to leave behind, and the prevailing one is to ensure I model the importance and value of an education to her. While the research has been challenging, to say the least, the outcome has been rewarding. I am eternally grateful to my dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo for her confidence in me, as well as her unconditional support. She was relentless in her efforts for me to persevere and see it through. Thank you Dr. Jay Scriber and Dr. Danica Hays for agreeing to serve on my committee and for the sharing of your expertise. I would also like to acknowledge the central office administrators in my school division for their encouragement and support. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my parents, Reginald and Alma Haynes for setting high expectations for my five siblings and me. They are the quintessential role models and their love continues to serve as a motivating factor in my life choices and experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) established for school divisions a paradigm shift that mandated accountability for student achievement designed to reduce learning gaps and improve learner outcomes. This push for accountability sparked reforms and new standards across education. Classroom instruction shifted from teacher driven to student driven, encouraging collaboration while also promoting high meta-cognitive learning strategies. Teacher accountability and student performance inevitably impacted the role of building principals and the transition of their training from transactional to instructional. The 21st-century principal is no longer a manager but a leader who can empower staff, build relationships with the community, garner partnerships, and cultivate learners equipped for the rapidly changing technological world while meeting ever higher testing mandates and quality learning standards (Watkins & Moak, 2010).

The evolving role of principals as instructional leaders has tasked them with ensuring building management and student achievement that are data and student driven. Shifting from former leadership styles to instructional leadership has tasked principals with the duty of cultivating instruction with the goal of improving achievement. Prior to 1978, school leadership modeled successful leadership in business and politics, including laissez faire, democratic, and autocratic styles. Historically, schools have fashioned leadership reformation, looking to business efficiency practices to inform their efforts to change the organization of schooling (West, Peck, & Reitzug, 2010). After 1978, public education continued to follow the evolution of business leadership, including the implementation of transformational and transactional, total quality management (TQM),

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and situational leadership styles. These styles were effective in garnering results in other areas of the workforce (industry, technology, and government), but educational leadership needed to consider instruction and learner outcomes, as well.

Education adopted various leadership styles first practiced in business hoping to improve schools and student performance. Every leadership style identified in the literature cultivates work environments in which success can be achieved; however, the research focused on characteristics of strong leaders, not specifically addressing how leadership impacts achievement. Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009), in their case study of principals' roles as leaders, surmised that studies revealing the immediate effects of educational leadership on school performance were marginal due to the exclusive focus on behavioral actions and indirect effects of principal leadership. With limited study of the effectiveness of these leadership styles as they impact learner outcomes, the research has served to qualify leadership approaches and relationship components that inspire and drive followers to perform.

All leadership styles have merit and garner results that enhance the school environment; however, education requires a style that will improve instruction and drive student achievement. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) concurred, noting that "while empirical reports of what effective principals do have expanded, many questions remain about the relative importance of different leadership strategies on student achievement" (p. 6). Seeking a leadership style specifically designed for education, which would also promote student achievement, authorities began developing the concept of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is founded on the belief that successful principals systematically monitor

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student progress, visit classes, observe teaching while providing feedback, and possess expertise in curricular development and teaching (Neumerski, 2012). Other authorities have credited specific characteristics as the basis for strong instructional leadership. As researchers call for an explicit model of principal instructional leadership these characteristics have emerged: setting clear goals to serve as a source of motivation, possessing a high degree of self-confidence and openness to others, tolerating ambiguity, testing the limits of interpersonal and organizational systems, being sensitive to the dynamics of power, maintaining an analytic perspective, and remaining in charge of their jobs (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Even though there is no concrete definition for instructional leadership, methods for measuring effective leadership have emerged; one definitive element is that these leaders impact achievement. Neumerski (2012), in her research of instructional leadership, credited the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) created by Hallinger (1992) as the baseline for measuring leadership as it impacts student achievement. The PIMRS isolates 50 principal behaviors, forming an assessment with three dimensions and ten functions of instructional leadership. The three dimensions are (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program and its functions, and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate. Framing and communicating goals are the functions measured in the first dimension; the second dimension includes supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress; and the functions in the third dimension include protecting instructional time, providing professional development, maintaining a visible presence, promoting

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high expectations, and providing incentives for teachers and students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The PIMRS is not the only framework that has impacted the development of instructional leadership. Neumerski (2012) also credited the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (1996) for creating the National Standards for School Leaders, influenced in part by Hallinger's (1992; 1990) framework. These standards, revised in 2008, redesigned principal training programs and evaluations, identifying behaviors critical to instructional leadership: (a) developing and facilitating a school vision of learning, (b) advocating and nurturing a school culture conducive to student learning, (c) managing the organization for an effective learning environment, (d) collaborating with families and community members and responding to needs and mobilizing resources, (e) acting with integrity and fairness, and (f) understanding and influencing the larger sociopolitical context (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 319).

The ISLLC standards and the PIMRS provided generalizations regarding what administrators do but failed to define how, why, or whether the work varies by context. Instructional leadership is young in its conceptualization, but its merits lie in its direct formalization for the purpose of producing educational leaders trained to improve student achievement and instruction. Valentine and Prater (2011) stated, "As researchers responded to the call for an explicit model of principal instructional leadership, the factors of an effective instructional leader began to emerge" (p. 6). The instructional leader by definition is determined by behaviors and actions instead of the process behind the enactment of these behaviors, leaving an ill-defined and weak sense of how

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instructional leadership is implemented decades after the term was coined (Neumerski, 2012). The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (SELI) (as cited in Pethel, 2013) further defined leadership, formulating three key aspects of the responsibilities of a school principal: (a) developing a true understanding of how best to support teachers, (b) managing school curricula to promote student learning, and (c) helping transform the school into a more effective organization, thereby better promoting meaningful teaching and successful learning.

Limited research on leadership and its impact on student achievement has hindered a well-informed response for the assertion that instructional leadership is the most effective type of leadership. Nevertheless, basing the claim on the authorities included in this review, the researcher believes that instructional leadership cultivates and results in improved learner outcomes. This belief is rooted in the emergence of instructional leadership as a direct response to the mandates and frameworks that are driving accountability in education. Also, instructional leadership was developed specifically for education, whereas other models were adopted by education after they resulted in success for industry. Hallinger (1992) wrote, "For the most part, however, a nationwide trend towards school consolidation, the profession's emulation of corporate management, and the political nature of public educational institutions led the majority of principals to forswear the instructional arena as a domain of primary concern" (p. 35).

NCLB demanded accountability for student achievement and also sparked reforms to the curricula and the standards by which principals were to be trained and taught. These reforms resulted in the formation of an organization for the purpose of improving leadership preparation programs:

When the organization determined its goal in 1992, would be to improve the quality of preparation programs, to stimulate research, to speed the sharing of ideas, and to promote the professional of the school administration, the name would again change to the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (Griffiths, 1999). With the goal established, the NCPEA embarked on developing reforms and standards designed to produce a more efficient leader with varied skill sets, thereby necessitating a more tailored leadership program. Based upon these initial efforts, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE) (1986) and the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) (1988) organized to determine most importantly that “public schools should become full partners in the preparation of school administrators, ...improve the recruitment of minorities and women to the ranks of school leaders...[and] form the establishment of a national certifying board of administrators” (Korach, 2011, p. 659). Realizing the necessity of addressing the anticipated decline in administrators that might effectively impact achievement, districts and universities formed partnerships.

The partnership design joins universities with school districts to tailor leadership training to provide the specific skill sets needed to garner relationships and improve student achievement. “In 2003, a university and a large urban school district began collaboration to systematically refocus both institutions...with the common goal of accelerating academic outcomes, realizing the principal as the keystone to supporting and improving teacher practice” (Korach, 2011, p. 659). Available literature supports the notion that partnerships are an effective approach to cultivating principals equipped to

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manage the changing demands and roles of the job. A limitation of conducting a study of district–university partnerships is the sparse amount of previous research on the subject. The minimal research available has failed to nullify district–university partnerships as a viable approach for improved principal preparedness. Huang, Beachum, White, Kaimal, Fitzgerald, and Reed (2012) affirmed her notion, stating, “Extant research, though limited in quantity, increasingly demonstrates the critical connection between quality preparation experience, candidates’ leadership capacity, and their subsequent instructional and transformation leadership practices” (p. 72).

Purpose of Study

The primary goal of this study was to learn if the Peninsula City Schools–Madison University (PCS-MU) partnership is a viable model of leadership preparation as perceived by the PCS-MU stakeholders, including supervising principals, principals of noncohort participants, principals serving as mentors, and division leadership team (DLT) members. The secondary goal of this phenomenological study was to determine whether or not implementation of the design constructs—planning, collaboration, internship, and mentorship—cultivated skilled leaders. The final goal of the study was to review the improvements and design changes currently shaping the program.

The study relied on the examination of documents, observations of the researcher, and interviews of participants, including supervising principals, DLT members, and university faculty. The research design and goals of the study were developed to include further literature on principal preparedness as related to district–university partnership design tenets. There was limited research on the impact of partnership program

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constructs on principal preparedness; although this study investigated only one district–university partnership, it garnered empirical evidence.

Research Questions

The literature review informed on rationales for design tenets, which comprise of successful district-university models. Seeking the perceptions of key stakeholders, the primary research question focused on specific design constructs implemented by district–university partnerships that have proved effective in grooming aspiring leaders, including planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship. With these design tenets in mind, the researcher in this study of PCS-MU sought to ascertain stakeholders' perceptions of leadership preparedness. The subset research questions: Subset research questions were the following:

1. What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the district–university educational leadership partnership?
2. What are the experiences of stakeholders in the educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features?

Significance of Study

The study of the PCS-MU Cohort design was significant in determining the effectiveness of partnerships in developing instructional leaders capable of addressing the learner needs of school districts. Gaining insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the design constructs as perceived by stakeholders, specifically the various supervisors and principals, was an overarching value of the study. The changes to the partnership design implemented by the DLT and MU faculty were significant to other districts for

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design improvements. Evaluation of the partnership design as perceived by the PCS-MU stakeholders provided perceptions regarding design constructs as they influenced instructional leadership. It also provided data on the design components for improvement to the studied district and other districts using the partnership model.

Context of Partnership

PCS, as did many other districts, partnered with a neighboring university to improve its opportunities to train its own leaders for the purpose of increasing student graduation rates while decreasing learning gaps and dropout rates. The PCS-MU partnership design was selected initially because of convenience and because it represented other district–university partnerships implementing design constructs that merged theory-based course work with an internship experience and mentorship. The partnership also was aligned with the standards, mandates, and policies required of both districts and universities to ensure certification and accreditation.

The division under study was an urban district located in southeastern Virginia. It was a progressive school division, comprising approximately 21,800 students. The division included four public high schools with a population totaling 5,800 students. The two larger schools each housed between 1,600 and 1,800 students, the third largest had an enrollment of 1,200 to 1,300, and the smallest consisted of an annual enrollment of 900 students. The PCS high school design prepared students for advanced or college preparatory diplomas and was challenged with preparing students for continuing education or the workforce. For those students desiring to continue their education, PCS developed a rigorous course load, which included the International Baccalaureate

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program, dual enrollment courses with an area community college, Advanced Placement courses, honors courses, and academic strands concentrating on specific career interests.

PCS had 1 early childhood center, 19 elementary schools, 1 gifted center, 2 Pre K-8 schools, 5 middle schools, and an alternative education site housing the online Performance Learning Center and the GED program, in which 30 principals participated. Student demographic information for the division consisted of the following: 63.4% African American, 29.3% White, 3.6% Latino, 2.3% Asian, and .3% American Indian or Alaska Native. PCS employed 1,530 teachers, of whom 115 were national board certified. The division leadership team was comprised of 10 leaders: the superintendent, 2 deputy superintendents, 6 executive directors, and 1 director (PCS, 2012).

Madison University, located in a neighboring city, included a satellite campus located in the PCS district, making proximity a factor in its selection as a partner. MU credited itself as a dynamic public research institution serving students and enriching the state, the nation, and the world, implementing rigorous academic programs, strategic partnerships, and active civic engagement. In addition to service and enrichment, MU also was founded on the belief that knowledge is productive and research driven (Madison University, 2013).

PCS, as did all districts, faced a possible principal shortage, resulting in grant funding from the state's Department of Education in 2004. In addition to the state grant, PCS partnered with a university and a foundation to design a leadership model focusing on the division's mission and goals. Through the partnership, the division sought to blend theory-based instruction with authentic real-world application to foster and groom aspiring leaders. For its third cohort, the partnership included in its design a rigorous

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selection process requiring a written application by the applicant, a principal recommendation, and a fishbowl activity (Admission documents in Appendix B). The partnership invited division leadership members to teach courses providing the cohort members' specific data, scenarios, and learner needs for the purpose of personalizing training for leadership in PCS. The internships included leadership projects, which began the 1st semester of attendance, to expose the cohort members to leadership experiences within the division while serving to evaluate and provide feedback for continual leadership growth. The internship was completed in the final semester of the program, and each participant was required to complete an elementary, middle, and high school experience along with a central office experience. These experiences took place during the summer months and were designed with the participants' skill sets, interests, and areas of growth in mind.

Cohort Participant Selection

For the purpose of principal preparedness, the PCS-MU Cohort design, beginning in 2005, focused on training leaders to address the specific instructional needs of the PCS division. The initial selection process required each candidate to obtain a nomination from the principal, complete a written application, and submit MAT or GRE scores (Appendix B). Principals typically recommended teachers who exhibited an interest in leadership, had served in leadership roles within the schools, possessed knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and expressed a desire to improve student achievement through innovation and rigor. The designated DLT members and the university advisor reevaluated the process, focusing specifically on strengthening the procedures for selection. To improve selection and ascertain leadership promise, the partners

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collaborated, adding requirements for a written response regarding a current issue in leadership as well as a fishbowl activity. The fishbowl session divided candidates into collaborative teams for the purpose of addressing current leadership issues. The simulations afforded the DLT and other selected leaders within the division the opportunity to witness the candidates and evaluate peer interactions and leadership potential. The committee then selected 24 participants to form its 2013 Leadership Cohort.

Components of the Program Design

The six ISLLC Standards, and the new state principal evaluation standards drove leadership training and development. The state performance standards:

1. Instructional Leadership: The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to student academic progress and school improvement.
2. School Climate: The principal fosters the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.
3. Human Resources Management: The principal fosters effective human resources management by assisting with selection and induction, and by supporting, evaluating, and retaining quality instructional and support personnel

4. **Organizational Management:** The principal fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and use of resources
5. **Communication and Community Relations:** The principal fosters the success of all students by communicating and collaborating effectively with stakeholders
6. **Professionalism:** The principal fosters the success of all students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession
7. **Student Academic Progress:** The principal's leadership results in acceptable, measurable student academic progress based on established standards (State Board of Education Principal Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria, 2013)

Strong collaboration between the district and university supported an evolving program design and optimal success for promising principals. The continuous communication and involvement of the university faculty designee with the DLT point of contact, the professors, and the cohort members resulted in strong collaboration and a strong foundation for the program. Davis, S. H., Leon, R. J., and Fultz, M. (2012), in their assessment of the PUSD-Cal Poly partnership, affirmed that the solid base was the direct result of the mutual respect and shared commitment established by the ongoing communication among members of its planning team, including "time together listening, emailing, learning, establishing goals and outcomes, evaluating the assessment data, and solving problems" (Korach, 2005, p. 3). These same components drove the collaboration

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between PCS and MU and the commitment to “develop courageous and effective instructional leaders for urban schools who are knowledgeable, highly skilled and relentless in their commitment to building learning communities designed to accelerate the achievement” (Korach, 2005, p. 3), while also providing “additional resources that can be better realized when both organizations work together” (Gooden, Bell, Gonzales, & Lippa, 2011, p. 3).

DLT team involvement in the partnership design included collaboration on course syllabi, instruction aligned with the university curriculum, and course specifications merged with personalized experiences tailored for the specific needs of the division. Along with the theory-based learning, cohort participants were assigned leadership projects and internships during DLT meetings. Internships were assigned over the summer for minimal impact to learner outcomes during the school year. The authentic experiences afforded opportunities for the aspiring leaders, serving to expose them to job-embedded learning opportunities, while also providing opportunities for the DLT and MU faculty to evaluate leadership potential in the real-world setting of the school environment. The PCS-MU partnership supplemented the internship experiences with other leadership opportunities designed to challenge the promising principals while garnering evaluative data.

The cohort participants were included in projects that provided them with opportunities to showcase their ability to facilitate meetings with community partners, intern as summer school site coordinators, and perform other leadership roles at the building and central office levels. Realizing that an internship experience at the end of

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the program does not efficiently demonstrate leadership potential, the partnership deemed it necessary to support the process.

Another area strengthened by the partnership was the mentorship component. During the first semester of the cohort, the participants were assigned leadership coaches. This initiative was implemented to provide an external perspective for the cohort participants and by having the mentors serve as catalysts for shaping and supporting the candidate's views and execution of leadership (Davis et al., 2012).

District–university partnerships are driven by researched-based practices that establish successful design components (Davis et al., 2007). PCS-MU applied the same processes to shape their leadership program for grooming leaders. These components included a partnership built in mutual trust and respect, continual collaboration, an internship design supplemented with leadership projects and opportunities, and a mentorship program. Although these were not the only design constructs that shaped the partnership, the four components included in this study strongly impacted leadership training and improved the quality of leadership potential.

Definitions of Key Terms

Definitions are included in this section to familiarize the readers with key and recurring terms for the purpose of enhancing their complete understanding.

1. **Administrative Allies** is the mentorship program implemented by PCS-MU, which partnered a seasoned building principal with expertise in leadership and effective practices for inspiring leadership in others with an aspiring leader in the cohort.

2. **Collaboration** is the consensus between the district and university concerning the nature of the project and a host of related practical issues (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; Pounder & Crow, 2005).
3. The **Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC)** established the need for standards and accreditation for principal training. Along with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), ELCC facilitated comprehensive research, revisions, and field review of proposed changes for principal training, resulting in the ISLLC standards (NPBEA, 2011).
4. The **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** was passed in 1965; NCLB, a reauthorization of ESEA, “added many new initiatives, creating a stronger, more accountable education system and seeking to change the culture of education by mandating the use of scientifically based research to support instructional strategies” (Frey, Mandlawitz, & Alvarez, 2012, p. 67).
5. **Instructional leadership** is founded in the belief that successful principals systematically monitor student progress, visit classes, observe teaching with immediate feedback, and possess expertise in curricular development and teaching (Neumerski, 2012).
6. The **Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 1994)** was developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with the NPBEA for the purpose of strengthening preparation programs in leadership. The objective was twofold: (a) to create a set of standards that

would provide the basis for reshaping the profession of school administration in the United States around the perspectives on school leadership and (b) to direct action in the academic policy and practice domains of the profession consistent with those perspectives across an array of strategy leverage points (Murphy, 2005).

7. **Internships** expand candidates' knowledge and serve as the vessel through which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality (Bottoms, Frye, & O'Neill, 2006).
8. **Mentorship** equips future leaders with real guidance from knowledgeable professionals, building practical readiness, in context, and offering continued learning and support (The Wallace Foundation, 2007; Zubrzycki, 2013).
9. The **National Committee on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA, 1987)** called on school districts to share responsibility with universities for preparing school leaders through the development of joint educational leadership programs that draw on the strengths, resources, and unique perspectives of each (Brown & Horsford, 2011).
10. **No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001)** set challenging goals for school districts to decrease achievement gaps and raise proficiencies in reading and mathematics through testing accountability and annual yearly performance gains. State-led reforms focused on closing achievement gaps, promoting rigorous accountability, and ensuring that all students were college and career ready (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

11. **Partnerships** are collaborations between school districts and universities for the purpose of training principals as instructional leaders.
12. **Planning** is the process district leaders and university faculty used to develop the partnership design for training instructional leaders. “Partnerships require a high level of planning and decision making to ensure that programs are developed to meet district need, the requirements of the state and leadership provider, along with the students” (Mast et al., 2011, p. 32).
13. A **school district** is a government agency responsible for operating local public schools. A school board, a group of publicly elected officials, governs each school district (Office of the Education Ombudsman, 2012).

Delimitations of the Study

The primary delimitation of this study was its focus on one partnership design. The study also was limited to the interpretations of the supervising principals of cohort and noncohort participants, as well as the perceptions of DLT members. Supervising principals of cohort participants provided lived experience; due to their direct supervision of these leaders, their assessment of novice administrators was expert but resulted in a study limitation. Cohort participants who completed the leadership program and secured jobs in leadership roles in the division were excluded from this study due to their novice experience as leaders, which might have affected their ability to identify strong and purposeful leadership. Cohort participants who had not secured leadership roles were not represented, as the purpose was to glean the effectiveness of cohort members serving in leadership positions. The researcher also did not consider the perceptions of those who did not complete the program. The study included the perceptions of DLT members

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currently employed, excluding those who might have participated in recruitment and taught courses but had since left the division. Finally, the study design did not include perceptions of university faculty participants.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Relying on a variety of books, peer-reviewed journals, and articles, the researcher conducted a review of literature regarding the shift in education, which had led to the district–university partnership design model for the purpose of training and equipping instructional leaders, to improve learner outcomes. Included was a historical review of policies, mandates, and reforms that had driven changes to leadership training, including the shifting role of principals from managers to instructional leaders the emergence of district–university partnerships, and the design tenets proving effective in training instructional leaders. The review supported the constructs upon which this study was formed.

This review of literature detailed how the push for decreased learning gaps, testing accountability, and annual yearly progress had generated a demand for highly qualified leaders. It was also the intent of this review to examine how standards, accreditation, and partnerships between school districts and universities had driven the process to cultivate highly qualified educational leaders, equipped to impact student achievement. Although university and school district partnerships appeared promising, there were assertions these findings were limited as a result of studies of specific programs that rarely demonstrated how leadership impacted student performance. Huang et al (2012) cited “...empirical data on specific leadership preparation program policies, practices, and outcomes have been slim historically, a growing interest in advancing program improvement and further establishing the link between preparation and program outcomes has emerged” (Orr, 2011, p. 72).

These assertions concerning the limitations of the studies fail to nullify the notion that there are promising preparatory designs and frameworks that foster and train strong instructional leaders. Gooden et al. (2011) wrote, “Recent research supports creating university-district partnerships as part of a complex solution to address some of the demands by improving the effectiveness of principal preparation programs and thereby increasing the number of effective leaders prepared to work in urban schools” (p. 1). This literature review comprised of studies, reports, research, and related works from national organizations regarding district–university partnerships. The first section reports on the mandates and policies driving the implementation of partnerships to cultivate educational leaders prepared to address student achievement. The second section addresses the evolution of the principal’s role to instructional leader and the importance of preparedness through effective training, which merge theory with practical experience. The final and third portion reviews four constructs of district–university partnership design with regard to principal preparedness.

Historical Development of Educational Leadership

The demands and complexities facing American schools and their leaders have changed dramatically over the course of the past few decades. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* called into question the quality of American public schools. Along with the quality of American public schools, the publication also questioned public schools’ ability to sufficiently prepare students for a global workforce and a constantly changing economy requiring workers to be equipped with skills and knowledge that can adapt to the demands. What followed was the advent of the accountability era in which expectations for strong learning outcomes as evidenced by student performance on high-stakes tests

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that had never been more stringent. Legislators responded with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

“NCLB, a reauthorization of ESEA, added many new initiatives, creating a stronger, more accountable education system and seeking to change the culture of education by mandating the use of scientifically based research to support instructional strategies” (Frey et al., 2012, p. 67).

NCLB also set challenging goals for school districts to decrease achievement gaps and raise proficiencies in reading and mathematics through testing accountability and annual yearly performance gains. The expectation for continual growth placed considerable responsibility on school leaders, specifically principals, to ensure that all students make significant educational gains. Title II, Part A, Section 2101 of the NCLB Act specifically addressed the need to train and recruit high quality principals for the purpose of increasing student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). As a result, NCLB has shifted how principals approach their roles by requiring them to be cognizant of data and how to interpret data to effect change and growth. According to Levine (2005), “in an outcome-based and accountability driven era, administrators have to lead their schools in the rethinking of goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum, pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology, and use of time and space” (p. 12). NCLB has placed stringent demands on principals to lead and improve educational gains for all students.

Although purposing schools with improving learner outcomes, NCLB has influenced changes in how principals serve as leaders. Redish, Webb, and Jiang (2006) asserted, “The role of the principal has been dramatically changed by school reform

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measures and a growing emphasis on increased achievement of all students especially in the context of No Child Left Behind Act” (pp. 283-284). Spillane and Kenney (2012) purported,

The shifting policy environment in the USA puts pressure on school administrators to attend to instructional matters as measured by student performance metrics in core school subjects and to engage in efforts at recoupling the external policy environment with administrative practice and with classroom instruction. (p. 548)

NCLB and mandates for increased student performance have been shifting the role of principals, directly impacting how these leaders need to be trained to increase learner outcomes and close achievement gaps.

At the building level, the school leader is ultimately responsible for student learning outcomes. Today’s principals must accept the responsibility of serving as their schools’ instructional leaders with the responsibility of learning for all students (Lynch, 2012, p. 40). This expectation was not always the case, and as the role of the school principal transformed, the complexities of the job heightened, and the demands and expectations placed upon school leaders mounted, the push has become how best to equip school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to meet the challenges. Many educators have suggested the demands of the job have changed so dramatically over the course of the past decade that traditional programs are no longer sufficient to meet the leadership challenges posed by public schools today. In the past principals were challenged with managing buildings and staff; now they must concentrate their efforts on data-driven accountability because the principal controls the most important factors affecting the school’s teaching and instructional quality (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Kaplan, Owings, & Nunnery, 2005;).

One effort to improve leadership and transition from traditional leadership programs for the purpose of improving achievement through accountability are the school-university partnerships. Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman, & Cook (2003) stated, "School-university partnerships have become important in reform efforts" (p. 330). The rationale for this phenomenon was sparked in part by principals' retiring at earlier ages and districts' reporting a shortage of qualified candidates. In 2000, the Institute for Educational Leadership reported, "The need for school administrators will increase by 10 to 20 percent in the next five years, according to the Department of Labor" (p. 3). As noted in the literature, current principals may not be equipped to manage 21st-century schools; therefore, districts must be proactive in cultivating leaders. According to Green and Cooper (2012), "now, more than ever before, the leadership of schools is being questioned, and the hard questions being asked address the performance of schools and student achievement" (p. 55).

The research also has supported the need for university and district partnerships to groom principals whose roles will include instructional, community, and visionary leadership as paramount to the success of public education. Yerkes and Guaglianone noted, "When districts provide opportunities for teachers to engage in authentic leadership and socialization experiences with school administrators, they demonstrate the value of the principalship and its requirements, and as a result, talented educators seek the position" (as cited in Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, p. 469). Talent and desire are key elements as teachers transition from the classroom to management, but these elements do not assure that educational leaders will emerge. According to Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004), there is more to grooming a leader than "just recruitment, preparation,

licensure and placement” (p. 477). They devised four insights for what is needed to prepare 21st century school leaders: “the community of administrative practice, and role identity transformation from teacher to principal, mentoring and engagement in authentic administrative work, and continual professional development” (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, p. 472). It is not sufficient simply to educate leaders; it is also necessary to partner them with experienced principals for mentorship and to provide these educational leaders with work experience that affords them opportunities to develop leadership skills.

The purpose of this literature review was to substantiate the need for university and district partnerships to cultivate educational leaders that are equipped to manage the evolving 21st-century, public educational setting. The merging of schools and universities purposed with training instructional leaders is uniquely challenged with the need to meet the expectations of district, state, and federal mandates for learner outcomes, which are becoming increasingly more stringent; the need for proactive principals that can garner change is even more vital to the process. Borthwick et al. (2003) added, “An educational partnership may be viewed as an organization, which suggests the need to examine elements such as members, structure, goals, resources, and output as well as its operation within an environment” (p. 331). Therefore the review has been organized to address the educational reforms that have sparked school and university partnerships with the purpose of grooming educational leaders that can answer the call for accountability in student achievement. Also, the purpose of the review was to examine the contexts for these partnerships, focusing on the commonalities proving effective in partnerships while also identifying those attributes needed to be an effective

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educational leader, specifically, planning, collaboration, internships and mentoring, and, most importantly, the selection of staff and cohort participants.

Evolution of the Role of Principal

The U.S. Congress State Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity in 1970 established the principal as the most vital person in a school:

In many ways the school principal is the most import and influential individual in any school.... It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone for the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become...If the school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success. (Orr, 2007, p. 56)

The principal's playing such a vital position is not a new notion, but as the demands of the job have increased and evolved, the role of the principal has been repurposed, making the relationship directly linked to learner outcomes and student achievement (Orr, 2007, p. 56). Mitgang (2003) affirmed this idea: "Never have public schools counted more heavily on the nation's nearly 84,000 principals to lead the instructional improvements needed to meet tough new state and federal mandates" (p. 1). At the same time, the American economy has transformed from an industrial economy to an information-based global economy, requiring workers with a higher level of skill and education to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Factoring in the transformation of the economy and the role of the principal there is now a need for a more educated populace, which has resulted in more rigorous standards for promotion and graduation, mandated student testing, and school accountability. School leaders must balance and meet the competing demands of diverse stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, community, and political groups. Demographic shifts among students, administrators, and teachers have

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brought about increased diversity and increasing achievement gaps among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (Levine, 2005).

Shift From Traditional Roles

Changing contexts and demands require effective school leaders shed the traditional role of principal as building manager and embrace their primary responsibility as instructional leader (DuFour, as cited in Fink & Resnick, 2001; Heck & Hallinger, 1998). Mitgang (2003) suggested the long-held but outmoded expectation that the school principal should be able to manage solely all disparate and multiple tasks required to effectively run a school should be replaced by a new paradigm:

The successful leader more closely resembles an orchestra conductor than a virtuoso soloist. The principal is ultimately accountable for her school's success. But being accountable for melodies a good school makes is not the same as playing every instrument single handedly, or knowing how to. (p. 2)

The principal is held accountable for the school's success, and the former process of shouldering the leadership solely is shifting to a shared accountability in which the principal is a steward for instruction and learning outcomes.

The impact of changing principal duties and the shift to accountability make principals and their roles as leaders vital to the learning process (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Green, 2010; Hobson-Horton, Green, & Duncan, 2009; Waters & Grubb, 2004). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty wrote, "There is growing agreement among researchers that the school leader is best positioned to ensure that teaching and learning occur throughout the school, only second to teachers who have the most immediate effect on student success" (as cited in Green & Cooper, 2012, p. 56). Therefore, these factors—organizational, student population, and policy—must be considered, creating the unique context for each school and making leadership demands a vast and varied responsibility

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and the accountability for success critical to job performance. According to Spillane and Kenney (2012), “High-stakes accountability levers that are directly tied to instruction, if they are to work, operate in and through particular school administrative arrangements” (p. 548). Student variables impact curricula, programs, and support needs of the student body; therefore, the policies and politics of a school present leadership challenges.

Effective leaders must possess the capacity to adapt their practices and style to the context in which they find themselves and be proactive in obtaining results consistent with district, state, and federal mandates. Spillane and Kenney affirmed this notion: “School leaders seek to achieve results that they see as consistent with federal, state, and school district objectives” (p. 549). Preparation programs must develop leaders with a diverse repertoire of skills and practices and the savvy to choose the practices that best fit the circumstance and context.

New Roles and Leadership Practices

Although the descriptors used by researchers may vary, there are three broad categories of leadership practices necessary, but not in and of themselves sufficient, to effectively address most situations, including setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Effective leaders set directions by developing, articulating, and garnering support for a shared vision, goal, and purpose within the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Effective leaders demonstrate strong knowledge of learning and pedagogy required to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as an “emotional intelligence” that allows them to discern the person-specific needs and motivations of individuals to enhance professional development and performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Knowing

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the structure and culture of the organization itself can support and sustain or diminish the performance of educators effective leaders attend to the organizational context of the school. Leithwood et al. (2004) posited, however, that effective leaders possess the added capacity of understanding and responding to the multiple and ever-changing contexts within which they work. Contextual factors such as geographic location, school and district size, student population, policy context, and political climate require that the effective leader adapt his style and practices to fit the context.

Although the context within which the principal works may be changing constantly, the goal of every school is to positively impact student achievement. Effinger (2005) stated, "In all education all goals are encompassed in the goal to improve student learning and are accomplished by focusing on three key elements: results, productive work environment and continual improvement" (pp. 34-35). Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein (2009) added, "They [principals] are responsible for facilitating an academically supportive environment for teachers and students through decisions related to curriculum, instruction, organization, staffing, professional development, budgeting, discipline, attendance, activities, goals, and supervision" (p. 235). The responsibilities of principals directly impact learner outcomes because their goal is to improve instruction and achievement. Even more striking is the differential impact leadership can have on student learning factors. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2010) reported, "Reviews of research suggest that successful school leaders influence student achievement in several important ways, both through their influence on other people or features of the organizations, and through their influence on school processes" (p. 5).

When leadership is weak or the leadership practices implemented for improvement prove ineffective, student achievement can be diminished or negatively impacted (Waters & Grubb, 2004). The Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) findings support the notion that developing a clear understanding of what constitutes strong, effective educational leadership as well as an understanding of how educational programs can adequately endow candidates with the leadership knowledge and skills deemed critical to success are two necessary priorities for education. What effective leadership “looks like,” however, is less certain. The standards that have driven the ways through which schools address student achievement are also directing the focus of leadership, especially how these leaders are trained. In efforts to address and reshape the weaknesses in educational leadership programs, the National Committee on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE) created a 27-member commission consisting of leaders within and outside the educational profession to examine the quality of educational leadership with a focus on the role of principals and superintendents.

A Clarion Call for Change in Leadership Preparation

The role of the school leader has evolved into a plethora of responsibilities to improve student achievement. This evolution was the direct result of education organizations’ and policies’ responding to the concerns for the future of public education. *Leaders for America’s Schools*, by Jackson and Kelley (2002), outlined a broad range of recommendations for improving educational leadership preparation in America. The overarching recommendation in the report was to radically redefine educational leadership: “Following the commission’s 1987 report, issues related to the structure and

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focus of educational administrator preparation programs took on new emphases as programs were reviewed in attempting to respond to the deficiencies as outlined by the commission” (Jackson & Kelley, 2002, p. 193). Specific recommendations were made by the NCEEAA regarding the roles that schools and universities could play in redefining educational leadership preparation.

NCEEAA Drives Shared Responsibility

The NCEEAA (1987) called on school districts to share responsibility with universities for preparing school leaders through the development of joint educational leadership programs that draw on the strengths, resources, and unique perspectives of each (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Districts also were called on to develop programs to recruit high-quality administrators among their teachers, particularly ethnic minorities and women. Recruiting women and ethnic minorities for the leadership programs would address the shortage of both groups in the educational setting, as noted by Brown and Horsford (2011): “In 1991, the Holmes Partnership established the Holmes Scholars[R] Program to support mentoring for talented men and women who are underrepresented in leadership positions in professional development schools and institutions of higher education” (p. 514). The rationale for joint educational leadership addresses the weaknesses of traditional university programs while also allowing school districts to tailor leadership programs that will produce leaders who can identify and positively impact the needs of the division.

The Committee noted one predominant weakness of traditional university educational leadership programs: Traditional programs often focus, almost to exclusion, on development of a theoretical knowledge base without providing students the

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opportunities to develop and refine the practical skills needed to undergird and apply theory to solve problems. The Committee noted effective educational leadership preparation programs should address five core strands: the study of administration, the acquisition of vital administrative skills, the application of research findings and methods to problems, supervised practice, and demonstration of competence (NCEE, 1987).

ISLLC Standards: Policy and Practice Domains

Just as the quality of public education was questioned in *A Nation at Risk*, the quality of school leaders and the educational administration programs that prepare them have been called into question as well (Griffiths, Stout, and Forsyth, 1988; Levine, as cited in Duncan, 2010). This lack of confidence has resulted in changing standards and preparation for educational leaders. In 1994, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) created the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). According to Murphy (2005),

the objective of the Consortium was twofold: (a) to create a set of standards that would provide the basis for reshaping the profession of school administration in the United States around the perspectives on school leadership...and (b) to direct action in the academic policy, and practice domains of the profession consistent with those perspectives across an array of strategy leverage points. (p.155)

ISLLC standards identified the purposes of school administration and the appropriate functions of school leaders:

The ISLLC standards reflect three unique dimensions of school leadership: leaders as strong educators, especially in the area of instructional leadership; leader as moral agents, who value justice, community, and education as an inclusive enterprise; and leaders as caring members of the educational community that empower others on behalf of creating strong learning communities. (Waters & Grubb, 2004, p. 3)

Using this belief as a foundation for the development of the standards the team then had to establish the expectations for leaders with the final outcome of promoting student

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learning: “The aim of the development team was then to define leadership in terms of connections to conditions of schooling (e.g., high and appropriate expectations, clear academic goals) that explain student achievement—to backward map leadership from student learning” (Murphy, 2005, p. 160). The ISSLC standards provided management objectives for educators and set the groundwork for accreditation through the efforts of the Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC): “To link the important leverage point of leadership embedded in the ISLLC design, the ELCC guidelines were scaffold directly on the *Standards*” (Murphy, 2005, p. 155). The consortium set out to design guidelines for universities to use as a baseline for educating and assessing school leaders to ensure they were completing master’s programs that equipped them to address the educational needs of schools.

Murphy was not the only authority to surmise that educational leadership programs were in need of standards and accreditation. In his 2005 report, *Educating School Leaders*, Levine, after a 4-year study of the nation’s schools of education, concluded that educational administration was the weakest of the programs schools of education offered and that the overall quality of educational administration programs in the United States was poor. Also, Levine identified significant weaknesses in the majority of educational leadership programs studied in nine distinct domains; he found most programs lacked clarity and relevance of purpose, curricular coherence and rigor, curricular balance between theory and practice, balance in faculty composition between academics and education practitioners, high admissions standards, high graduation standards, high-quality and practice-driven research, adequate resources, and continuous self-assessment with an eye toward continuous improvement. Levine noted school

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systems often granted pay raises merely for accumulating educational credits and degrees, creating both a demand and market for the proliferation of educational leadership programs that, without a commitment to quality, relevance, and rigor, were accelerating “a race to the bottom.”

In their review of the research on leadership and its influence on student learning, Leithwood et al. (2004) highlighted the critical importance of the fusion of theory and practice:

For useful, robust, situated knowledge to develop most readily participation with others must occur in activity which is “authentic”—circumstances which involve the ordinary activities of school leadership and management. Authentic activities are situated in the social and physical contexts of the school, community, and district, and therefore must be accounted for in problem-solving and must be represented in the knowledge structures stored by the principal. (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 69)

ISSLC and ELCC established the need for standards and accreditation whereas the NCEE recommended the shared responsibility for universities and school districts to prepare leaders through joint educational programs. The intent of these partnerships was to provide potential educational leaders with theory and authentic learning experiences that directly addressed the specific educational needs of the districts in which they would serve.

District–University Partnership Design

Recognizing the need to commit to a collaborative effort to improve educational leadership and its preparation programs, the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA) convened the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation in 2002 to address needs for strengthening school and district leadership for the 21st century (Jackson & Kelley,

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2002, p. 193). This commission formalized district–university partnerships purposed with cultivating educational leaders to improve student achievement by providing field-based experiences to support learning opportunities for the candidates to apply theory to practice. Devin (2004) supported the idea of district–university partnerships, stating, “Those who prepare new administrators and those who supervise principal practitioners must work together to redesign preparation programs and develop ongoing support systems for practitioners” (p. 70). Still evolving, the literature has noted specific commonalities among school and university partnerships that cultivate educational leaders prepared to lead instruction that will advance student achievement and reduce learning gaps. According to the literature a common thread includes planning, collaboration, internships, and mentoring, which are the foci of this research.

The school and university partnerships have created an opportunity for districts to be innovative and hands-on in training their own principals and to produce leaders equipped to address district, state, and federal mandates while also assuring accountability for learning outcomes. Goldring, Huff, Spillane, & Barnes (2009) noted, “Learning-centered leadership expertise steps beyond subject matter content and problem-solving skills to encompass the broader organizational knowledge that a leader possesses and employs to organize a school around the goal of improving instruction and student achievement” (p. 204). In addition to these characteristics, leaders must also be able to nurture and support the development of a personalized learning community for students with specific means for how to achieve educational goals based on an array of contextual matters. For educational leaders to fulfill the expectations of the job, they

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must participate in training organized around national, state, and district standards (Cray & Weiler, 2011, p. 927).

Despite the intent, some partnerships ineffectively define the responsibilities and duties: “While all states have licensure requirements that purport to identify the capacities and orientations necessary for school leaders, many are unable to define with meaningful levels of specificity the responsibilities and duties of the principal” (Cray & Weiler, 2011, p. 927). The literature on the principalship is daunting because it has suggested principals should be all things to all stakeholders and garner change to remedy all the learning deficits with which the schools are plagued. Browne-Ferrigno and Sanzo (2011) asserted, “Despite reports of positive impact of collaborative preparation, some studies have exposed challenges that must be recognized and addressed if universities and districts are to work together successfully” (p. 650).

Providing a clear definition for educational leaders and the roles required to properly serve the schools they will oversee is imperative to the training process. When the role of the leader is not clearly defined and the roles not properly developed, weak and ineffective leaders are fostered. In their report, Cray and Weiler (2011) surmised from 77 surveys received from superintendents in Colorado during the 2007-2008 school year that one area of concern was new administrators’ lack of experience and knowledge of job responsibilities; they reported,

Several respondents echoed this offering the following observation: “[New administrators] lack an ability to handle the stress of the job.” The capacity to manage time was mentioned numerous times and often linked to limited job experience: “Time and experience contribute to meaningful decisions that allow [new administrators] to consider the consequences and impact of their decisions.” (p. 930).

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The Colorado superintendents also thought the participants of educational leadership partnerships entered schools with professional deficits in the areas of political arenas and range of building demands. Accordingly, superintendents indicated new principals needed further training in dealing with difficult stakeholders and conflict resolution. Relationships are key to the success of a school and its administrator. One who lacks the ability to provide feedback that results in improvement or who is resistant to making tough but necessary changes and decisions will have minimal capacity to manage and support personnel to promote effective teaching and learning (Cray & Weiler, 2011, p. 930).

According to a McREL study (2004), “effective school leadership requires that principals use practices that are positively associated with student achievement” (p. 6). Effective educational leaders possess key attributes that programs desire to cultivate and refine through theory and authentic, hands-on experiences. This combination of theory and authentic experiences is the key ingredient to successful collaboration and the cornerstone for yielding highly trained leaders.

Rationale for the Partnership Design

Research of the literature has led to the assertion that NCLB has prompted many trends in education intended to improve student achievement and accountability. Some of these trends have failed, whereas others have catapulted into effective programming. University and district partnerships appear to be one training approach that is now yielding the educational leaders districts are seeking. Peel, Peel, and Baker (2002) noted, “Quite often, programs, as well as partnerships, do pass. When educational partnerships have been formed to provide only temporary band-aid solutions to very complex and

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multifaceted problems, they, like other trends, have faded away” (p. 319). Jackson and Kelley (2002) suggested most studies were inadequate to formulate a true consensus on the validity of university and school district partnerships and whether or not these partnerships produce leaders equipped to truly impact student achievement. “Despite these efforts, many preparation programs continue to lack the curricular coherence, rigor, pedagogy, and structure to provide the kinds of knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to produce a large supply of exceptional school and district leaders” (Jackson & Kelley, 2002, p.193).

Furthermore, there was limited research on university and school district partnerships. Murphy and Vriesenga (2006) noted, “Although the volume of research increased during the last half of the 20th century, concerns about the quantity of research in school administration have not abated” (p. 184). The researchers further stated,

Riehl and her colleagues (2000)...assert that “in contrast with the growing body of teacher research, there is little evidence of similar growth within educational administration” (p. 399), a point that Firestone and Riehl (2003) reinforce in their prospectus to the proposed volume of the task force’s work: “Research on educational leadership may have had such limited impact because so little of it has actually been done.” (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006, p. 184)

Since the inception of university and district partnerships for the purpose of improving educational leadership, many programs have failed to produce exceptional school leaders: “To illustrate, in a review of the quantitative research from 1980 to 1995, Hallinger and Heck (1996) identified only 40 studies that address the relationship between school leadership and student academic achievement” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 6). Not only have research studies concurred that the same issues exist with program weaknesses but they also have agreed on the tenets required of programs to produce effective leaders: “While there is little empirical evidence on how

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specific program components influence leadership behaviors, on-the-job performance, or student outcomes, there is some promising research seeking to understand the outcomes of preparation” (Davis, Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson 2005, p. 5). The intent of this section is to focus on the school and university partnerships and the shared strategies that are proving to be effective.

Peel et al. (2002), in their study *School/ University Partnerships: a Viable Model*, found that “educational partnerships that were well received and successful involved real empowerment, collaboration, and trust by all stakeholders, as well as shared power by the leadership” (p. 319). Browne-Ferrigno and Sanzo (2011) noted, “Neither universities nor districts can do what is needed on their own; neither can single-handedly provide the breadth of experience needed to adequately develop and nurture leaders for today’s P-12 schools” (p. 650). Peel et al. cited Carlson’s 2001 work: “These partnerships are committed to managing change through ongoing reinvestment in the potential of people through grass roots initiatives and through encouragement for those willing to innovate” (as cited by Peel et al., 2002, p. 320). The researchers further asserted it is imperative to “explore the collaboration processes and the implementation of partnership design,” concluding that “viewing the partnership as a coalition, and respecting the wants and needs of all players will create a climate of respect, collaboration, and trust necessary for success” (Peel et al. 2002, p. 323).

Browne-Ferrigno and Sanzo (2011) affirmed, “In their comparison of a conventionally delivered program with two collaborative programs, Orr and Barber (2006) found that shared responsibility for principal making yielded more graduates positively oriented toward assuming school leadership positions” (p. 650). These authors

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(Browne-Ferrigno and Sanzo, 2011) also asserted that three levels for successful leadership must be the foundation for effective programming. Accordingly, first are top-level leaders (e.g., university deans, department chairs, district superintendents) who gain commitment for the partnership, particularly through acquiring the much-needed financial resources to support the initiative. Second are frontline leaders (e.g., senior faculty, experienced principals) who work together, often on a day-to-day basis, to establish the mission, vision, and strategies of the partnership. These individuals must be carefully selected because they create “operational and strategic ideas” and “translate plans into action” (Senge et al., as cited in Goldring & Sims, 2005, p. 233). Finally, partnerships need “Bridge Leaders” skilled at engaging like-minded individuals across the partnering organizations. Bridge leaders (i.e., individuals typically serving as coaches, mentors, internal consultants, or thinking partners) participate in a “sophisticated dance between those in organizational power in each of the partner organizations and those who [have] only informal power within these same institutions” (Goldring & Sims, 2005, p. 234). As did Browne-Ferrigno and Sanzo), Goldring and Sims concurred that leadership programs require bridge leaders to establish the legitimacy of each organization, coordinate and link the partners, and help focus the partners on the critical issues.

Some researchers have stressed the importance of “Bridge Leaders” to the partnership process, suggesting that the relationships for cohort members are more successful when the partnership designs incorporate the support of bridge leaders. Bridge leaders mediate the relationships, serving as a resource for both university and school district leaders and the recruited cohort members. The process of designing partnerships

between universities and school districts relies heavily on the collaborative efforts of many stakeholders from both entities. Collaboration is imperative for structure, support, and sustainment. Davis, Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) wrote, “Proponents maintain that close collaboration enhances program consistency and helps develop a sense of shared purpose and a common vocabulary between districts and local colleges of education” (p. 11). Effinger (2005) asserted, “University–school district partnerships are ideal for the development of leadership preparation programs thus providing a laboratory for the classroom” (p. 45).

Planning and Collaboration

The expectation for educational leaders to meet the high demands of federal, state and district learning mandates is constantly evolving. A constant evolution of high-stakes testing and learning-outcome accountability is driving districts’ needs for innovative leaders that can inspire and guide teacher-student relationships for decreased learning gaps and continuous growth. The Task Force on Principal Leadership, *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship* report, included the following statement: “Principals today also must serve as leaders for student learning. They must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze and use data in ways that fuel excellence” (Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), 2000, p. 2). Noting the specialized skills required of principals and the lack of qualified candidates, school districts and universities devised models that supported their missions. Using the ISLLC standards and assessments, many partnerships developed programs that varied in implementation and training, resulting in leaders with varied abilities and preparedness.

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Cray and Weiler (2011) reported specifically on the concerns of Colorado superintendents about principal preparedness of those completing partnership programs during the 2007-2008 school year.

School and university partnerships require planning to ensure all stakeholders are represented and mandates at all levels are met. Mast, Scribner, and Sanzo (2011) stated, “These partnerships require a high level of planning and decision-making to ensure programs are developed to meet district need, the requirements of the state and leadership provider, along with the students” (p. 31). Martin (2010), in her review of the planning process for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Winthrop partnership, discussed this overlap for partnership planning and preparing:

Both the university and the district have standards that are paramount to their work. The university, recognized by the National Council of the Accreditation of Teacher Education, bases its program heavily on the Educational Leadership Constituency Council standards. The district, however, evaluates principals on the state Principal Evaluation Standards. (p. 30)

Unlike most master’s programs, educational leadership has the unique responsibility to meet the requirements of the university program and its mandates along with the district, the state, and the federal government mandates. The overlap of standards demands the close collaboration of the two entities to create a purposeful program that can result in the desired outcome of highly trained educational leaders: “This partnership program between school district and leadership preparation programs requires in-depth planning to develop and sustain programs focused on preparing assistant principals and principals to meet the needs of students in diverse learning environments” (Mast et al., 2011, p. 33). Further requirements were described by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute:

In addition, the content should be aligned with the program's philosophy, and courses should build upon each other by integrating important disciplinary theories and concepts linking them to internship experiences. Program content in preparation programs should also be linked to state licensing standards. (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 8)

The fact that schools and universities work from separate federal and educational mandates makes their joint efforts to design a leadership program more difficult. The two entities share the same goal; however, the process and the mandates from which they work make their approach and vested interests, although aligned, very different in designing leadership programs. This same goal, despite a double agenda, makes collaboration among schools and universities the most pertinent component of the design and the partnership viability. A blend of expertise between higher education and K-12 practitioners is vital for school leaders and can serve to enhance student performance (Livingston, Davis, Green, & Despain, 2001; Wheaton & Kay, 1999).

A district-university partnership requires careful planning and collaborative decision making between the school district and the university to implement an effective educational leadership program: "Proponents maintain that close collaboration enhances program consistency and helps to develop a sense of shared purpose and a common vocabulary between districts and local colleges of education" (Davis et al., 2005, p. 11).

Peel et al. (2002) affirmed the importance of collaboration in their research finding:

Typically, at the heart of successful partnerships is a true collaborative spirit. The collaboration in this partnership contributed to the success of bureaucratic organizations being able to work together (in spite of systems that were often not aligned). This collaborative spirit and open communication led to very successful outcomes. From the outset, this project was developed collaboratively. While the master's program was in place at the university, course delivery and class schedules were discussed each semester with the public school partners. Often, professors and public school administrators cooperatively planned course design and delivery. Once programs were initiated, partners continued to collaborate on best practices to ensure continued success. (p. 322)

Mast et al. (2011) asserted authentic leadership planning includes the following tenets of collaboration: multiple perspectives are brought to the table, the process is values driven, the planning process for the program development discourages compartmentalization of program efforts, there is focus on consensus making, and there is acknowledgement of the difference(s) in power (pp. 38-39). Other authorities have agreed consensus is required when clarifying roles and responsibilities:

The participating districts and universities must agree to negotiate the nature of the projects and a host of related practical issues, such as the length of the project; the cooperation of various entities including the faculty, union representatives, the principal, the district superintendent, the school board, and parents (Pounder & Crow, 2005)

Along with shared decision making, “ethical principles that might constrain the project; and ways of managing internship assignments or projects that will not unduly interfere with other school processes” (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008, p. 310)

Peel et al. (2002) also commented on the importance of collaboration: “Another pitfall for some partnerships is the lack of true collaboration in determining goals; this problem may be attributed in part to perceptions formed when public school faculties meet with university faculties” (p. 321). The two entities in the partnership are vested independently of one another but each has the same goal in mind: to produce effective leaders trained to address the issues of the schools in which they will serve as leaders. Universities approach training through theory whereas school districts apply practical training experiences specific to the issues within the district; merging these efforts makes collaboration imperative to the process. Rakow and Robinson (1997) reported that collaboration was credited with the success of the program associated with the University of Houston–Clear Lake partnership. In their study of the Teacher Education Advancing

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Academic Achievement Model (TEAM), collaboration was a necessary component for school-level buy-in, which happened as the result of open meetings held in the school settings. These open meetings afforded a prospective school and cohort members opportunities to question university and district staff prior to becoming a site. Houston University and Clear Lake school district also concentrated on relationship building, which required time, nurturing, and the development of trust as they transitioned to the partnership model. Continued dialogue and the joint mission to provide the schools of Clear Lake school district and its interested staff members continued opportunities to share in the process created the “team” in TEAM (Rakow & Robinson, 1997, p. 66-67).

Even with careful planning and program implementation, there may still be concerns with the quality of the candidates. Cray and Weiler’s (2011) report from superintendents found that new principals entered the schools with insufficient knowledge of instructional strategies and best practices in the classroom. Many university preparation programs failed to provide skills in the technical areas of observation and evaluation of classroom behavior as reported by California administrators (Effinger, 2005; Gerritz, Koppich, & Guthrie, 1984). According to Cray and Weiler (2011), one superintendent noted,

A primary problem has been in working with experienced staff that feel they are being talked down to all the time. I don’t think the preparation was adequate for helping this individual become a leader of a team. All the management principles and learning strategies don’t count for much if the leader doesn’t listen or respect an experienced voice. (p. 930)

The PCS-MU partnership was a shared effort between the division and the university, which resulted in more than 50% of the previous cohort completers serving in leadership roles at the building level or in central office positions. Those not serving in

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leadership but still teaching were impacting school initiatives and using the knowledge gleaned to improve student learning. Formerly, the program represented the combined efforts of several DLT members and a university designee. This collaboration model was implemented to ensure that the design, course work, and interests of the division were fully infused into the interests and goals of the university. The 2013 cohort, however, consisted of the joint efforts of one DLT member, who reported back to the team when major changes or issues occurred, and one university advisor. This transition demonstrated confidence by both entities that the interests and regulatory compliances were honored and the expectations agreed upon executed within the structure of the cohort design. The university faculty member supported the process, visiting classes, collaborating with DLT members in teaching courses, and attending leadership activities. The university member was vested in the quality of the leadership and her attention to the candidates was a continual and active process. Along with the university designee, one other MU faculty member served on the selection panel and participated in the simulation activity. The willingness of the MU faculty to listen and implement the suggestions and direction desired by the PCS served as a strength of the collaboration and supported research implications.

Collaborative changes to the program design concentrated on the selection and mentorship processes. The improvements to the selection process aided in the ability to recognize leadership beyond principal recognition and a writing sample, whereas the Administrative Allies provided support and leadership building without the evaluation component. The continual dialogue and trust in the university supports research findings that collaboration is key to successful district university partnerships.

The problems with the “principal product” found in the Cray and Weiler (2011) report may very well be the flaws of the collaborative efforts of the school and university partnerships. Both entities desired to expose the candidates to the broad array of coursework and practical experience necessary to produce effective school leaders. Imperfections found in program design do not negate the viability of the partnership programs and their mission to produce leaders specifically trained for their locales; they instead reveal the necessity of continued collaboration and partnership between schools and universities.

Internships

School leadership internships expand candidates’ knowledge and serve as the vessel through which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality (Fry et al., 2005, p. 3). Internships are organized to provide candidates with authentic leadership roles, exposing them to the specific challenges and issues within the schools in which they desire to serve as assistant principals and principals. This specialized training opportunity allows the candidates to apply theory to the tasks of the job, thereby making the internship design the most meaningful to the candidates. Browne-Ferrigno and Fusarelli (2005) cited the internship is one of seven common elements within five, “high quality” preservice programs described originally by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), who noted these experiences provide opportunities to engage in leadership responsibilities for a substantial period of time under the tutelage of expert veterans (p. 739).

The feedback received from the veteran supervisor, coupled with performance in the internship, provides the candidate with a glimpse of his or her effectiveness on the job

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while also providing the district leadership team with a snapshot of anticipated performance. At the end of the internship experience both the candidate and the district leadership team have knowledge of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses and whether or not he or she will indeed be able to address the needs of the students and schools.

Time and collaboration matter. A weakness to the internship process concerns the limited required hours. Levine (2005) reported one third of prior cohort candidates included in his study suggested an improvement: to require more clinical experience of 45 to 300 hours. He credited the success of the Danforth model, in part, to a design strength, its third structural component, the 1,000-hour site-based internship with a practicing educational leader. The Danforth internship experience differed from many others in that it occurred alongside the coursework instead of at the completion of it (Levine, 2005, pp. 39-40). Accordingly, the Danforth internship model was rooted in the belief that cohort participants benefit significantly by the longer internship experience's coinciding with the curriculum coursework.

Lahera and Normore, as cited in Davis et al. (2005), asserted the internship experience should be performed in isolation. In their review of the Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy (GLGSA), they reported candidates were provided substitutes (through a grant) during the winter and spring quarters and assigned to schools other than their assigned schools to perform a leadership apprenticeship. This type of internship immersed cohort participants in daily leadership challenges, drawing upon the experiential learning theory, to provide experiences framed around authentic, real-world leadership problems. Another incentive in the GLGSA internship was the ongoing and

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immediate feedback concerning performance, which stimulated powerful and long-lasting transformational learning experiences for cohort participants (Lahera & Normore, as cited in Davis et al., 2012, p. 28). Gray (2001), in her article on leadership preparedness, offered tips she credited with enhancing her internship experience at Kannapolis Middle School in Kannapolis, North Carolina, starting in June of 1997 as part of her preparation program at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Supporting Levine's (2005) assertion that longer internships provide for more meaningful experiences, Gray asserted the internship should last a full school year to build the relationship with the veteran principal and to establish trust. She stressed the importance of establishing the intern as an active member of the school leadership team and having him or her begin before teachers arrive for the start of the new school year. Gray suggested after the integration of the intern as a member of the leadership team, the principal and intern should establish a vision for the internship experience that will provide the intern with the skills he or she is expected to gain and the duties he or she will be expected to perform. A third aid to Gray's internship experience was the gradual increase in her duties, beginning with shadowing and slowly increasing duties until she captured the entire leadership role. Gray also tied the success of her internship to the close relationship between the principal and her as well as the constant collaboration and feedback. Constant feedback and meetings provided time for continuous evaluation. Daily meetings with the principal and other leadership in the building afforded Gray opportunities to ask questions and work through concerns while receiving input for improvement. Finally, Gray's experience included the use of the university bridge leader as a support. This bridge leader reinforced and advocated for both the intern and the

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principal in creating the vision for the internship, assessing problems, and aiding in resolutions (Gray, 2001, pp. 661-665). Although Gray's suggestions were shared in a personal reflection, they provided a guideline for design that emphasized the importance of long-range internships with continuous collaboration among the candidate, the principal, and the university bridge leader.

Orr's (2011) 2004-2007 cross-sectional study of 17 university-based programs, of which 4 were in partnership with the local school districts, affirmed the importance of time for internship effectiveness. Programs were selected based on participation and affiliation with the UCEA, the Learning and Teaching in Educational Leadership Special Interest Group (LTEL-SIG), the Taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs, or a statewide consortium of leadership preparation programs. The total sampling from the 17 universities included 629 graduates. Survey findings concerning internships yielded the following: 14 of the 17 universities implemented internships, and each of those 14 participants was assigned a building-level experience. Five of the programs allowed candidates partial release time to perform internships (during planning periods and after student release) seven programs released candidates part-time (reduce schedule), and the remaining two schools' candidates reported completing their internships during summers, evenings, and weekends. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 3 of the school and university partnership participants rated the following components of their internships as follows: *learned to lead vision and ethics*, 3.9; *learned to lead learning*, 3.3; *learned to lead organizational learning*, 3.7; *learned management and operations*, 3.2; and *learned to lead parents and community engagement*, 3.4. The fourth partnership rated the experiences 4.6, 4.6, 4.7, 3.7, and 4.5 respectively. The rationale for the ratings

was not substantiated in the study; neither were the reasons the fourth partnership candidates rated their experience so differently from the others. What the findings do reflect is the majority of the partnership participants believed their internships insufficiently prepared them to assume the role of principal (Orr, 2011, pp. 130, 135, 141). These findings also support Gray's (2001) and Levine's (2005) assertions that internships need to be longer in duration.

Collaboration drives internships. Noting internship designs are weak in providing adequate time for candidates to truly experience the plethora of duties required of principals, there are other components of the internship yielding opportunities for candidates to easily transition into leadership roles (Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, & Evans, 1998, p. 28). Researchers also stated:

In the past internships have been centered on tasks such as scheduling; budgeting, student discipline; faculty meetings; home-school communication laws, policies, and procedures; developing reports; school plant concerns; testing; facilitating school-community relations; arranging substitutes; and monitoring extracurricular activities. With the shift to data-driven instruction the emphasis for principal internships should be on tasks that facilitate instructional leadership, school improvement, and student achievement (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008, p. 310).

Internships designed to inspire instruction require collaborative efforts through which university and district groups meet regularly and formally to develop reciprocal understanding and support for both entities. Also, the two groups should function as an advisory group, working together to shape policy and practice as related to preparation and continuous on-the-job-training. This collaboration of school and university determines what projects the candidates or cohort members will perform, how long the projects will last, who will serve as mentors or supervising principals, what training will be needed, how the cohort members will be supported and evaluated, and how the

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internships will be implemented so that they do not unduly interfere with other school processes (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008, pp. 312-313). Successful internships evolve when they are implemented with shared responsibilities, clearly defined goals, and a communicated commitment to instructional leadership for the development of principals.

The internship experience afforded PCS-MU Cohort participants was during the summer due in part to the impact that school year internships would have on the division financially and, most importantly, academically. Although the internship design followed the summer internship model, PCS-MU provided the cohort participants with other leadership experiences, thereby providing authentic leadership opportunities including building- and central office-level exposure. One example was the Communities Priorities Workshop, in which the cohort members, in their first semester, facilitated the sessions for the purpose of shaping a set of shared outcomes for the school division (PCS, 2013). The cohort participants were evaluated by DLT members and provided specific feedback on strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of improvement. Two of the cohort participants were selected as site coordinators for summer school, demonstrating the desire of the partnership to stretch and groom leaders as well as allow those exhibiting exceptional skills the opportunity to take the helm.

Internships are not finished products; they are growing, developing leaders under construction, and improving contextual relevancy of these experiences focusing on instructional leadership. As these experiences are powerful learning tools, the relationships among the schools, universities, and cohort members must be continuous collaborative experiences. Because most districts cannot afford to remove teachers from classes during the school year, the common practice is to offer summer internships. The

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PCS-MU model supplements the internship with other authentic leadership opportunities, which fortify the participants' experiences on varied levels.

Mentorships

Until recently, most school systems concentrated mentorship funding on teachers, citing teachers' direct influence on students, thereby allowing principals to enter into their leadership roles with a sink-or-swim mindset. When the schools and university partnership design was implemented, mentoring became an important component for educational leadership training. Partnerships include mentorship to equip future leaders with real guidance from knowledgeable professionals who have been trained for their mentoring role and who are engaged for a sufficient period of time to build practical readiness, in context, and offer continued learning and support (The Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 6; Zubrzycki, 2013, p. 4). Mentorship is one component is often missing from partnerships, thereby eliminating a support for the novice or aspiring leader and a connection to the district that can effectively inspire leadership growth.

Partnering a novice principal with a career principal has been carefully integrated into some leadership designs, with anticipation that the relationship could garner support and provide new principals with wise, experienced guides and role models. To effectively incorporate mentorship, specific issues have been addressed, including how to select the prospective mentors, how to adequately compensate the mentors, and how to focus subjective anecdotal content (The Wallace Report, 2007, p. 7).

Levine's 2005 report, *Educating School Leaders*, credited California School Leadership (CSLA), an educational leadership program implemented from 1985 to 2002, and Leadership Initiative For Transformation (LIFT), a Chicago-based preparatory

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program, as the prototypes for many urban schools. These programs focused on a student-centered climate, partnering the cohort members in mentoring relationships with experienced principals (Levine, 2005). The 2007 Wallace Foundation report credited Jefferson County, Kentucky, and the New York City Leadership Academy for realizing the importance of mentoring as a means to familiarize novice administrators with the workings and priorities of the system, while also challenging new leaders to change the interest of the schools to encourage learning as its priority.

Along with the authors of the Wallace Foundation report, other researchers also have credited school and university partnerships' use of principal mentors as an effective tenet of practical training. Zubrzycki (2013), in her article on principal development, shared several authorities' assertions on the advantages of mentorship. Research on district–university partnerships has asserted the value of mentorship in focusing on district-specific content and initiatives). She also affirmed that training in low-performing schools is beneficial because these future leaders more than likely will be hired to lead these schools. Zubrzycki included a quotation from the coordinator of the Urban Leadership Program and University of Illinois at Chicago partnership, whose program involved 83 principals working in Chicago's schools: "Schools headed by graduates of the program are more than twice as likely to close achievement gaps between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds" (Tozer, as cited by Zubrzycki, 2013, p. 6). In the same article, Zavitkovsky, a former principal who was coaching future leaders in the Chicago program, stressed the importance of using principals who had succeeded in the division to pass on to the next generation of principals what they had learned (as cited in Zubrzycki, 2013).

Mentorships foster growth. In consideration of how to stay connected to and support the principals in training, one tenet implemented in the design is the mentor-mentee relationship. “In well-structured mentoring programs, the mentor and mentee make a mutual commitment to work collaboratively and toward the accomplishment of an individually tailored professional development plan” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 10). Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) suggested leader professional development start during university preparation, with leadership mentoring being a part of the clinical practice found in administrative internships to “help aspiring and new principals expand their knowledge and skill in facilitation, influence, and vision building” (Zepeda, Bengtson, & Parylo, 2012, p. 122). The literature also has asserted that mentors represent an effective support for newly hired principals. Weingartner noted, “An effective mentoring program offers novice principals a pool of mentors” and creates “an environment in which a principal could pursue questions, issues, concerns, and frustrations with an experienced peer whose sole purpose is to provide support, advice, and direction” (Parylo et al., 2012, p. 124).

Gray (2001) supported mentorship as a viable component of the partnership program design and suggested the following key elements: training mentors skilled at teaching adults and equipping them with effective coaching strategies, having the mentor and mentee meet at least a month prior to the internship to create a shared purpose (rooted in the standards adopted by district and state), scheduling daily meeting times for reflection and feedback, and communicating with the university bridge leader when issues arise and resolution is needed (pp. 663-665). The mentorship elements provide a general guideline for districts and universities to develop programming stressing the

importance of mentoring relationships between candidates and seasoned principals, facilitated by university bridge leaders. In addition to the relationships of the stakeholders, the other key element is selecting mentors who can implement the coaching strategies while driving the mission of the district. To maintain these goals continued connections are needed.

Davis et al. (2012) described the mentorship program implemented through the partnership of the Great Leaders for Great Schools Academy (GLGSA) and Cal Poly Ponomo. The GLGSA Planning Team, consisting of central administration from the school division and the university faculty, selected experienced school principals who promoted positive interpersonal relationships, advanced student achievement, and expressed interest in participating. After selection, the mentor principals were trained on key mentoring strategies, apprenticeship goals and outcomes, and the methods to assess performance by a Cal Poly Ponomo faculty member. The mentor training was crucial to the development of the cohort candidates' school-wide change initiative (SWCI) or school learning plan, for which the candidates were guided by their mentor principals.

The PCS-MU partnership developed a mentorship component, partnering seasoned principals with cohort participants to support and inform them on important processes. The design of the mentorship program required the principal ally (seasoned principal) to attend an initial informational meeting after agreeing to partner with a cohort participant. The initial meeting covered the purpose of the principal ally, monthly meeting agenda items, and a contract of expectations for the participant and the ally principal. The principal ally viewed a PowerPoint presentation, which specified the ally role, "to act as mentor or coach to a future building administrator and 'Promising

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Principal’” (PCS, 2013). The partnership specified that principal allies serve as mentors and coaches. The principal as an ally mentor served to

- Expand knowledge of leadership skills
- Increase access to challenging opportunities and responsibilities
- Develop an administrative perspective
- Associate with a successful role model
- Provide opportunity to discuss administrative and educational issues with a respected practitioner
- Offer on-going support and encouragement
- Give honest and constructive feedback
- Access to inside information and organization dynamics
- Help in building a professional network
- Increase self-confidence...heightened career aspirations

(www.nassp.org, as cited in *PCS Administrative Ally MU Promising Principal Overview*, 2013)

Upon agreeing to become a principal ally, the mentor completed the contract and received a monthly calendar with discussion topics that were aligned with the theory-based curriculum. According to the PCS (2013), the intended outcome of the allied principal mentorship experience was to

- Showcase leadership
- Promote learning experiences that develop leadership skills and provide professional guidance
- Provide direct access to a support system
- Promote the foundation of a lasting professional network

The Cray and Weiler (2011) study found “the array of new administrator needs noted by the superintendents in this study suggests a need to formalize strong ongoing connections among those systems” (p. 931). The connections provided principals with the strategies and support to impact achievement. The researchers stated, “Such coordination could serve to bring effective teachers through development of leadership and change strategies and ensure on-site support for interpreting and managing the Year 1 challenges of a new principal” (Cray & Weiler, 2011, p. 934). This notion suggests the

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concept of districts' training their own through university partnerships is a sound approach to cultivating effective leaders, but the programs still need continual support and mentorship in the 1st year to ensure the transition yields leaders who are aware of the responsibilities of the job, can manage the stakeholder relationships, and are knowledgeable in instructional best practices.

Summary

Education has moved toward high-stakes testing and accountability, which has in turn driven the need for principals who can enact positive change (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Mandates and reforms have revamped educational programs to produce leaders who can impact learning outcomes, promote and sustain relationships with stakeholders, and keep abreast of the technological and educational trends, recognizing how these all impact and increase student achievement. The literature affirmed many partnerships are effectively producing leaders that can address the needs of their schools, but the issues with funding and the need for these programs in smaller, rural areas have caused some educators to doubt the ability of these programs to last. The previous literature was limited in its focus and addressed individual programs; therefore, much of the information exposed snapshots of programs and outcomes, providing little evidence regarding how the overhaul of leadership was truly impacting instruction, student growth, and achievement. The program tenets of collaboration and planning are effective when district and university members trust, value, and respect one another. When goals are poorly conveyed and one entity's interests dominate program design, the partnership is weak and principal preparedness compromised. University-district partnerships are

strong when each entity's interest is represented along with well-developed internships and mentorships (Davis et al., 2005).

Along with collaboration and planning, another key aspect of the partnership design is the internship experience. Extensive research has been compiled on the internship experience leaders are expected to perform as part of their fulfillment. Many of the studies have reported on the successes of individual programs but failed to include information about the impact of internships on learner outcomes and instruction. Most of the research described how leaders are groomed and prepared in this phase of their experience. Findings of internship studies support long intern experiences, consisting of 300 or more hours performed during the traditional school year. Internships assigned over summer schedules, during planning periods, and after work hours provide exposure to leadership but limit authentic opportunities to lead and address daily tasks. In addition to the limitation of time, the exclusion of the intern as a leader by the administration and staff also creates weak internship experiences for novice leaders. The other limitation noted as a weakness in design was the mentorship component.

Research has supported the implementation of mentorship as a design component. One study of an urban division's partnership design was credited for its mentoring program, citing it as an integral component of the program and for enlisting the mentors as full partners in the delivery and development of the integrated learning experiences (Simmons, Grogan, Preis, Matthews, Smith-Anderson, Walls, & Jackson, 2007). Like the Simmons et al. (2007) study, most of the existing research was limited to specific programs revealing that many programs were missing this design element or had not fully developed mentorship. Research also indicated the mentor serves not only as the expert

but also as a resource and support. There are other components that drive the successful training of leaders, but the literature addressed planning, collaboration, internship, and mentorship and therefore influenced the direction and focus of this study design.

Most of the research substantiated the idea that the success of district–university partnerships’ was related to their ability to address the individual needs of school districts, tailoring their leaders for specific instructional leadership. Although the principal is the leader, the one responsible for student gains and promoting the relationships that enhance and impact the opportunities for learner outcomes, the education he or she receives should be tailored by the division that is accountable for the schools. This literature review supported the intent of this study to evaluate principal preparedness of the PCS-MU Cohort, specifically relating to the tenets of planning, collaboration, internship, and mentorship.

Modeling other qualitative studies like, Effinger (2005), and Sanzo, Myran and Normone (2012), the intent was to fill gaps concerning the development and sustainability of district-university partnerships by focusing on an area that has not garnered a wealth of research. Case studies like the one performed by Peel, Peel and Baker (2002) of programs have been conducted crediting best practices and key design components highlighting recruitment, internship and partnership. Unlike these studies, this one expands the scope to include the perceptions of leadership stakeholders concerning the effectiveness of these constructs in principal preparedness. Considering the novelty of district-university partnerships, the research is continuing to emerge making it imperative to gain the observations and experiences of those designing, instructing, mentoring and supervising the programs.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to describe the research design implemented to capture the leadership stakeholders' perceptions of PCS experiences in the development and sustainment of the district-university partnership. Included in this chapter are the research questions, the procedure for data collection, and the instrumentation framing the qualitative study.

Research Questions

The literature review provided information on the mandates and policies driving the push for district–university partnerships as an approach for principal preparedness, noting a predicted shortage of leaders as well as leadership programs producing aspiring principals ill equipped to address learner outcomes. The literature also addressed specific design constructs implemented by district–university partnerships that have proved effective in grooming aspiring leaders, including planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship. With these design tenets in mind, the researcher in this study of PCS-MU sought to ascertain stakeholders' perceptions of leadership preparedness. Specific research questions were the following:

3. What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the district–university educational leadership partnership?
4. What are the experiences of stakeholders in the educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features?

Research Design

Employing an exploratory design, the researcher aimed to develop an initial understanding of the phenomenon under investigation for the purpose of defining concepts, developing hypotheses, refining questions, and providing a platform for further investigation (Sarantakos, 2005). Implementation of an exploratory research approach to the study of the PCS-MU partnership provided descriptions and themes not readily disclosed due in part to an underrepresentation of research on principal preparedness and, more specifically, on the design constructs implemented by partnerships. Yin (2003) explained exploratory research seeks to define “what” the experiences of the stakeholders are and serves as the strength of this type of questioning to deal with a full variety of evidence (documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations). Exploration as a design approach was intended for the purpose of shaping the instrumentation utilized to examine the PCS-MU implementation of planning and collaboration, internship and mentorship influence, and preparation of aspiring principals in the PCS division.

PCS and MU partnered for the purpose of cultivating aspiring leaders to address specific demographics and educational needs of PCS and thereby improve learner outcomes. By partnering with MU, PCS was able to recruit teachers within the division who manifested leadership skills and who supported the district’s vision through innovation and proven instructional strategies. Partnering with MU also provided a unique opportunity for PCS to explain the key elements in the design as well as the rationale for implementation. Recognizing design constructs are essential, the researcher aspired to learn the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding how planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship prepare aspiring leaders.

Methods Approach

Because the researcher wanted to ascertain personal reflections and interpretations of PCS-MU stakeholders, a qualitative research design was applied. This approach was favored over a quantitative design desiring multiple, first person interpretations of the same experience. Qualitative research “employs different philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (Creswell, 2009, p. 173). Qualitative research is fluid, shaped and influenced by social interactions aimed at gathering answers to questions of meaning from those who have directly experienced the phenomenon (Arghode, 2012; Roberts, 2013). Qualitative researchers are more concerned with perceived meaning and therefore explore the meaning of a phenomenon or process as understood by the participants.

Qualitative research is inductive, requiring the researcher to explore themes and insights of those directly involved in the phenomenon occurring. The study of the PCS-MU partnership was framed around the insights of stakeholders to gather information regarding the rationale for the design constructs and how these constructs prepare aspiring principals. Szyjka (2012) affirmed this type of inquiry requires the researcher to investigate a limited number of cases very closely; an individual’s personal experience with a phenomenon is revealed, which places that experience into a more meaningful context because the integrity of the social context is upheld.

Phenomenology

...a phenomenology study... is one that focuses on the descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they have experience. One can employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance of using methods that capture people’s experience of the world without conducting a phenomenological study that focuses on the essence of shared experience. (Patton, 1990, p. 71)

Realizing the goal of phenomenology, to report on human experience, the researcher was concerned with tenets influencing the PCS-MU partnership design as interpreted by those involved with recruiting, instructing, supervising, mentoring, and hiring. Other district-university partnership studies applied phenomenology and case study design to ascertain successful models and design tenets that strengthen principal preparedness programs. The focus on one program (PCS-MU partnership) to ascertain principal preparedness led the researcher to model phenomenological design, constructing theories inductively through interviews, documents, and observations. Considering the methodology, information ascertained was subjectively interpretive, reflecting the experiences, values, and biases (Szyjka, 2012).

The study design was intended to yield a discipline-specific theoretical framework and produce a rich description of the constructs implemented by the PCS-MU partnership to groom its leaders. In investigating the PCS-MU partnership, the research was rooted in lived experience shaped by the phenomenon, which, for the purpose of this study, was the partnership design for preparing aspiring instructional leaders.

Exploratory and Inductive

As this study was formed around one program and its stakeholders, not several cases, it was by definition a case study—bounded by time and activity through the “collection of detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Creswell, 2002, p. 13). The case study provided perceptions of the PCS-MU partnership by people who were uniquely able to inform as experts or who were privileged witnesses to the event (Weiss, 1994).

Exploratory design aided in shaping the themes of the phenomenon. Infusing exploratory and phenomenology research led to the inclusion of an open-ended interview process. Szyjka (2012) wrote, “Qualitative research typically asks open-ended questions, seeking to understand the complexity of a single idea or phenomenon” (p. 113). The participants were invited by e-mail to participate in the study and asked to provide a date, time, and location of their choosing for interviewing. The participants were provided the guidelines for the interviews, including the purpose; how their responses would uncover themes, with no incorrect answers; and how confidentiality would be honored, in hopes of assuring that participants would answer freely about their beliefs and opinions. Interview questions were semistructured with probing questions to provide clarity and validity. With regard to the rationale for the design, the questions were formulated to uncover how the design tenets shaped the partnership and how internship and mentorship were implemented to groom aspiring leaders.

Data-Driven

Qualitative research relies on data analysis to form the themes, perspectives, and reports. According to Creswell (2009), data analysis involves making sense of text and image data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. In applying phenomenological research methods, the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of essence description forms the study design (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). To amass the perceptions of principal preparedness under the design constructs of planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship, it was necessary to interview, observe, interpret, and theorize within the natural setting of the district–university partnership.

To ensure data would be purposeful, the researcher narrowed the focus to the experiences of leadership stakeholders as the authorities for identifying strong instructional leaders and their influence in the partnership design for the purpose of training aspiring instructional leaders. The study involved multiple sources of data, including interviews, observations, and examination of documents (recruitment process, selection, program description) for the purpose of answering *what*, *how*, and *why* questions. According to Szyjka (2012), “how and why questions can be answered when a researcher uses qualitative research; this aids in the exploration of phenomena related to the experiences of the sampling” (p. 112).

The researcher selected the following data collection processes in attempts to gain the how and why based on Creswell’s (2009) rationale of purposefulness: (a) interviewing the PCS stakeholders one-on-one for historical information and question control; (b) observing to gather first-hand experience, record information as it occurred, and explore topics that might be uncomfortable for participants to discuss; and (c) examining documents as an unobtrusive information source and as written evidence to further formulate themes.

Observation Supports Emerging Conceptualization

The researcher applied an observational protocol to reconstruct dialog, provide descriptions of accounts of particular events and activities, and generate reflective notes to further conceptualize the themes of the study. The researcher served as an observer of the processes in and outside the setting of the PCS-MU Cohort. The researcher attended classes with the cohort participants to discern the role of the DLT members as instructors and supervisors of the aspiring leaders as the design became a lived experience. The

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researcher also observed stakeholders and cohort participants in their professional roles and within the cohort; these observations proved useful for understanding what participants did, their roles, and how these concepts altered in response. Walshe, Ewing, and Griffiths (2012) explained, “Observational data collection methods span research paradigms, from structured observation that counts instances of events, to highly unstructured participant observation” (p. 1049).

In addition to defining the roles of the study participants and the cohort members, the researcher clarified his role as the observer and established collection methods employed. Observations of the stakeholder participants and the district–university cohort participants revealed roles within the partnership as well as professional roles. Another goal of these observations was to determine how these roles impacted the decision-making process along with how the researcher perceived each participant in their roles. By conducting observations as a nonparticipant, the researcher was able to record information as it occurred while having minimal influence on the dynamics of the environment and actions of the participants (Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2012). Because of the researcher’s role as an invited guest speaker and mentor, some observations were performed as a participant; however, this situation was not disclosed to the cohort so as to gain knowledge in the natural setting in which they learned and performed simulated and authentic real-world experiences.

The research design evolved from an interest in the PCS-MU partnership design for principal preparedness. Narrowing the study focus to the constructs of planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship resulted from the authorities’ assertions that these tenets were highly effective components of revered district–university partnerships.

The rationale for performing a qualitative, phenomenological case study was to gain insights into the perceptions of preparedness by those directly involved regarding the intent of the partnership design and how the constructs of planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship were implemented to culminate in skilled instructional leaders for the division. With regard to the research design, the researcher followed Taber's (2012) dichotomous model, believing it to be aligned with the purpose of this study: to garner the perceptions of leadership stakeholders, acknowledging their overlapping roles as program advisors or coordinators, instructors, supervisors, and mentors. Modeled after Taber's design, the study was data-driven, relying heavily on interpretation, observation, and instrumentation to garner rich descriptions of the PCS-MU partnership design for the purpose of principal preparedness.

Researcher Bias

At the time of this research, the researcher and primary author was a 42-year-old doctoral candidate at Madison University, Educational Leadership and Foundations Department. He was reared in a two-parent, middle-class family with five siblings. He was employed with Peninsula City schools as a high school principal with more than 14 years of leadership experience. Other background information pertinent to disclose includes the following: The researcher was reared and educated in the city. He has worked exclusively for the division, serving as a building principal on every school level, including the central office. As a result of his career, the researcher had a long-standing, professional relationship (colleague, peer, supervisor, mentor/mentee, or subordinate) and rapport with all study participants.

Duties of the primary investigator involved supervision of all aspects of the study, including designing the study, performing the literature review, framing the methodology, developing the research questions, selecting the participants, designing the protocols (interviews, observations, etc.), submitting documents to the review and PCS, and ensuring the integrity of the study (IRB documents in Appendix A).

The other research team member was a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Madison University in Virginia. She was selected at the recommendation of the study chair. The criteria used included her experience in public school, her role as an instructional leader, and her involvement with research in the area of district-university partnerships as a doctoral candidate. The primary duties of the research team member included reviewing the study design and interviews for the purpose of validating or challenging the themes and codes. The team member's biases encompassed having exposure to the researcher's thesis and codes, accepting the invitation to participate at the request of her advisor, and serving as an instructional leader at the time of this study. Other biases that might have shaped her perceptions were her experiences with leadership in a neighboring district where she was employed, including interactions with noncohort and cohort participants from that school division.

Drisko (1997) asserted the importance of disclosing personal bias when performing a qualitative study: "The researcher must seek out and report both personal bias and interpretations that differ from those with which they began the study" (p. 86). Therefore, as an employee and administrator of PCS and an Allied Principal, this researcher acknowledged the potential for bias. The researcher, having served as principal in several schools and school levels and having hired several cohort participants

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and noncohort participants, held some preconceived bias with regard to the cohort participants' preparedness and effectiveness relating to job performance and, most importantly, learner outcomes.

The researcher having 15 years of leadership experience believes the district-university partnership between PCS and MU is a sound initiative for training aspiring principals. Cohort participants benefit from the DLT involvement as evident in their knowledge of PCS' learner needs and their ability to serve in a plethora of leadership roles within the division. While the DLT is permitted varied opportunities to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the cohort members as they serve as instructors and oversee the practical experiences. The overarching reward of the partnership is the opportunity to groom leaders from within the division already exhibiting leadership potential.

It was evident that PCS-MU partnership design is fluid and constantly being reviewed for improvement. Three constructs that were strengthened were recruitment, internship, and mentorship. One bias held in observing the previous cohorts was the selection process. Relying primarily on recommendations, the second cohort had a weakened leadership pool at the completion of the program. The interviews were more information sessions, requiring the candidates to introduce themselves and communicate their interest in the cohort and leadership aspirations. The current recruitment design was a stronger process but the pre-requisites for acceptance, which included candidates who were exceptional writers and those who showcase well in a fishbowl activity still does not ensure the partnership selected the strongest candidates.

Noting the importance of scholarship and ability to stay poised and articulate when posed with scenarios provides insight into anticipated performance, these are not stand-alone measures. Principals are an essential and necessary resource when selecting candidates and the process needs to include them beyond a letter of recommendation.

The researcher is in favor of internships occurring during the traditional school year. The financial and learner hardship that may result from this design is recognized however it does not negate the necessity of authentic opportunities to observe and evaluate aspiring leaders. Summer school practicums only provide a snapshot of the daily responsibilities of a building administrator and cannot serve as the only indicator for leadership capabilities. Therefore the projects that the PCS-MU model fortifies the practical experience with did enhance the opportunities to observe and evaluate aspiring leaders that may not be exhibited or offered in a summer school practicum.

Mentorship was another area the partnership collaborated and augmented. Initiating the Administrative Allies, the opportunity for aspiring leaders to form a relationship with a current principal to serve as a mentor and a coach. The division's recruitment of building principals is an effective initiative that could be further enriched by including retired administrators. The mentorship relationship is critical to the success of an aspiring leader in that it is a continual relationship grounded in mutual trust. Mentors accept the responsibility with the intent to be instrumental in ensuring the success of his mentee by providing constructive criticisms, serving as a mediator, and a sounding board. Including retired principals as mentors adds to the common sense, interpersonal, and practical skills critical to being a leader. Retired principals also offer

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fundamentals of leadership that sometimes get lost in the focus of leadership development.

Reporting these biases aided the researcher bracket assumptions. “Bracketing typically refers to an investigator’s identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study’s data” (Fischer, 2009). Review of biases with Dissertation Chair, research team and research member were performed to validate that the process was one of discovery and not of uncovering. These precautions were applied to acknowledge the goal of phenomenological work for the purpose of uncovering and not proving prejudgments (Wertz, 2005). To further determine and bracket assumptions and preconceived ideas the researcher examined and re-examined his notes.

Acknowledging the existence of researcher bias was not to eliminate these biases but to explain how they shaped the collection and interpretation of data (Merriam, 2009). In addition to the acknowledgment of bias, the member checker process was also implemented for identifying preconceived ideas about the cohort participants, in isolation and in comparison to noncohort leaders. Citing Wertz (2005), the researcher applied the basic concepts of phenomenology to include epoch to “apprehend the meanings of the world as they are given to the first-person point of view” (p. 168). Description of the data collection process included a section for biases and viewpoints; an independent observer reviewed the data collection to maintain the integrity of the study.

The researcher acknowledged that the stakeholders participating in this study also held prejudgments concerning the PCS-MU Cohort design and its aspiring leaders based on their interactions and roles in the division and planned to identify instances of bias.

Participants

Seeking to capture salient themes and information, the researcher's selection of participants included seven of the PCS DLT members and the principal coach, as well as three supervising principals and two nonsupervising principals of the division cohort. The researcher intended to use a sampling of 13 participants representative of the division leadership, including DLT members and experienced principals. DLT members were desired because of their direct involvement with the PCS-MU partnership through recruitment, teaching, supervising, and hiring of aspiring leaders, including cohort and noncohort participants. Experienced principals were included because of their expert knowledge of leadership and their involvement in the hiring of cohort and noncohort participants.

Creswell (2002) wrote, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 178). Acknowledging the intent of the research, to examine principal preparedness of the cohort members of the PCS-MU partnership, the researcher selected study participants based upon their leadership roles in the division and their roles within the partnership. DLT members also were selected because they were experts in identifying exceptional leaders and were responsible for recruiting, instructing, supervising, mentoring, and, potentially, hiring these aspiring leaders. Principals from the division served on various levels within the division and might have recommended cohort members, supervised internships, hired cohort completers, or had no interactions with the cohort members or the partnership.

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The 13 invited participants each had at least 10 years of building-level leadership experience. The seven DLT members varied in central office level leadership; two of the members had served more than 15-20 years, three had 8-10 years, and two had 2-4 years in the position. The member in central office had served at that level for 4 years, and the five principals, with one exception, had served as building-level principals for at least 10 years for the division. Of the five principals, two were leaders on the elementary level, one on secondary in middle school, one in a PreK-8 school, and one on the secondary, high school level. (See Table 1)

Table 1: *Experience of Principals*

Years of educational experience		Years of classroom experience	Years of leadership experience, building level		Years of leadership experience, central office level	Years of Involvement with the Partnership
Participants		Teaching Experience	Secondary Middle and High	Elementary	Central Office and DLT	To include all cohorts
DLT 1	29	12	0	0	17	8
DLT 2	36	17	12	0	7	4
DLT 3	40	11	0	13	13	3
DLT 4	32	9	0	11	12	8
DLT 5	26.5	0	20	0	6.5	5
DLT 6	32	0	0	0	32	5
DLT 7	18	4	6	6	2	1
DLT 8	33	8	18	0	7	1
DLT 9	19	5	14	0	0	0
DLT 10	09	5	4	0	0	0

DLT 11	19	4	0	15	0	1
DLT 12	15	5	2	8	0	1
DLT 13	12	4	0	8	0	1

The demographics depicted in Table 2 revealed the majority of the leadership for PCS were Caucasian and female; the other demographic data disclosed that there was only one other race represented in PCS leadership: African American. The DLT was heavily represented in that 7 of the 10 members participated. Of the 35 principals or coordinators serving at the building level for the division, 5 were included in the study. This number may appear to be an underrepresentation, but in considering the number serving as supervisors or mentors for the district–university partnership, as well as their years of experience in developing and identifying leaders and in leadership roles, the number is adequate and appropriate. The one unique participant of the study was the one principal that had fewer than 10 years of leadership experience, but that person was also a member of the first PCS-MU cohort.

Table 2. *Demographics of Participants*

Gender	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Total
Male	3 23.1%	1 7.7%	0 0%	0 0%	4 30.8%
Female	6 46.2%	3 23.1%	0 0%	0 0%	9 69.2%
Total	9 69.2%	4 30.8%	0 0%	0 0%	13 100%

This purposefully selected sample included eight DLT or central office members, three principals currently supervising cohort completers, and two principals who had neither worked with, hired, nor housed current cohort participants in their buildings. The principals participating also served as Administrative Allies.

Study participants. Following are demographic descriptions of the invited:

1. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: secondary teacher, and DLT member.
2. Female, African American, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: secondary level teacher, secondary principal (high and middle), DLT member.
3. Female, African American, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, administrator (outside the division) elementary principal, DLT member.
4. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, elementary principal, DLT member.
5. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: secondary API (high school), director of alternative and adult Education, DLT (outside the division), DLT member (in the division).
6. Male, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: Senior accountant for PCS, finance director (outside the division), executive director of financial services (outside the Division), assistant superintendent (outside the division), DLT member.
7. Male, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, assistant principal (elementary and middle), principal (elementary and middle), DLT member.

8. Male, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, consultant for the state department of education, principal (elementary), leadership coach (central office).
9. Male, African American, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, assistant principal (high school), principal (elementary and high school).
10. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: high school teacher, assistant principal (PreK-8), principal (middle school).
11. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, assistant principal (elementary), principal (elementary, outside the division), principal (elementary).
12. Female, African American, upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Experience: elementary teacher, assistant principal (elementary), principal (PreK- 8).
13. Female, Caucasian, upper-middle socioeconomic status. Experience: postsecondary teaching, elementary teacher, assistant principal (elementary), principal (elementary).

The researcher selected this group believing it would result in well-informed themes related to principal preparedness as well as these stakeholders' perceptions and recommendations regarding the division's approach for addressing leadership needs through its partnership design.

Procedures

The process was initiated with an application to the Madison University Review Board requesting exempt status to conduct research using human subjects. Upon approval, the researcher requested permission from Peninsula City Schools, completing the required application for conduction research within the division and submitting the study concept, which included the study invitation letter, a letter of study purpose, the interview protocol, and the interview questions.

After receiving district permission to conduct the study on the PCS-MU partnership, the researcher sent an invitation letter via electronic mail to the eight DLT and central office team members and the five principals (invitation letter in Appendix A). The electronic mail provided potential participants the purpose of the study and a letter of invitation with interview protocols (confidentiality, request to decline participation, and study purpose). The respondents agreed to participate, and follow-up phone calls were made to extend gratitude and establish an interview date, time, and place.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and document reviews. This section is devoted to the research protocols used to conduct the study.

Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews that were semi-structured, open ended, and exploratory to gather robust and rich descriptions and explanations. The interviews were structured to last no more than 60 minutes and when conducted stayed within the anticipated time restraint. They were scheduled over a 2-week period at the convenience of the participant with regard to date, time, and location. Each interview session was held at a location within PCS school conference rooms and central offices. The researcher

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facilitated the interviews, establishing confidentiality, ease of disclosure, and comfort. The protocols included the purpose for the interview, the ways in which the collected data would be used, a restatement of confidentiality, assurance of anonymity, and instructions indicating how to decline participation. For the purpose of recording the interviews, a digital recorder was used and downloaded into Garage Band and sent to a transcriber via e-mail. Once the receipt of files was confirmed, the files returned to the researcher, and the accuracy of the transcriptions determined, the recordings were erased from both sources.

Interview questions were designed to determine whether the PCS-MU partnership was preparing aspiring leaders under the design tenets of planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship for the purpose of improving instruction and learner outcomes. The researcher also wanted to understand how the design constructs were implemented to sustain the partnership and how the stakeholders perceived the internship and mentorship components. The interview questions (Appendix A) were separated into four categories:

1. Leadership Pathways: Questions were posed to ascertain how each participant acquired his or her leadership position and how he or she was trained for leadership. The purpose for seeking this information was to glean how these experiences may or may not have influence partnership design. These questions asked specific leadership training experiences, experiences with the district university partnership, and their perceptions of the partnership as an initiative for preparing aspiring leaders.

2. Partnership, Planning, and Collaboration: Questions were designed to provide information about the processes and rationales for the partnership design, including planning and collaboration activities. Recognizing that the tenets were closely connected, the researcher combined them to eliminate overlap and redundancy. The stakeholders were questioned about the evolution of the current design, how planning and collaboration processes drove the design, which stakeholders involved in the process, and what trainings are afforded supervising principals.
3. Internship: The internship provided authentic, real-world applications of theory in predetermined assignments for the cohort members and was a key component in leadership design. Related questions were generated based on a desire to understand how the partnership implemented the internship and its goal, including how and why supervising principals were selected, how they were trained and informed, and how the projects were developed.
4. Mentorship: Mentorship provided cohort participants with experienced principals to support and guide them through the program. The questions for this category were developed to glean the specific role of the mentor, including ways in which the mentor role differed from that of supervising principal, and how mentors were selected.

Observations

For the purpose of providing a “firsthand encounter with the phenomena” of interest in the natural setting of occurrence and to supplement and clarify data in qualitative research, the researcher’s observations also contributed and shaped the study’s

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findings (Merriam, 1998, p.94). The researcher was invited to the interactive session for the third cohort. The interactive session was part of the recruitment process implemented to further narrow the selection process. Candidates were evaluated on their ability to respond verbally and in written form to a current leadership issue. Prior to attending the interactive session, the researcher determined the following elements were vital to ascertain; the stakeholders involved and their involvement with the process as well as their interactions with the candidates, the components of the selection process implemented, and the effectiveness of the activities for final selection of candidates. The components of the interactive session was a 50-minute timed writing to sample a case and the group “fishbowl” activity. The timed writing was first. Candidates were given the same three questions based on a case and they were required to answer 2 of the 3 questions posed (Appendix C).

The second half of the interactive session was the fishbowl activity. The candidates were divided into groups of 3-4 and asked to address a question related to the same case-study from the timed writing. The researcher, again viewed the process to determine how the leadership stakeholders interacted with the candidates, their level of involvement in the process and the strength of this activity in narrowing the selection of candidates.

The next opportunity to witness the cohort occurred after their acceptance into the cohort, during the second semester of coursework. The cohort participants were assigned to facilitate a workshop. This workshop joined community members in like groups (students, teachers, parents, elected officials, city personnel, military, faith groups) with a PCS-MU cohort participant as the group facilitator to share ideas for

improvements. Attending this event, the researcher was again observing the leadership stakeholders involvement with the process, the leadership stakeholders interaction with the cohort participants, and how this experience aided in grooming the cohort participants for school leadership.

Administrative Allies training was another opportunity for the researcher to witness the PCS-MU partnership. Unlike the others, the researcher had a dual role, as a participant and an observer. The process for this observation began with recognizing personal biases and listing these for reference when they may occur. The other part of the process involved the same process performed at the other events (what leadership stakeholders were involved and the level of involvement, the interactions with mentors and the leadership stakeholders and the strength of the initiative to aid in grooming aspiring leaders).

In addition to these activities, the researcher observed classes and presented as a guest speaker. The observations were conducted to glean how the leadership infused theory and authentic experiences to stretch and tailor leadership. At the completion of each observation, notes were reviewed, coded, and triangulated to inform on stakeholders level of involvement, interactions with cohort participants, and how these activities aided in grooming aspiring leaders.

Documents

The documents that shaped the study were public and private. Creswell (2009) defines documents as “public documents (e.g., newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports) or private documents (e.g., personal journals and diaries, letters, e-mails) (p.

181). These public and private documents used for this study aided the researcher narrow themes and support the findings of the interviews and observations, as well as triangulate.

Documents used to inform and shape the themes and perceptions of this study were the public documents of the division (recruitment manual, recruitment notes, candidate packets, and Administrative Allies presentation and manual). These public documents provided rich description of the processes related to collaboration and design improvements to PCS-MU model. Private documents were in the form of notes to include observations, biases, feedback from meetings with study chair, research member, and follow up meetings with study participants. Review of private documents further informed and added to the triangulation of themes and codes. Along with the recruitment forms, the PowerPoint and design for the Administrative Allies, the personal notes and follow up interview meetings resulted in continuous comparison of data.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2009) wrote, “Data analysis involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants” (p. 184). After the transcriptions were received, the researcher reviewed and categorized the themes and coded accordingly. The interviews and coded themes were then sent to the other team member to complete the member-check process. Conducting qualitative research involves descriptive analysis of lived experience to further understand the human experience. For the purpose of this research, the study findings were used to ascertain the success of the PCS-MU partnership as experienced by the leadership stakeholders.

Transcribing Data

The transcription process began with organizing and preparing the data for analysis. Creswell (2009) provided a linear hierarchical approach, from specific to general steps, with multiple levels that could be implemented in varied order (see Figure 1).

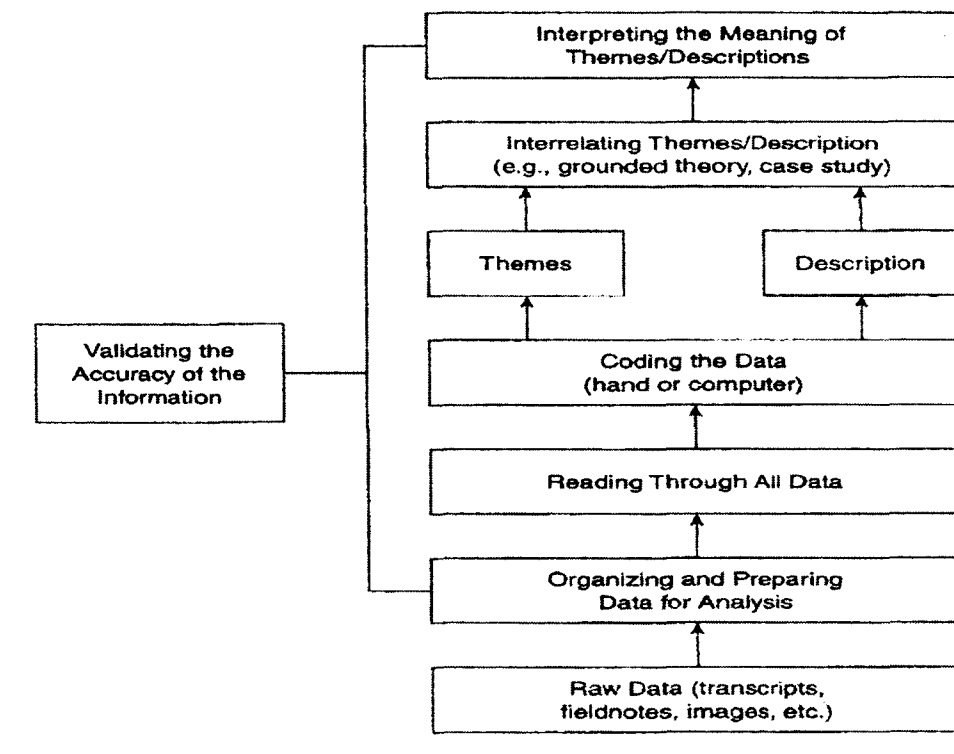


Figure 1. Creswell's data analysis in qualitative research.
(Creswell, 2009, p. 185)

The researcher employed Creswell's data analysis steps to ensure a process of validity, reliability, and generalizability.

In keeping with the phenomenological approach to assemble textual and structural descriptions, the researcher implemented a hermeneutical approach- describing the

experiences as well as, epoch- eliminating as much of the researcher's experience from the phenomena to obtain a fresh perspective (Creswell, Hanson, Clark-Plano & Morales, 2007 p. 84). This process involved reviewing materials and sorting the data into potential themes. Reviewing the DLT and principal interviews, the general constructs were shaped based on what the participants said, the tone of the ideas, and the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information (Creswell, 2009).

Coding is the process of breaking data into parts that can be compared for similarities and differences for developing related categories (Strauss & Corbin, as cited in Yearworth & White, 2012). The coding applied for this study was manual. The researcher merged the triangulated themes from observation notes with the themes from the interviews further triangulating and coding. This process is further explained in the findings section of the study.

The process of epoch was performed to remove and record biases and predetermined ideas. These private notes became part of data collection and were also used in discussions and meetings with chair and research team member. The steps for coding were theme identification, interpretation, coding, reviewing, organizing, verifying, reevaluation and re-coding. The researcher began the process by describing the emergent themes from private notes from observations of PCS-MU activities and verifying with research chair (Creswell, 2009). After discussion and challenges concerning codes that emerged from interrater meeting, the primary researcher also met with research chair. After these consultations, the researcher reevaluated themes and after reviewing the transcribe interviews generated themes and description making a comparison. The process would be performed again and codes developed from the interviews and notes

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were now sent to the research team member again resulting in discussion and challenges, and the research chair. The primary researcher having established consensus by reviewing notes from meetings with research team and research chair of the data set, completed code legend and resent the codes along with Chapters 2 and 3 to the research team member for further discussions and challenges. The second meeting resulted in interrater consensus and the primary researcher followed the same protocol to finalize the codes.

Trustworthiness

To address threats to “trustworthiness researchers’ the following criteria and accompanying strategies can be applied: truth-value through credibility, applicability through transferability; and neutrality through “confirmability” (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003, p. 421). Due to the researcher’s impact on the construction and facilitation of the interviews, the coding and member checker processes, and the demographic data and description, stringent measures were applied to ensure trustworthiness. Desiring rigor, and to test the extent that trustworthiness had been met, the researcher also applied prolonged engagement, persistent, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

Trustworthiness is the way one works to meet the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of research (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). The primary researcher endeavored to maintain transparency and ethicality by implementing triangulation, peer debriefing, reflective commentary and member checks. Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007) include triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks along with prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and negative case analysis in a

list of strategies comprising “parallel criteria of trustworthiness.” Parallel criteria of trustworthiness serve to increase or test credibility, transferability, and dependability and “confirmability”.

Triangulation of documents, informants, and data sources began the process to assure validity and reliability. Careful review of private and public notes were performed to identify emerging themes, as well as those who informed to include Research Chair, Research Team Member, and interview participants. Shenton (2004) asserts triangulation is necessary to verify individual viewpoints and experiences offering a rich picture under scrutiny (p. 66). Debriefing with Research Chair to review themes and triangulation as well as conferring with the Researcher Team Member was a continual step in maintaining trustworthiness. Discussion with research team and others, to discover alternative approaches, flaws, and direction was the primary reason for debriefing. The other was to determine ideas and interpretations, and continued probing to aid the researcher in identifying his biases and ensure prolonged engagement. Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) further establish that peer debriefing “keeps the inquirer honest, assists in developing working hypotheses, develop and test emerging design, and obtain emotional catharsis” (p. 19). Reflective commentary by the primary researcher established a thorough and continuous process for removing biases, developing constructions and informing on the credibility of the study. The final step in maintaining trustworthiness was member checks. “Throughout this process, the researchers ask participants if their themes or categories make sense, whether they are developed with sufficient evidence, and whether the overall account is realistic and accurate” (Creswell & Miller, 2009, p. 127).

CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Chapter 4 presents results and analysis of the data garnered through the phenomenological study of the PCS-MU partnership. The researcher sought the perceptions of division and central office leadership members, as well as the principals supervising cohort and noncohort leaders.

The codes were shared with Research Team Member One, with one challenge in Category 1, Subcategory 1, *Self-reflection*. After deliberation and providing rich dialogue with Research Team Member One, the researcher restructured the subcategory from Leadership Pathways, determining the factor was addressed in Subcategory 2, to Self-reflection. With only one challenge, the interrater was determined to be above 90% indicating the coding and themes were valid and reliable.

The themes that evolved from the interviews conformed closely to the researcher's perceptions of the district–university partnership, specifically as it impacted leadership development for the division. This result was credited to selection of participants as experts in identifying leadership potential, developing leaders, and perceiving program design for the purpose of grooming promising principals. The thematic categories that emerged were: partnership through collaboration, the partnership model, collaboration as a design construct, recruitment, internship, and mentorship, traditional leadership pathways, partnership leadership pathways, viability, preparedness, practical experiences, non cohort leaders, out of district leaders, and theory. These

textural descriptions emerged from private and public notes and were triangulated using a structural diagram to organize and combine overlaps.

Findings

The PCS-MU partnership was formed for the purpose of providing aspiring leaders with theory-based instruction and authentic leadership experiences for cohort participants. Commencing with the third cohort, the faculty and DLT designees implemented design improvements to the selection and mentoring aspects of the program. Desiring the leaders with the most promise in the preparation program, the partnership required that candidates participate in a fishbowl activity to showcase their ability to process and respond to leadership issues under time constraints. This activity allowed the DLT and other selected leadership members in the division to witness interactions of candidates as they solved current issues plaguing education and, more specifically, the division. Recognizing a weakness in the area of support and resources, the district–university partnership implemented a mentorship program for the cohort participants. The Administrative Allies program paired a promising principal candidate with an expert building leader to offer support and a resource for dialogue that was not evaluative (Administrative Allies documents in Appendix C). These two design changes illustrate the active communication between two entities that results in true collaboration when there is trust and mutual respect for one another’s interests. The study sought perceptions of the leadership from informed experts of leadership development and from experts in program evaluation.

Seeking interpretations and information about the experiences of the DLT members and building level principals, the interviews questions were divided into four

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categories: leadership pathways; partnership, planning, and collaboration; internship; and mentorship.

Leadership: Self-Reflection and Training

The first category sought the participants' reflections of their leadership experiences and their involvement and experiences with the district university partnership. Eleven of the participants began their educational careers in the classroom setting, one as an instructional assistant, and another as a substitute teacher; the remaining nine were classroom teachers, two of whom were career switchers prior to becoming teachers. The two participants with no classroom experience entered education at the leadership level, one as an assistant principal and the other in finance in central administration. Regardless of how their careers began, several participants shared that a previous supervisor or principal under whom they served saw leadership potential in them and encouraged their leadership aspirations; one participant said, "My principal was a real pest and continued to place notices for programs and master's degrees in my mailbox. I was at my first elementary from '81-'88, and each of the principals drove my leadership path." Another DLT member shared the following:

I was an elementary teacher. My principal approached me about running an after-school tutorial program at the school. [This was my first] opportunity to work with other teachers in the building in a leadership role and to have an impact on a larger group of students outside my four classroom walls. And I really enjoyed the satisfaction I got out of running that program and seeing some success.

And another stated,

[I] started teaching and needed room to grow, and others that I worked with saw leadership traits that needed to be nurtured. And, one of my past supervisors mentioned that he saw leadership potential in me and that I should pursue it. And so he started giving me some experiences that would help on that pathway

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These reflections evidence that, along with the desire to become leaders, many of the participants were encouraged and provided their first opportunities while still in the classroom.

Participants also were asked about their leadership training. Twelve of the participants had completed a traditional, theory-based leadership program from local universities or satellite programs of two regional institutions. Because they completed theory-based programs many of the leaders had informal practical exposure. One participant described his training:

At XXX University it was a strong emphasis on theory and it wasn't until the later part of the program that I had the opportunity to have instructors who were former practitioners. Towards the end I was, like, I wish I could have had that all along. But, at the same time I thought that there was a lot of rigor involved in the program and so I felt that they were somewhat selective in who came into the program. So the people that I had the opportunity to learn from in the class I had a lot of respect for. And I was a first-year teacher, so a lot about education was new to me because I hadn't gone the route of education for undergrad; so I was not only learning about admin but about education in general. I thought, again, the latter half of the program, some of the assignments were things I could take back and implement at the school. But I would say the strongest component of that program, in addition to the high expectations, was the advice of the practitioners and the lasting professional relationship that was forged, and as a result of those relationships other opportunities had come along.

A graduate of XXX stated,

It was really a traditionally prepared approach. XXX was just starting its administrative master's degree program, and so I was in a huge group, mostly made of secondary people. And because it was a satellite program there was no center down here, so there wasn't [*sic*] any opportunities provided for us to be in leadership roles and mentoring. What was great was the professors from XXX and this area were very good practitioners; they were active in their current role as administrators whether division level or at the building, so we got that experience.

Another DLT member shared the following comment:

Aside from the formal course work that I took at MU, PCS did have an internship program of sorts. It was really more of an orientation into the inner workings of the school division.... I don't know who did the selections because I don't think

we could self-select; you were tapped to participate. It was monthly meetings with finance and I really understood what was the role of finance in the school division from a leader's perspective.

The one unique traditionally trained leader underwent a leadership boot camp during her program with XXX college:

My master's from XXX was heavily laden with theory.... It was a standard preparation program...prior to ISSLC Standards, but I am sure the university had some specific things they had to fulfill. They assigned experiences where they had us role-play, look at video and evaluate teacher performance, and debrief to get us ready for the real things that you do in schools and not just theoretical precepts. I also had the opportunity to go to the Leadership Assessment Center. It was a program that PCS sent people to that were interested...it was three days of leadership boot camp, in-basket, out-basket kinds of things and scenarios. You were required to do presentations, write letters, and all the things you would do within the week of taking your first job, and they assessed you on each of those eight to ten leadership characteristics and gave you feedback.

The one member that did not participate in a traditional program was a member of the first PCS-MU cohort. Her account of her direct experience with partnership as a cohort member was as follows:

My experiences were a combination of things. Often times the assignments that we were working on in our coursework were designed around real problems or situations, unique to our school division. So if it was a school finance class, we were working with data, school finance data for PCS, for our division. Or if there were or if we were in a data decision class we would be working with a data problem unique to PCS so the goal being for us to work on real-world problems that our division was currently addressing. So often times our assignments were dealing with PCS issues. Sometimes we had assignments or projects that required our doing things within different buildings or schools, whether it was in our grade level, secondary, elementary or otherwise. We would have assignments that we would do, where we would have to interact with staff within the school building and work on assignments for our class, and then again the traditional internship hours that we were required to complete were all done in PCS.

These conversations affirmed that the traditional tracks for leadership preparation were effective in providing potential leaders with theory; however, fortification of the

coursework with some type of practical experience representing the day-to-day exposure was the piece the participants determined to be the most meaningful to actual leadership.

The next questions in Category 1 addressed the participants' experiences with the district–university partnership. Several of the DLT members' roles overlapped as all had taught courses and provided input on internship selections and mentorship assignments, and most participated in the selection process for the third cohort. The central office participant served as an advisor to cohort members and collaborated with the DLT and MU faculty designees. The five principals had multiple roles with the partnership as well. All served as mentors, two had no other involvement, and three were supervising principals who recommended candidates that were accepted into the cohort.

One of the DLT members in her 2nd year in the division described her experiences:

I came late to the party but I have had the privilege right now of teaching the current cohort students, and so I was introduced to the concept of the cohort and went to the original intro meeting that we had with the young people. I was a part of the group that looked at the group interviews and the assessments that they did to get into the program. So that is my current experience. Not a lot of up front in terms of planning but kind of getting to see how people were chosen, and I think it is a good process. I was involved in a leadership cohort program in another division where people were not chosen as carefully. People signed off on recommendations to make folks feel good without considering, "Would I hire this person as my assistant principal?" So, as a consequence, we got people who were not likely to become strong leaders no matter how much coaching and support. They just did not have some fundamentals, so I think the choice process was really good—and the opportunity to have people in the division leadership capacity do the teaching adds some ability to make things very realistic...

Another DLT member that had been involved with previous cohorts shared the following:

The main experience I had was just sitting through the fishbowl, the selection process. I appreciated doing that part because I think a couple of cohorts ago I actually taught the class. There were people in that class that should have never been selected; that was my personal opinion. They were selected on the strength of their application and their administrator's recommendations. Seeing people in

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the fishbowl you have a better sense of what they brought to the table. I don't really think you can start with a blank slate. This is like the next level. I thought that was helpful in trying to really tap people that had leadership potential based on what we witnessed, how they went about the activities, how they interacted with each other, whether or not they exhibited any leadership with the group, stalled on whatever the task was, so I thought that was helpful.

Another DLT Member stated,

With the latest cohort group my experiences have been somewhat limited because the executive directors worked with the university faculty to develop it. They would work on it and then bring it in to me to talk about for me to give input. For the most part I am very pleased with what they have developed. I think it has a good blend of theory and practical application.

And another member explained his involvement:

I have been involved as the leadership contact for the program. I didn't from this vantage point have the opportunity to see how the first cohorts went; I was a building principal at the time. I heard that the DLT had a larger role in that, and the superintendent really spearheaded a lot of how that program unfolded. With this program, because everyone is so busy, it's been pretty hands off for the rest of the folks. The only other folks that have been involved in the process in depth have been those folks teaching it.... The idea of another cohort was broached but it wasn't until we were looking for four AP openings at the elementary level all at one time that I realized the necessity. We had 75 people apply. It was hard for us to find four people who looked good on paper, to be honest. We said at that time it would be great if we could go into the classrooms and take some of these all-star teachers and put them in these positions. So we said, "We know we have got people in the division who can do the job and [that we] have confidence in.... Let's put together a cohort." And the nice thing about a cohort is that we can tweak it and work with MU in a collaborative effort to really design it to meet our needs. So I worked with our contact on the selection process and the interview process and tweaked that. She had a lot to say about that. And I really liked how that rolled out.

One of the principals reflected on her experience with the cohort:

Kind of a funny story, 2 years ago, I had been here for 6 years and had had a new AP every year. The DLT member over my building afforded me the opportunity to sit in an interview for APs. At the time we brought a group of people, a group of staff and a group of parents, and he and I interviewed with the parents. I interviewed with my staff and we interviewed six or seven people and there was not one candidate that we interviewed—I take that back, there was one—that we interviewed that we felt...was more knowledgeable and stronger than any one of my teachers sitting at the table. And I said to him afterwards, I cannot hire

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someone when my staff has more to offer. I think that is when we started chatting and I said, "I have a group of great people in my building that I am pushing," but I think finance and lots of other things, pregnancies, lots of young moms and I said, "If PCS were to ever do this..." It was interesting that we interviewed several people from previous cohorts. I just felt that skill set was not there, and my staff felt that as well. You talk to the elementary level, you ask a question about geographical instruction, you have to define the word for them. That's a problem. I can't have them observing teachers that are more knowledgeable than they are. Knowing that I had a very strong staff, it was very interesting. So when PCS did the information sessions, I encouraged 12 of my staff members to go.

What emerged from these comments was that the experiences for DLT members had shifted from being heavily informed and involved in the process to having a DLT designee work with the university partner and report in the division leadership meeting any vital information to gain input and assist in final decisions. The conversations also disclosed the constant communication and collaborative relationship the leadership had with the university faculty, including the principals as well as the division leadership. Also uncovered from the interviews was how the division was driven by its leadership needs or the lack of strong candidates to hire to begin the third cohort. In addition to DLT leadership, the observations of the principals, their expressed building needs, and assertions that principals had potential leaders within their buildings aided in the DLT's decision to offer opportunities to the cohort.

Question 4 supported Question 3, seeking the participants' level of involvement with the current cohort. Of the 13 participants, 3 of the DLT and central office level leaders worked directly with the university faculty and the cohort members. As reported, the DLT had a designee as well as the central office leader working with the faculty representative for the purpose of addressing design components, instruction, and advising. One additional DLT member collaborated as needed:

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I was a part of the screening process for selecting the candidates. I didn't participate in the actual simulation they did, but I got to read all the essays and did that original screening there. I also taught one of the two classes this summer. That has really been my involvement at this point and just a part of the planning processes for putting together the mentorship (Administrative Ally Program) that we introduced...individual interactions; we hired two to serve as summer site coordinators, so I had experiences with them in quasi-leadership roles. I am a part of the whole planning process. We really want to make sure we have a high-quality pool of potential administrative applicants ready to step into leadership roles. As a division, at elementary, and with the combined schools, our philosophy has been we really want to have a very deep bench that we can pull from for whatever the reason, whenever we need to.

Another DLT member stated,

As the point of contact for the division, I am heavily involved in the process. I meet with [university designee] and collaborate on the course design—how the division's interest will be merged with the theory. For example, using our data. This gives a personalized meaning to what they are learning and rationale for what may drive decisions, programs, and such. I was also involved in the recruitment process...

Those who are not directly involved still met with cohort members and participated in leadership opportunities, which might include teaching courses:

As an instructor and maybe some coaching and some other things because to get that relationship...so, if they have an issue in their school that they need our department's support for that they will come to me, whereas they might not do it due to the length of the title. You throw that executive in front of things and it sometimes makes folks a little standoffish. So as an instructor and I feel as division leadership team member, I am personally accountable that they get a quality experience in that classroom because when they get that diploma and when they pass the exams they need to pass to be administrators in the State of Virginia, they have to have our "Good Housekeeping seal of approval," and so I kind of take it personally because it is our cohort.

Another DLT member said,

My involvement with the cohort is minimal. I agreed to an interview by one of the students for one of their classes. I sat in as a process observer during one of the community priorities workshops because the cohort members were the facilitators for those breakout sessions. I did observe one of the cohort members—two, one was the recorder, one was the facilitator. I have not taught a class.

One of the principals shared the following comment:

Again, my level of involvement at this point is the interactions with the two teachers currently enrolled in that program. One of my APs in the last couple of weeks was asked to speak, talk to the class about what it is like to be an AP and what the challenges are, the benefits, all of that. In an indirect way I had involvement there. I don't know what future involvement I might have in visiting classes or working more closely. I will be working as a mentor. It's called an administrative ally. I will be working with two folks as their administrative ally. Both of them are currently working at the elementary level, and I will be meeting with them at least monthly.

Another offered the following statement:

I am very involved, not only at my school, but someone has reached out from another school, has heard what I have done with my staff, asked [if] I would take her under my wing, [name omitted] with her as my ally. What I have done with people in my building, as a principal, as an AP, what is every opportunity they need. One of my current cohort members is a special ed teacher; otherwise they are generally classroom teachers, so I have assigned each one of them so they take a low-incidents child and go through the whole child study process, TCR, just things that I know, as a classroom teacher, you don't have any experience. I am making them all do a PTA meeting, I am making them all do weekly news letters, just giving them the experience I feel if they were handed an AP tomorrow they would be ready. That's part of building the leadership capacity but the other piece of it is that they all had to look within the building and say who are you going to reach out to and mentor as somebody to take your spot. So, just continuing your cycle.

And another said,

Everyone wants to pick my school because it is a school in severe need now, so school improvement projects are in real need of schools like I am currently the principal of. That's been my involvement, and I have also been asked to mentor ally two of the cohort members. Just providing feedback to them and some thoughts on admin, which I also think is very valuable because I never had anybody to make that connection to.

These conversations revealed that three DLT and central office members were directly involved in the planning and collaboration with the university faculty. What also materialized concerning involvement with the cohort members was the leadership participants' desire to provide support as mentors, observe and supervise projects, and

take an interest however needed, feeling obligated to the division and the cohort members' success. The researcher observed firsthand the interest and commitment the leadership had for the cohort members and their success. The feedback was encouraging and constructive. Several of the leadership participants made a point to converse with the cohort members, whether they were evaluating them or not, to ensure that they felt confident and had the materials they needed to facilitate the communities priorities workshops.

When asked Interview Question 5, "What is your perception of the PCS-MU partnership as an initiative for training instructional leaders?", the study participants expressed confidence in the PCS-MU initiative for training instructional leaders. All 13 of the leaders considered "the grow-your-own" approach to training potential leaders to be effective for providing the division a hiring pool. The district-university initiative also was perceived as having great potential due to its blend of best practices for both entities. The leaders further credited the collaboration and communication between the district and the university as a vital component for the partnership's being a viable leadership training program. One participant's reflections on the grow-your-own approach included the following:

You can be very focused. I think that lends itself to an asset of using a cohort...to tailor the instruction so that they come out with the skill sets that you need as a school division. And they have your internship and opportunities embedded for PCS. I see that as an asset.

Another participant added,

I think it makes sense. I think that the concept of grow your own is a vital concept.... I think a grow-your-own leadership program, especially in partnership with an institution such as MU, which has a strong educational component to their university... just makes sense.

And another responded,

I think it is a win, win. I don't know why divisions would not want to have these collaborative partnerships. There is clearly a lack of qualified candidates that have a desire to go into administration. A division has an opportunity to pretty much handpick those folks they feel are suited for those positions and give them an opportunity to get the required training. They get an opportunity to see them up close as they work through the program and both in coursework and their interactions throughout the division, to interview them over a period of 2 years to get a better feel for their fit for admin. They have interested, bright folks who are also working on problems that the division is currently wrestling with, that they get their perspective and work out of it and the students are benefiting as well in terms of their course work; everybody benefits.

The participant continued,

I think it is a great initiative. I think we should grow our own leaders, that it is a positive direction that we are moving in. We will have more people retiring and we will be in need of several administrators. And what better way to do that than to have a cohort of tried and true teachers ready to take that next step?

Several of the participants commended the partnership and recognized the collaboration as an integral strength:

Overall, I think it will be a successful model. I can't say with certainty because it hasn't been tested yet. I think that there was a lot of thought put into the design, lot of thought put into the selection of candidates. I think the pieces were put into place to make it successful, but the time will tell if we have really hit the mark.... I think that the program gives the people a foundation knowledge so that they know about the things that they need to be aware of it as a leader, working with other people, building those relationships, making sure that you don't get into any legal issues, student discipline issues; they are all so critically important.

Another added,

I think it has tremendous potential, the opportunity to blend best practice, theory, and leadership of the university with best practices of the division. The university is so open to being receptive to our needs; it is not a lock step. They have their framework but have been very flexible to what we need. We are considering another course and it is designed to meet the need of the university and ISLLC (We want them to pass the exam) and what we want in PCS. The way it looks here is not the way it will look for another division.

Building on that notion, another participant also stated,

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I think I would put it up against any program around to be honest with you. Because I believe the direction we are headed, as far as instructional leadership in PCS, is in the right direction. And the fact that MU has given us the latitude to say, "You know, this is your instructional model in this division, feel free to run with it, we will be happy to provide input, but if you guys have a direction you are heading in and want that to be the nuts and bolts of the course then run with it".... The other piece about that is that [the faculty member] who heads up this, the liaison for MU, really has a major impact on where that program is heading. She really understands the importance of instruction leadership and she knows that there are some dinosaurs perhaps in the department and some practices that need to be changed. I am encouraged by the fact that they are revamping the program to really address a combination of theory and practice, perhaps less theory.

An idea that emerged from two of the participants was a concern about retaining promising leaders after making the investment of time and training. One of them said,

I think it's an excellent program in its design and the hands-on approach, looking at administration and actually making those connections with people.... In the past it hasn't always been that way; we've worked at growing people and kind of let them all go. I would like to see us get fine people that we have molded and really let them get to know [PCS] or let them get to know this district so that they are well rehearsed. By the time they get to be my AP, I don't have to train them as much about PCS because they have already gone through 2 years of that.

The other leader stated,

If we are grooming leaders that we handpicked, then of course our focus is going to be rooted in our specific needs. However, I think the partnership with the university must ensure that while we are driving leadership for our purpose, no matter where they receive a position, they will be equipped to lead wherever they are hired. It would be counterproductive for the division to invest the training and time into these promising leaders and have them serve in another division, but at the same time it speaks to the quality of our leadership program.

The researcher reported this outlier in the interviews, finding it interesting that the leadership had not put in place a contract requiring cohort members to invest a number of years of service after the completion of the program. The follow-up question posed to learn the rationale determined that the DLT believed those who participated in the PCS-MU cohort were vested in the division and were unlikely to venture to another division. Also, examination of the previous cohorts revealed that most of those who completed the

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program had remained, with only 7 of the 45 participants accepting jobs in other divisions.

The final question in the category of Leadership: Self-Reflections and Pathways asked, “Do you feel the PCS-MU partnership is a successful model to prepare aspiring school leaders to address the specific student needs of the division? (Why or why not?)” Of the 13 respondents, 9 strongly affirmed that the PCS-MU partnership was indeed preparing promising leaders equipped to address the specific student needs of the division.

In response to this question, one DLT member stated,

Yes, because of the practitioners teaching the course and the cohort members coming directly from our ranks. We are all speaking the same language. And, I think that may make for a richer conversation and deeper learning because they know they are learning more about the organization that they work in, that they aspire to be a leader in. That also gives us an opportunity to see the strengths and weaknesses and to fill those gaps where they might be identified.

Another shared,

Absolutely. The interactions that the students have with the senior management of the division or the senior level leadership of the division could not be anything but fruitful, on both ends of the spectrum. It gives the leadership an idea as to what the teachers and the folks that are aspiring to become administrators, what they think, where they’re at, what they are thinking in terms of current conditions and trends within public education. And at the same time it links the existing administration and senior leadership to them and allows senior leadership to impart some of the rationale for some of the decisions being made as well as share experiences with aspiring administrators so that they can enter into the job with their eyes wide open.

Another confirming participant asserted,

I say yes. It is uniquely poised to do that because while in many traditional programs everything is done at the classroom level, the majority of things are done at the classroom level and it’s all very theoretical in nature. There’s a huge practical component in terms of the internships, and those opportunities that those students get for involvement in different projects within PCS—that benefits both

parties. It is all very contextually lined; the things that they are learning are contextually aligned with the issues at hand for our division right now.

Another responded,

In its current form, yes, the university partner has been very flexible and responsive—I do not know if it is a university driver that is doing that or if that is her philosophy that is doing that—but traditionally there is this very sort of structured view that I think universities have of principal preparation programs and they get in that mode of this is how it has to be—and MU seems to be very responsive with the cohort, particularly with our needs.

The four participants that were less sure offered these explanations:

I can't answer that fully.... I think the university is allowing us to tailor course content to what we believe our leaders are going to need in this division with the challenges we face. I don't know to what extent the university does not have that latitude; however... I know... that course I sat in on this first session and even as [the instructor] is teaching about accountability measures, which certainly is in the curriculum, he is using the data from our division. He has the FAO Reports from each of us and is teaching those young people how to interpret that data and what they have to worry about and where it came from and so I do think that the design is a solid structure for producing sound results.

I think we've got some work to do if we're to continue this—from a planning standpoint, I think we should have involved more stakeholders. I do feel that the way MU has approached this—to say we know that these are your folks, and we know you have confidence in them and we know a select number of them will be future administrators. So from a succession standpoint, where do you see it headed, where do you need skills emphasized and developed? Because we have got that latitude; we know what we are doing and where we are headed, and it's in the right direction.

Overall, I think it will be a successful model. I can't say with certainty because it hasn't been tested yet. I think that there was a lot of thought put into the design, lot of thought put into the selection of candidates. I think the pieces were put into place to make it successful, but time will tell if we have really hit the mark.

I think it can be. It's so early in their program. One of the things that has been beneficial, because I hear about it, having the connectivity with PCS people teaching. It is making it very applicable to them.

Category 1 described the leadership pathway, which for most participants was an interest supported by a supervisor who encouraged leadership pursuits while providing

opportunities for growth. Of the 13 interviewees, 12 graduated from traditional leadership programs with leadership projects or internship exposure, but the practical experience afforded in the current design was a component that several viewed as a weakness. The remaining questions addressed the participants' involvement and perceptions of the PCS-MU partnership design's effectiveness in preparing leaders, in addressing student needs within the divisions, and in being an overall successful model. The findings indicated that the DLT, central level leaders, and the principals of the division, regardless of the level of their involvement, believed that the program was a sound initiative for grooming local leaders and that it successfully addressed the division's needs by blending the data and issues with the theory-based coursework.

Planning, Partnership, and Collaboration

Category 2 was shaped by how collaboration between the stakeholders, through the partnership, was driven by the division's needs. In the previous category, confidence in the program design and the overall effectiveness of the collaboration between the district and university was found to be extremely high even if the level of involvement was limited. The second category examines the design, specifically focusing on the execution of the partnership for grow-your-own leadership.

Unanimously, the participating leadership members believed the goals of the partnership were driven by the division's potential leadership and learning needs even if they could not speak to how it was accomplished. The three members that were directly involved provided insights. The first member stated,

It came out of careful analysis of what we had done in the past and outcomes. So we took a look at the other cohort groups we had run and looked at how many had come out and were successful building administrators or central office administrators. So what pieces of that were best and where did we think we could

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make some changes? It was a lot of conversations about what we had done in the past and current need. And really the biggest change was the selection process. Previously we recruited based solely on principal recommendation and teacher application to this current practice of the simulation activity.

The DLT designee explained,

First, it was me taking the idea to the Division Leadership Team after meeting with [MU faculty member] and saying here is what we are proposing; what are your thoughts? And, it was really as simple as [the superintendent] giving her blessing and saying, “Go forward.” It was kind of like [the MU designee] and I sitting down and looking at how the program was rolled out, me having experience teaching in the program. And then again thinking about the lack of skills that we are seeing and the poor resumes that we are seeing coming in and what we believed were sharp candidates here. So, again, it is kind of like tailor making it to meet our needs, from a planning standpoint

Another DLT member posited,

Looking at what we have done in the past and then trying to figure out what really worked well, and what does the research say about the training for people for leadership positions, what kind of experiences should they have, what kind of mentoring activities should they have? So I think it’s been in progression from the kind that I had, that was basically a show and tell, that didn’t really give me much information other than I got to meet the leaders of the school division and get to know them. Those were informal networks and now it’s more formally based; we are thinking about it, we are planning it, and we are doing it. We have looked at what’s worked, [done] the research to [determine what] successful programs look like. We tried to build one that would really give us a good cadre of people who can take over and be successful. I think that having a lot of our DLT members teach it also helps them form the connection with leaders in the division.

The principals admitted limited involvement and knowledge of how the program evolved but were willing to speculate. One principal said,

My understanding—I have never been involved in direct conversation on a leadership level about the evolution of the cohort program—my understanding was that at the time that the first cohort was developed PCS, not unlike most divisions, was—in terms of looking ahead over their administrative needs for the coming 10-15 years, —was looking at having a shortage of qualified candidates to lead schools. So, the divisions thought why not grow your own? Why would we not encourage the folks that are working for us in the division that have loyalty to our division to seek training or education and allow them to step into those positions? It originally evolved out of a need to fill positions over the long term.

Another principal added,

I think it was through the opportunity with looking at the succession planning. We have this university right at our back door, and we have potential leaders that want to build that, so I think that is kind of what PCS was looking at building. I think [the DLT designee] was very instrumental in “let’s think ahead.” And I think a part of it is to keep us competitive and marketable in terms of here we have this, this is what we are trying to do, and I think that MU and PCS’s willingness to meet in the middle, so to speak, have the best of both worlds. I think that that’s why it has come about.

The remaining respondents either stated they did not know or made the same assumptions as the principals. This finding indicates that the lower level leadership perceived the partnership to be a well-structured and collaborative effort of the DLT team; however, what materialized from the Division Leadership Team members was that three of the members worked with the faculty designee, and of those three, there was one main point of contact. Also when major design improvements were recommended, the DLT and various other stakeholders were part of the process.

When asked what planning and collaborative processes drove the current design, the following findings developed. The DLT desired a selection process that showcased leadership potential beyond an application and principal recommendations. One DLT member said,

Well, we met several times—the executive directors, [faculty designee], and different members of the leadership team who were not a part of the original cohorts—the leadership coach, with all of his leadership training, was a part of those conversations as well. So a lot of collaboration to get where we were. PCS does a great job of figuring out where we want to be and then figuring out how to get there instead of vice versa. So we knew we wanted a good strong pool of potential candidates that at any time we could pull off that bench and say, “Yes I have two or three that I know will run through the interview process and be fine,” instead of reviewing a pool of 75 and maybe finding 3 we could live with.

Another DLT member stated,

The selection process—this was fairly collaborative in nature so anyone who wanted to be on that DLT process was invited. We invited some other folks, too, other stakeholders. One of the pieces of feedback from the first cohort was that written application process, and we had some principals that didn't feel they couldn't be honest when they submitted a letter of reference for candidates, so relied on those too heavily. We had some folks that had just horrible writing skills so we wanted to add that writing component in. Learning from previous mistakes was part of the planning too.

And another member confirmed,

Well, I know that there was collaboration amongst the DLT, talking about the process for selection, and then the selection process itself was a collaborative process with administrators, DLT members and staff from MU, going through and reviewing and previewing and making decisions on who should be or who should not be, or who the program was not necessarily for. I think it was a collaboration process that drove the decision-making process.

The central-level leader offered the following statement:

Last spring we met once, [DLT and MU faculty designees] and I, to just talk about what we were thinking was going to happen this December and this fall. So we had a meeting back then and [the university faculty member] and I talked and shot e-mails back and forth and shared some different articles. She sent me her education platform, her thing on coaching, and what the thing should be like. I sent some information to her, reading, so what we really want this to look like, then again over the summer, and again this fall all in preparation of last week's meetings. There has been some good collaboration and has always involved the three of us. We did e-mails, we shared documents on Google, but it wasn't always like [the university designee] was running the show, or from the university. It has been really collaborative. It really has been.

The principals were not a part of the collaborative meetings and their responses included statements such as "I am not sure" or "I cannot speak to that."

Along with consistent collaboration that included both entities for the purpose of improving the design, the division planned with its needs driving the implementation:

I would think that if the division folks are teaching the course then, so I know they had to align with, you know, whatever the courses, course topics have to be within the framework that the university has to meet, the state certification side. But I am pretty sure that if they have division folks teaching it that—and it's going to be pretty specific—I'd say quite a bit has been influenced.

Another participant who served as an instructor stated,

I am not privy to the total design in terms of all the course work for a student to get their [*sic*] master's or get their [*sic*] endorsement. I know that I am doing the school finance piece, but I think specific needs are more than likely going to be addressed as the DLT [members] are teaching the class. The areas that I am involved with, of course, I will do what I can do to keep the students apprised of current financial trends and things that are going on in the economy as we are preparing for the budget season. There was certainly a lot of thought in terms of working with MU in terms of timing of when the class was taught. The finance class will be taught in the spring semester, which coincides with the actual budget process while the general assembly is in session and while our school system is formulating its operating budget.

And another affirmed,

A great deal of the design was influenced by that. Otherwise, we would have just paid money for them to go over to MU. They have guest speakers that are—I've spoken to classes; I am actually going to do another one tomorrow night. To me it is very PCS focused. Also casting an eye out to see what else is going on but is very focused on the way that we do things in PCS, how we do our data, how we do internal communication, all those kinds of things I know that are woven into it.

And still another,

I would say so far where we are is at 75%. I mean you look at the course [DLT member] taught, what I taught, what [another] taught and the number of internal folks we bring in and the activities we have them participating in (community priorities workshops), and the projects I am having them do are a little bit different than the class I normally teach. So, I would say the overwhelming majority has been geared towards the things we are doing in PCS, so, then again, to build some of the background knowledge of folks who don't know the behind the scenes of PRtl in PCS or the teacher evaluation system in our approach.

And another,

Most of it actually. That was the rationale for the collaborative cohort model. We know what type of a leader we want in PCS so we are going to participate in a cohort and then we definitely want it driven by what we need.

The principals were unable to explain how the interest of the division impacted the planning and design of the partnership. Building on the assertions made by one DLT members was the notion that this was an area that could still be implemented and that the

lack of response was possibly reflective of an oversight in that they were not involved more and provided this information. The finding that evolved was the notion that the leadership invited and included other leadership stakeholders but not for the total process, which might need to be examined because they were a vital component for other areas of the process.

The stakeholders involved in the process formulated the next question posed to the participants. This question elicited responses much like the responses for the other question about partnership, planning, and collaboration: Three to four DLT members had direct input and served as key stakeholders in the process while the remaining members and principals were limited in their participation:

As I recall, we had DLT members and we had administrative principals. I don't know if we went down to APs and I am not sure whether or not instructional leaders or curriculum leaders were involved in the process, but I do know that DLT as well as principals were involved. As far as why, I think those are some of the major stakeholders that you would want to have involved. If you were doing a true stakeholder you would have the students involved, the parents involved. The decisions being made to who may be qualified to move forward in a leadership program I don't necessarily think it would be appropriate for students, fellow teachers, or parents unless those parents and fellow teachers have the qualifications that would enable them to be able to determine whether or not a candidate would be able to achieve success and then move forward into a leadership position.

Another participant made this comment:

I believe the executive directors are more actively involved in the design and decision making because as supervisors of school leaders they have front-line knowledge of where your school leaders have their challenges and what their needs may be based on what they have seen of more inexperienced leaders; I think that because of their front-line knowledge.

The DLT designee added,

I think when you look at both [the MU designee] and myself as being the liaisons for our constituents, myself with the DLT and MU, and then her, seeking feedback from her folks, particularly from the other advisor and other professors

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who will be teaching the program, and then me at this level. Again, with me making the filter of decisions of when I believe we need the input from a larger number of folks. I think that I have answered that somewhat already but—DLT here, professors over there, and then as we are moving forward, more input here from you all, these administrative allies. Because what is happening is happening. With the instructional supervision course there is a syllabus that has been used before, but we can take and tweak that. I don't know, maybe meeting time to time with admin allies 10-15 min before or after superintendent's meeting, because we are all in the same room and saying, based on some of the conversations we are having, "We need a brief survey. What are some of the concerns you are hearing?" Others are some common themes, maybe we incorporate a project, an assignment or a reading in some of the classes based on what you are hearing. I can see more input as this continues to unfold.

And another member stated,

At this point, current administrators—conversation about quality of candidates and their needs and leadership team members and of course the college-level folks and we haven't reached out beyond that. We probably—and you may want to follow up with our university and DLT representatives because I do not know if we have specific conversation with people who have completed the previous cohorts... Unless they did, I have not formally met with them, but if they are in the division, I continue to meet with them and it would have been good to talk with those still in the classrooms versus admin roles.... Talk to people who didn't finish, and the vast majority did finish, and when we ran the percentages and well over 50% received leadership positions and almost equal percent we considered successful, if you consider staying in the field and being effective as your guidelines for that, and it probably would have been a good idea.

The remaining participants could not respond based on limited interactions at this level, but, as stated by the last participant, having others involved, including the previous cohort participants, would be a good direction in which to move.

Question 11 rounded out Category 2, asking, "What trainings are afforded mentors and supervising principals to ensure program efficacies?" Of the 13 participants, 9 referenced the Administrative Allies mentorship program for promising principals.

One participant stated,

That is the part we are working on now. That was not a focus in the previous cohorts—in this arena. The work that we introduced yesterday—as far as the allies go—'cause obviously those of you that we have asked to become allies will

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probably at some point be asked to have them intern with you. And so we will provide ongoing information and training about that, and I think part of the principal coach's list of questions of sort of how you can get started and what questions you need to ask. You need training and support on how to help them as well—all of you are experienced, high-quality administrators, and if you have assistant principals, then you know what your roles are there.

Another member added,

I think that we probably really just kind of started with our initial meeting. My plan is not to let it end there. A part of that training was giving some folks some information, just giving folks some information of just what we are looking at the role of, what mentors do, coaches do, so that was included in the Power Point. We gave a structure of what the initial contact would look like. But then we gave a generic template of what a meeting would look like between the ally and the principal, the promising principal. And then one of the things that I am planning on doing is, like a couple of weeks before, at the end of each month, starting in November—I've given out the one for October—that there'll be some questions, sample questions, and some stems that will be connected to the topics that were discussed for the course work. If they are talking about community relations, I will go ahead then and give the folks some sample questions and some stems of things that will encourage some dialogue, some thoughtful consideration on developing school and community relations.

Another participant said,

We have not done anything for training regarding current principals of cohort members. We have had some written communication via e-mail about being supportive and being understanding when they are asking for some professional relief time. There has not been any training provided; that would be one to grow on. And then for the allies, of course, the training you participated in the other day is the only thing we have had.

One of the principal participants added,

All mentors did receive training at the division level. This training included providing us with dates to meet with the individuals, as well as topics of possible discussion for them and ways that we can serve them better. And it is not a one-shot deal; it is something that we will come back to often.

Another principal supported the previous comment: "I know they are all assigned mentors or Administrative Allies. And we recently had some training with MU faculty and DLT members to explain our roles and meeting dates and topics." And another stated,

So far we have had what our role will be in terms of how best to go, like ensuring that we are not acting like intern supervisors but acting as that kind of ally, per say, that mentor that they can kind of go to, be real with, have real conversations about administration. So far that piece has not been in depth. In my aspect I have talked to a lot of people so I have heard of the many features of the program, just because I want to know what is going on.

The conversations confirmed that trainings for leadership were in the early stages of implementation. Most felt the trainings offered clear explanations for roles and expectations for the newly formed Administrative Allies. Trainings for internship supervision or for support of cohort members within the principals' buildings were not provided, but, again, an expectation on how to support them was shared.

In conclusion, the themes evolving for partnership, planning, and collaboration indicate that planning was collaborative and driven by the division's leadership and learning needs, the planning was effective in providing resources and support for the aspiring leaders, and the involvement of leadership stakeholders was thinly applied. One leader noted that this was an area that could still be examined and improved. Another theme that emerged was that the DLT members were more informed and aware of the PCS-MU partnership design than the principals were.

Internship

Category 3 focused specifically on the internship component. Guided by authorities' assertions that internship experiences provide the practical exposure required to stretch potential and glean the daily roles of principals, the PCS-MU internship was performed in the final semester of the program. The cohort members were assigned appointments at each level: elementary, secondary, and central administration. These internship projects were performed during the summer, and the projects were assigned according to leadership issues for the division. The DLT and MU recognized that these

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experiences could not stand alone; they were fortified with projects that showcased their abilities to facilitate workshops, serve as coordinators for summer school, and continue to perform in their buildings as leaders.

The assignment parameters for assigning internships were designed, assigned, and driven by specified members of the DLT:

I don't know yet how that is going to work for this cohort. Typically, our practice involves Dr. XXX and I meeting with human resources representative to look at applicants and what they have asked for and then the needs in the summer and attempt to make a match. People tend to request internship experiences based on areas where they are very comfortable, and that almost always drives us in another direction. We are looking for folks that can be well-rounded and experienced. For example, if you are requesting an internship in the high school where you have taught for several years, we are almost always going to ask you to go to a middle school and work for someone you have never worked with before.

The DLT designee stated,

We haven't gotten that far yet. But what we are looking at right now, again, what experiences can we offer that we believe will help build that skill set when someone first comes in hitting the ground running, that they will learn from? So right now the first part of the intern piece is looking at if we are doing some things this summer with an internship. And we strategically placed some structural supervision side by side with that; can we get them out into summer schools and really getting into what you guys are really doing with Dr. XXX and what XXX and I are doing with our folks? It's having those peer walks. So, again, focusing on instructional leadership, that's going to be a big piece. So right now the conversation has just been focused on instructional leadership.

Another DLT member added,

In the past, I know that we have looked at internship projects as the division leadership team speaks to some of those projects that we have already identified and need work, and these are people that have the skill sets now to do some of it. So we have typically taken projects that are on the DLT agenda to work and have assigned groups of interns so that they can work collaboratively.

And another said,

That, I have absolutely no idea. But if I were asked I would hope it would be an area that the particular cohort member would be interested in. Because the old adage, "follow your passage..." so if somebody is not interested in special

education I don't know that I would want them to serve as an intern in special education. If for some reason someone was interested in moving into the area of support services, that is where I would like to see them move as an intern. I think it should be where there is interest.

The principal who completed the first cohort elaborated:

I don't know if it has changed since the first cohort that I was in, but the guiding factors at that time were they wanted to ensure that you were getting experiences at a level other than that where your primary experience was. I taught at the high school level, so they were very encouraging that I seek out opportunities in terms of projects and internships at the middle school level or even at the elementary level, just to give me exposure and experience in an area that I didn't have that much experience. I'm assuming that they will probably strongly encourage that folks get a breadth of experiences not just what they are used to or with what they are comfortable with. We were also encouraged to make sure that we were choosing projects that allowed us to deal with issues not in just one little minute area that we were interested in or we were most comfortable with but also to take on projects or seek out experiences in all the different facets of administrative leadership—whether it was instructional or finance or whatever area that might be—to be sure that we were getting a broad cross section of experiences.

Another principal stated,

I am not at all familiar; I could guesstimate. I would hope that they would branch them out outside of their normal experiences, aspects of education, and letting them see. No one ever took me to a middle school so it would be interesting to have had that experience to get out there; no one took me to a high school. As an elementary education to think of myself in a high school, I think I could never do that. I would think they would try to match them up with something outside their normal comfort zone, so that they could look at those as prospective ideas for their leadership roles in the future.

Acknowledging the integral part the internship plays in developing leaders and offering a true evaluation of leadership potential, the researcher sought the participants' perceptions of their purpose. One principal's perception is reflected in the following statement:

I believe that what we look to is to be sure these individuals have experiences across the board. That they will have/develop experiences at the elementary, middle, and high school and at the division leadership/school board leadership level, to ensure they are well-rounded.

Another principal believed that internships served the following purpose:

To get yourself in that role as much you can so that you are not in shock when you get there. It is a way to let you experience some of it—you will never experience all of it—so that you are not in complete shock mode when it comes. That first time a parent chews you out, or the first time a teacher doesn't perform, knowing that you have had some, even if you have had some observable experience, some sort of experience of how a teacher's performance and those kinds of things.

A DLT member defined internships:

To provide work experience before they have the total responsibility—so they can get some coaching prior to taking a position. It is a great place to be—when the nameplate goes on the door with whatever title you have—at that point you become, unless you have some relationship that you can have informal mentorship or coaching from, you feel the need to be very confident from day one because you are the new kid

Another member added,

To help students to make the connection between what we have talked about in class and a more real-world application piece. So, hopefully, some of the theory they have been exposed to, some of the projects and research and conversations we have had in class—from various texts—that they can then put into practice and see for themselves firsthand. The data course I teach—one project is preobserve and postobservation conversation with the teacher. So, the opportunity, again, to get into the field—it's one thing to read about it but another to do it. And then to reflect on that experience, hopefully with the ally.

Another explained,

I think an internship is really designed to give that prospective leader an opportunity to see the work through the eyes of the practitioner, to walk a mile in the practitioner's shoes. To have someone they can ask all the questions of. To give them an opportunity to perform a task to see how well they interpret what is needed because you cannot give them every little detail. And to provide that support and guidance and give them some reason why you might do something differently. Or get them to think through, "When you did X, how did that work and how might we tweak to make it better? What steps might you have missed and how can we make sure in the planning—what did you learn from that?" So, I like to be a sounding board and provide examples and opportunities. And generally because people are doing this in the summer, it is not necessarily 'cause they are in summer school that I get them. And so it is not necessarily a very— from where I sit, it is a little less involved and hands on than some other

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departments. But then I can be nexus between them and the right curriculum department to stretch them.

And another said,

To me it is to give them some project base, some real-life experience. To me it is almost like a student-teaching experience where you find out if this is something that you really want to do. I really wish that we could do it in a more robust manner. That we could have them working through the school year, to see what it is really like. Summer school is very different.

The DLT assigned internships to stretch participants by offering out-of-the-box experiences, to give them real-life experience, and to connect the classroom and coursework. With the intent of the internship established, the next question inquired about how the DLT developed internships. One respondent replied,

I would think that it is they come in and ask us where we need an extra pair of hands. I think that they try to pair up their skills and abilities to the sites. There is also a part of me that would like for people to be in a site where they are a little bit challenged. So that they have to really put their leadership skills to use in a learning situation. I am sure you remember when you first became a building leader; everything didn't come in a neat little package for you and you ran up against new things all the time

Another said,

As far as this cohort is concerned, we haven't gone that route yet. I don't even know, to be honest, yet MU's expectations regarding what they want, or is it the state's expectation to have it elementary, middle, high now? And have to have a portion of each? We haven't had that discussion yet. So the expectation I would say is to hopefully match them up with some we feel would be a good fit. Like what we did with the allies. We had some conversations and moved some people around, trying to find a good match to give them a good experience. But going back again, too, if you are limited with time, getting the biggest bang for our buck and maybe seeking their input, too.

And another shared,

I can only speak to when they are assigned to me, and that is based on their interest. If they need central office experience they may want it as a potential curriculum leader. So they want to be assigned to a specific department. Interns, if we are going outside the cohort, they need to apply through HR, and specific DLT members sit down and parcel them out.

And another said,

Again, what we did in the past was we identified projects that were pressing—things that interns could do—and we aligned them with the skill sets that would help interns grow as well. Of course, we give them the experiences of K-12 because the license is going to come out K-12. And we look at them serving other leaders; they can pull them out and really help round them out. And they go from there. For example, if you have a person who only has high school experience, giving them someone who is strong in elementary so that they get that feel. Because a lot of times when you have someone who is in high school they work closely with that building principal, and you know what that life is all about; but learning the life of an elementary school or preschool you might learn that piece of it. Just trying to make sure that they work in an area that can really help them grow. One of the groups from the last cohort—I remember a previous cohort participant from the first cohort—worked on transportation issues that we were facing. They came up with a way to resolve some of the transportation problems. Again, that is an area that seems to be on the peripheral [*sic*] of a leader's job. But, if you can't get them there, it is hard to educate them.

And another recounted,

My perception is that internships are probably developed where there seems to be an identified need. Perhaps they have—in a specific department or a specific school—the specific issue or challenge; it would be helpful to have someone working on that, and that might be an area where they might say, “Let's get an intern here in this particular school or to work on this particular issue or challenge.” In terms of assignment to site, I would think that part of that might be students probably have the opportunity, I suspect, to state their preference in terms of the level of students that they would be working with, be an elementary or middle, whatever their aspirations are for the leadership piece. I suspect, with student involvement over a 2-year period, DLT personnel as well as MU staff get to know those students very well and probably see unique strengths in different folks and say, “Hey, based on this, this student really did a great job in the finance class.”

And another said,

I think the development of the internships to include all of the levels of leadership. It gives them a great opportunity to get their feet wet and to learn about the different levels of leadership. In assigning, I think they do a great job of making sure they are not specifically assigned to a building that they are already working in so that they are not just getting one view of an administrator, but are seeing different types of leadership styles.

The perceptions of how internships were developed addressed the provision of experiences on all levels according to the division's needs, but not having the individual complete an experience in the building where they taught or worked. The last question in the internship section sought the perceptions of the participants with regard to the division's expectations to groom these leaders. Again, this was one of the questions to which the responses were unanimous. All respondents believed they had a responsibility to groom and support the aspiring leaders.

One respondent stated, "My perception or expectation is to totally immerse them in leadership roles to include classroom observation and evaluation of teachers, discipline, budget, and all other day-to-day activities." Another added,

My first responsibility is to model my expectations. I have to be able to give them different perspectives on what leadership may look like in different areas and provide them opportunities to develop as leaders. I think I have to serve as an listening ear as well and give them an opportunity ask questions they may have concerning leadership.

Also provided was the following comment:

It's something I love to do, building that leadership capacity. And, to me, if they are coming out of my building they are a direct reflection on expectations, professional experiences, opportunities of me, so I am going to give them everything I can.

And another said,

Personal responsibility that comes with the title executive in front of your name. It is my job to build leadership in every employee I encounter—if you are not developing people, then you are not doing your job—telling them the truth about performance. It doesn't matter what your role is; you take care of every body

Another member stated,

I think because this is a PCS cohort that I have much higher expectations for myself to work with these folks and to help them be successful. And I look at teaching a course, and while I am building relationships with folks in these noncohort classes, I invest more time in people who show initiative or who I see

as potential hires for PCS. Whereas I see this with 21 people, I know not everyone is going to get a job, but I still see that they are going to have an opportunity and positively impact their school. I am much more invested in this, much more from an expectation standpoint, higher expectations, because it's family of PCS employees as opposed to some cohort from another division. While I have high expectations, I have higher expectations for these folks because I know these are folks that are going to have a significant impact on kids and teachers in the very near future.

And another said,

Well, I think clearly there is that expectation. And again I will cite the community workshop program's piece that we understood that was our role to help support them. Give them feedback so that they could grow in their facilitation skills as they work with stakeholders. So, I think that there is an expectation that will work with all of the cohort participants.

And another offered this opinion:

Every leader should be looking for a future leader. So when I hear about, or see or have the opportunity to work with someone that I feel has potential, I feel that it is my obligation to try to talk to them about what I see in them and what their next steps might be. I think that you voiced that earlier. I think that is all the way up.

The themes that evolved for this category indicate that the leadership felt an obligation to support, encourage, and provide resources for these aspiring leaders because of their commitment to the division and its interest. Because the internship was so vital to leadership development, the assignments were grounded in cohort members' interests, growth potential, broad experiences, and the needs of the leadership team. The leaders at each level understood that internships were for the purpose of providing real experiences that complemented the theory-based coursework.

Mentorship

The third cohort introduced a new component, Administrative Allies. Research has affirmed that mentorship pairing potential leaders with expert principals to dialogue, share concerns, and coach them through the process, strengthens leadership preparedness

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(Zubrzycki, 2013). The Administrative Allies were supportive with the exception of an evaluative relationship allowing for open communication. The emerging themes for mentorship included establishing the difference between mentor and supervisor, mentorship assignment, and contributions of building-level leaders in the design partnership.

All of the participants identified one difference between mentors and supervisors: Mentors do not evaluate; they serve as sounding boards and are more closely aligned with coaches. A DLT member provided this description of mentors:

Mentors will not evaluate the participants, and that is the biggest difference. It is the same thing between a coach and a supervisor. The central-level leader's role in working with leaders now is coaching, so he doesn't provide evaluative feedback to the supervisors. He doesn't evaluate the person's work, but it is about coaching and that is what mentors will be doing. If at some point mentors are asked to also supervise participants, you will not supervise the ones you mentor because that dynamic changes.

Another DLT member explained,

Good question. We purposefully didn't want mentor to be the supervising principal. We knew and know that the supervising principal will still serve in a mentor capacity, and part of that is depending on the relationship they currently have with that particular cohort member. We wanted that mentor role and admin ally to be one where we felt like, in confidentiality, like a coach, you can have some conversations that wouldn't get back to your supervisor so you would put the guard down, so to speak, and can be free to talk about topics and whatever topics you want to talk about. It might even be in that mentor role that you are having some conversations about some questions you have about some decisions your supervisor is making. We wanted to separate those two for safety purposes.

And another stated,

Mentoring is more of a nurturing, of providing guidance, of support, of providing words of wisdom. You also need to be a safe sounding board. To me the mentoring relationship—you might not want to tell the person evaluating you that you really don't know how to analyze that data because that may come back to haunt you. But you should be able to go to a trusted colleague or mentor and say, "You know, I know analyzing data is critical and I did it at a very rudimentary level as an IL or department head but I know as an administrator you really need

to delve [into] it. Help me understand what should I be looking for. Who can I talk to if I do not know how to do a pivot table?" And I don't want to tell somebody, "I don't know." And you are not going to tell your supervisor because you can't trust that it will not be rolling around in the back of their head every time something happens. So to me a mentor is supposed be this safe place. And what I teach in my seminar is that mentorship is a two-way street. If you read an article, you shouldn't be waiting for your mentor to give you everything; you should be sharing the article with your mentor. I attended a conference, and Marzano said that you open a dialogue so you aren't waiting for someone to come and speak to you. And so—I don't know—I try to train people; that it is a two-way street and you need to give as much as you get.

Another DLT mentor confirmed the others' statements:

Supervising principal evaluates. Mentors are there for support, guidance, help. So to me that is probably the biggest difference. Not that a supervising principal can't also provide guidance and help. The mentor is the one that you can go to and really try to lay things out.

And another added,

The key word on that whole thing is the word supervising, because a mentor is not going to be a supervisor at all. A mentor is, again, from NASSP's role is more a person who is going to give advice and share experiences and share knowledge, share expertise, and to be there to help that student/promising principal grow. Whereas supervising principal, they do some of that as well, the bottom line is that they have got to be looking at the teacher's ability to teach and add value to the role.

The mentoring principals shared the viewpoint of the DLT members. One said,

You become that friend. Over the course of time I have had mentors in my role as leadership who have really just been that go-to person to say, "Is this for real or should I handle this this way?" without that feeling of evaluation. And to have that is truly valuable. Even as a principal now the persons that I looked as my mentors when I was becoming AP and trying to aspire to be a principal, they are still my go-to people, and not just for information, just sometimes need to vent. Sometimes you need to be just like, "Am I really cut out for this?" There are days that you walk away and think, "What in the world was I thinking?" Sometimes it's just really nice to kind of ground you and I think that this serves in this purpose too; I think that that person that can say, "That felt fine and dandy but real life is going to be like this," and for them to not be like, "Oh," and not to really have that evaluation cloud hanging over them.

And another provided this point:

I should have the relationship that they can come to me in confidence without judgment and share with me their concerns and be assured that I am going to give the best advice to build them as leaders. As mentor, I am not evaluating them but serving more as coach.

The mentoring principals confirmed that mentors are not evaluating but instead offering support by listening, encouraging, and offering guidance. The remaining questions concerned how the mentors were selected and then partnered with the cohort members. The principals, although not sure because they were not involved in the process, believed they were selected due in part to their ability to lead, recognize leadership potential, and develop that potential: “DLT selected the mentors and matched them with promising principals based on who would be a good fit.” Nevertheless, another principal posited,

I think mentors are selected based on their experiences and based on their level of success. I think we have been selected because we are some of the best and the brightest in the division and that is something we want them to emulate.

And another said,

I would hope that they would put into place like personality. They are in the third semester so they know those cohort members enough to pair them up and to put them with people who have had similar tracks and avenues that they are going. Whether they are aspiring to be a secondary principal, heading them in that direction, or whether Peninsula sees them on the path that they want them to travel. Sometimes it is not the path we want to travel.

One of the three DLT members who served as a designee stated,

We went through the same process when selecting mentors to work with cohort members. First, we identified the key people who have the skill sets we are looking for and have the skill sets to be able to pass it on. You can be fabulous and awesome and great but if you can't help someone else get there, then I do not need you as a mentor; just run your building.

Another designee followed up with the following comment:

Like I shared the other day, I think mentors are selected, number one, looking at people, we believe, as a DLT, who are effective at what they are doing now with an emphasis on instructional leadership. And, that we believe will take the time and have the skill set to effectively communicate with these folks. And then be honest with them. The other piece is already knowing our cohort members after having worked with them for a semester. It is who do we feel like would be a good match that will allow them and encourage them to open up and gain from the experience. I think that we looked at both, and from a DLT standpoint, who would be an appropriate model? A lot of it is where we are headed in Peninsula and folks that we believe as mentors can speak to that.

The third designee added,

The executive director, I'm sure, came up with the list somehow. [The university and DLT designees] and I—we all kind of brainstormed as well. Initially, I think that our DLT point of contact may have sent out to the DLT or maybe a list to the second advisor, and said we are going to be looking for some mentors for our programs. Forwarded them to us and we kind of made the list, sat around, and just kind of—then again we looked at building performance. We also looked at their interpersonal style and relationships. Will they be able to convey, will they be a good model for folks? And then we just sent out an e-mail to everyone in that pool inviting them to be a mentor. Everybody that was invited said yes.

The remaining DLT members indicated they were not informed of the process for selections and pairing of mentors with mentees. As a participant and observer of the process for mentorship training, the researcher also gathered that the mentors were selected based on the DLT's perceptions of the principal's ability to groom leaders and provide the necessary supports, serving as a resource as opposed to a supervisor.

The final questions for the mentorship category concerned how mentors were informed of participation in the Administrative Allies as well as their contributions to the design of the mentorship initiative. Reflecting on the conversations, the researcher realized that the same outcomes evolved as was the case with the internship category: Principals were not integral stakeholders in the design and had limited-to-no input as to how the DLT structured it.

The process was similar to what was done with the principal trainings: Summer meetings were held to decide the focus and direction. The situation was similar with the mentors. A finding that also was conceptualized in the conversation with this DLT member was the realization that principals had not been included and that she might correct that:

I love that last question because I don't think you guys have been asked, which is really important. Well, it isn't too late for us to do something about that. Yes, that is a great question because as of now you [principals] have not contributed to the design but we should really do that. It is still plenty of time now.

Other respondents reflected similar perceptions. The three designees were able to speak to the constructs of the mentorship program and how it was implemented, whereas the remaining DLT members declined to speculate. Again, the principals provided their perceptual input based on their attendance at the training, surmising that as the program evolved, their perceptions would become vital to the improvements.

In conclusion, the 13 leadership interviews conceptualized four salient themes related to principal preparation through district–university partnerships. These findings further contributed to the increasing body of research for the design constructs that impact the grooming of potential leaders for the specific learning needs of a division through the district–university model. The commonalities that occurred related to leadership reflections and pathways, partnership, planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship. These themes were extracted through rich conversations and authentic descriptions of promising principal development from leaders directly and indirectly involved with the PCS-MU process.

The interviews resulted in a well-informed analysis of the Peninsula City Schools and Madison University cohort design, reported in Chapter 4 in narrative form. The

respondents were asked 20 open-ended questions, including probing questions to clarify responses and request further elaboration on the subject matter. The data were collected through the implementation of a qualitative study protocol requiring the researcher to transcribe, code, and identify themes. Chapter 5 presents discussion of the findings, summarizing conclusions, observations, and recommendations for program improvements and continued study.

Summary

In ascertaining if the leadership stakeholders included in the study found the PCS-MU partnership to be a viable model for principal preparedness, the researcher learned that the stakeholders do believe the partnership is effectively grooming aspiring leaders. The interviews, observations, and documents revealed the collaboration was heavily division-driven to include DLT members as instructors, PCS data aligned with coursework, and supervised leadership projects and internship experiences. The study also informed on the overall involvement of the DLT leadership and building level principals. The interviews and follow up conversations with the DLT designee for the partnership uncovered that the collaboration shifted from an inclusive process of the first two cohorts to three DLT members working closely with the university faculty designee. Also uncovered was the limited collaboration with building level leaders for the purpose of planning, evaluating components for improved practices and implementation, and for the development of the constructs specifically in recruitment, internship, and mentorship.

The second question asked, “What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the district–university educational leadership partnership?” What the researcher learned was PCS and MU performed a continuous evaluative process

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to improve and strengthen the partnership model. Three constructs that underwent change were recruitment, internship, and mentorship. The interviews also spoke to the commitment the leadership stakeholders feel for grooming, supporting, advising and encouraging the cohort members. This commitment is one of the reasons the conversations and continual evaluation for improvement occur.

The final research question, “What are the experiences of stakeholders in the educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features revealed that the majority of the leadership stakeholders were uninformed on the process. Although uninformed, they were supportive of the improvements made and believed internship and mentorship were key aspects of the program to stretch and mold leaders, as well as provide the cohort participants with building level leaders who could establish a reciprocal relationship of trust to address leadership issues and mediate concerns.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study Overview

The study examined district–university partnerships established for the purpose of grooming aspiring leaders to address the specific instructional and student needs of the division in which they work. Literature on district–university partnerships (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; New York City, New York; and Gwinnett County, Georgia) asserted the most successful models for principal preparedness effectively merge theory with practical experience, integrate sound design for internships to stretch leadership potential and expose cohort members to varied leadership experiences, and provide mentorship that supports, guides, and generates a rich and trusting relationship. The literature indicated weaknesses in leadership programs occur when collaboration is poor and the district and university fail to establish a trusting relationship that drives a well-blended program design. Other components that can negatively impact leadership programs are the internship experiences and mentorship support offered. This qualitative study of the PCS-MU partnership garnered narrative data, which supported the overarching findings and drove the direction of the study.

Focusing specifically on design constructs asserted by authorities to be vital components, the study further explored how planning, collaboration, internships, and mentorships aid in grooming potential principals for leadership in their divisions (Mullen, 2005). Observing the processes, reviewing documents, and participating in various capacities, in addition to interviewing the 13 leadership participants, the researcher found

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that the PCS-MU partnership exhibited a strong collaborative relationship rooted in trust and mutual respect, which resulted in an effectively designed program. Chapter 5 focuses on an analysis of the results, as well as recommendations and implications for further research.

Statement of the Problem

Educating students to be career and work ready has become a process driven by federal and educational mandates and policies. Educational leadership training is one area these sanctions, for the purpose of student achievement, have resulted in “a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005, p.5). Review of research also suggests, that along with establishing common expectations, training should converge on the importance of three aspects of the principals’ job. These aims for principal training are developing a deep understanding of how to support teachers; managing the curriculum to promote learning; and developing the ability to transform schools into more effective organizations that foster powerful teaching (Davis et al., 2005). What also emerged was that traditional training models for educating and training promising leaders indirectly involved one important entity, school districts.

Realizing the vested interests districts and universities share in training potential educational leaders, district-university partnerships were formed. This pairing increases integration of course and instructional practices (Hill, 1995). District-university partnerships also improve the training experience offering cohort candidates internships and mentorships supervised by the DLT members and expert building level leaders trained in mentorship. Sanzo, Myran, and Clayton (2011) contend one of the stresses in

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traditional design concerns the internship experience. “Often students are left to their own devices to set up internships, identify a mentor (who most likely is not trained in how to serve as a mentor), and are often delegated non-instructionally focused/more managerial tasks” (p. 295). The other benefit of district-university partnerships is the districts’ opportunity to groom their own leaders for the specific needs of division.

The rationale for the study was to discover the perceptions of district-university partnerships as a viable model for training aspiring leaders. Research suggests the partnership design yielded more graduates equipped to assume leadership and jointly, they provide a breadth of experience needed to groom and sustain potential leaders (Browne-Ferrigno & Sanzo, 2011). Noting the importance of instructional leadership training and the joint efforts of district-university partnerships, program design is crucial to the success of the model. The study considered these assertions and reported on design constructs that positively impact the development of effective instructional leaders.

A phenomenological inquiry was conducted and guided by the following research to learn the perceptions of leadership stakeholders on the partnership design for grooming leaders equipped to address the district’s instructional and learning needs.

1. What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the district–university educational leadership partnership?
2. What are the experiences of stakeholders in the educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features?

Findings

Examination of documents, observations, and interviews of division and building-level leaders were performed to ascertain the effectiveness of the PCS-MU partnership

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model for preparing aspiring principals. The research utilized a qualitative, phenomenological design to answer the initial research question: Is the PCS-MU partnership preparing aspiring principals for leadership and equipping them to address the district's specific learner needs? The subset questions asked how the design had evolved into the current model and how the constructs had strengthened leadership development, specifically the constructs internship and mentorship. Interviewing the purposely selected participants resulted in well-developed themes that inform on the perceptions of the design and recommendations for further improvement to the PCS-MU model, while also providing model data.

Finding # 1

The initial findings indicated that partnership constructs were relevant to the current body of research on principal preparedness.

Constructs Fortify Leadership Preparedness

The 13 participants' conversations conceptualized four themes on partnership design: leadership reflections and pathways; partnership, planning, and collaboration; internship; and mentorships. The overarching finding was all participants believed the PCS-MU partnership was a viable model for developing instructional leaders primed to step into leadership roles and address learner needs. The themes materializing from the conversations on partnership, planning, and collaboration have implications for current leaders, aspiring leaders, and district–university partnerships. With regard to their pathways to leadership, all but one participant reported completing traditional, theory-laden programs with limited or no internship opportunities. The one participant who completed a nontraditional route was a member of the first PCS-MU partnership, and she

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credited her successful transition to the leadership experiences from the program.

Another commonality that resulted from the interviews was leadership potential had been recognized by a supervisor and nurtured. As leaders, the study participants continue to groom promising principals and teachers with leadership potential believing as DLT members and seasoned principals, it is their responsibility to support, model sound practices and behaviors, and mentor/coach them. As the partnership continues to revamp and improve the design, considerations should be given to the type of programs and initiatives needed on the school level for potential leaders to maximize and showcase their leadership promise.

A weakness to leadership training and the program design emerged in recruitment of candidates. Although, it was not a focus of the study, the finding makes it pertinent to inform on. To ensure PCS-MU was truly getting the strongest potential leaders, the partnership added components to the selection process. These components included a writing module and fishbowl activity, which the DLT leadership found to be a necessary improvement. Providing the selection team an opportunity to the candidates interact and share their ideas and approaches to real educational issues and scenarios eliminated those who were not strong writers and also those who did not assert their ideas and show leadership qualities.

Finding the recruitment component to be vital to the process, it can be further strengthened by building level participation in the selection process. Having principals weigh in on the candidates beyond a recommendation letter provides the selection team another stakeholder to evaluate potential. The lens from which principals view leaders

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and determine leadership qualifications may be the missing component that results in strong, well-rounded cohort participants.

Finding #2

Emerging from the study of PCS-MU was the importance of collaboration. All of the study participants believed the collaboration between the division and university as the true strength of the program. The DLT designee shared the divisions concerns for recruitment and mentorship and the university listened and revamped the program. This collaboration for improvements convinced the division leadership stakeholders that they are true partnership. The other piece to this finding was that only the 3 DLT members directly involved with the partnership are informed and building level leaders are not included in the design and planning for improvements.

Importance of collaboration

Trust and communication are effective components for creating a design that blends the interests of both district and university. The DLT team members and principals who were interviewed asserted the success of the program and the ability for continuous improvements to the design were the direct result of the investment of the university designee in the partnership. The mutual respect for interests and the university's appreciation for the vision of the district evoked a tailored and authentic leadership preparation program.

Findings also were derived from conversations about internship experiences. Three DLT members served as advisors or designees for the partnership for the purpose of collaboration. When major issues arose, the district point of contact presented them to the DLT for resolution. Also for the purpose of assigning and creating internships for the

cohort, the DLT met jointly to devise projects and assign supervisors. Internships were not stand-alone experiences, and the strength of the partnership design was that the cohort members had continuous opportunities and experiences that maximized their leadership potential.

Although the university and the district have a well-developed partnership, there is an oversight when looking at the other stakeholders and their collaboration in the district-university partnership. The partnership does not include the building level leaders or previous cohort completers in planning and implementation of the design for their perceptions and recommendations. Principals can offer great insight to candidates beyond providing recommendation letters and serving as supervisors and mentors. The DLT designee offered one-reason principals are not tasked with partnership duties is because of their overextended responsibilities as building leaders. The lack of building level involvement excludes an integral stakeholder to the leadership process as they can provide first-hand knowledge of the strength and weaknesses in the selection process, internship and mentorship design. The principals are the ones responsible for recommending the candidates and overseeing their training and are a vital resource when evaluating for design improvement.

Gaining the insights from previous cohort program completers may also result in design improvements. Having completed the district-university program, their perceptions and insights inform on how the experience prepared them and what tenets were strong and which ones they believe need tweaking. These stakeholders serve as the product and are now working in leadership positions within the division. Their input may

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generate and produce improvements that are a valuable asset as the partnership continues to refine the program.

Finding #3

The mentorship initiative was described similarly to the internship and was perceived to be well developed and a program strength.

Mentorship, A Program Strength

Those directly involved in the process were the three individuals designated to work with the university point of contact; the DLT met to assign partners and supported the process by attending the initial mentor meeting. Mentorship was a newly implemented initiative, reflective of the manner in which the division and university worked collaboratively. The Administrative Allies evolved, recognizing the potential leaders were missing a vital resource and support system. Requiring a point of contact to guide, inform, and communicate without the evaluative component was considered by all study participants to be a vast design improvement. This was not the only improvement the partnership design underwent.

In evaluating how the program had advanced from the prior cohorts, it was noted the selection process had been overhauled. Realizing a weakness in the former process of written application and principal recommendation, the DLT point of contact and the university faculty met to add requirements for a written response regarding a current issue in leadership and a simulation activity. Although not described in the study, the selection procedures were repeatedly mentioned as a possible design improvement, thereby reflecting the continued collaborative efforts.

Finding #4

The partnership served as an evolving model that had achieved successful grooming. The study participants expressed their confidence in the partnership and its ability to train leaders for the PCS school division. The stakeholders directly involved in the leadership believe the PCS interests are valued and implemented in the theory based portion.

PCS-MU Successfully Grooms Leaders

Even for those who might not attain leadership positions, the interviewees strongly believed the partnership had afforded leadership exposure that enhanced teaching and interactions with other stakeholders. The stories and themes that emerged represented the need for other salient conversations regarding design improvements. All of the participants reported having confidence in the partnership's mission and believed promising principals would emerge at the completion of the program. This assurance of having a quality leadership pool was credited to the improved selection process, varied leadership experiences infused along with the coursework that fortifies the internship, and the addition of a mentorship initiative.

Interpretation Section

The study appraised the leadership preparedness of the PCS-MU partnership design for the purpose addressing the district's specific educational needs. What materialized through interviews of leadership stakeholders was the district-university partnership was well received. The participants' conversations revealed most were uninformed on the processes and how the design was established to drive preparedness. Even though leadership stakeholders were unaware of the methods, they had confident in the program as an initiative to train potential leaders. In revisiting the research questions,

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the PCS-MU partnership was effective in building a leadership pool, the constructs developed through strong district and university collaboration, and the internship and mentorship components were areas that were given continual focus for improvement.

The research affirms the district-university partnership was predicated on mutual respect and strong collaboration between the two. Proponents agree sustainment of partnerships required close collaboration for shared purpose and common vocabulary (Davis, et al., 2005). Collaboration and open communication lead to successful outcomes especially when the communication continued to inform on best practice for continued success (Peel, Peel, & Baker, 2002). Interview findings of PCS-MU concur with advocates stressing collaboration as a program strength promoting mutual respect and trust between the district and the university, and the authority afforded the district to implement and infused their interests. While the collaboration was found to be strong between the DLT designees and the university, the relationship was weak with other stakeholders, as most were not aware of the design or how decisions were made.

In reviewing research, many contend selection is a key design element. Although, selection was not the study's focus, the previous cohorts limited leadership potential heavily influenced the changes made to this construct. "Oftentimes the process is not as aggressive and thorough as one would imagine and sometimes results in making "bad choice[s]" (Normore, 2006). To avoid admitting weak candidates, districts need to implement well-constructed recruitment and selection processes grounded in careful planning and a solid research base (Normore, 2007). Normore (2006) referenced other authorities, stating the recruitment process must begin with leaders identifying promising principals and encouraging them to pursue leadership roles, coupled with a rigorous

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system that examines the candidates beyond the basic university requirements. PCS-MU partnership collaborated on their selection process and made revisions to include a writing component on a current leadership issue and a simulation activity.

The conversations also structured around the subset research questions. The first subset question asked, “What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the district–university educational leadership partnership?” These experiences proved all but one of the participants completed a traditional leadership program and their pathways to leadership was supported and mentored by a supervisor. The leadership stakeholders’ experiences with partnership, planning, collaboration, and internship and mentorship for all but three participants, was limited to teaching courses, selecting administrative mentors and internship assignments. The principals’ experiences were limited to serving as guest speakers, recruiting, mentoring and supervising cohort members.

The second subset question was, “What are the experiences of stakeholders in the educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features?” Addressing internships the DLT selected the assignments and delegated the cohort members. The principals were not a part of the selection process but they served as school level supervisors. What all interviewees expressed consensus on is the purpose of internships. Like, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), the PCS leadership agreed that internships provided opportunities to experience leadership duties over a period of time supervised by an expert veteran. At the end of the internship experience both the candidate and the district have performance data revealing their strengths and weaknesses. The DLT established that the partnership served as a continuous interview

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for the cohort members. The internship possibly being the most crucial performance indicator was given careful deliberation and assignment. DLT study participants espoused on the process performed, they establish internship assignments and elect cohort members based on interests, strength and the ability to stretch this potential for growth. Realizing the importance of authentic leadership opportunities the DLT ensured there were a plethora of experiences.

Mentorship is designed to equip future leaders with real guidance from knowledgeable professionals who have been trained for their mentoring role and who are engaged for a sufficient period of time to build practical readiness (The Wallace Foundation, 2007, p. 6; Zubrzycki, 2013, p. 4). All study participants defined mentorship as someone who coaches and guides an aspiring leader. They all agreed it was their responsibility to aid in grooming the cohort members because they were representative of the division and an investment into the future. The DLT designees and university faculty shared in the desire to make the mentorship a formal initiative and created Administrative Allies. Accordingly the goal was to provide an environment in which a principal could pursue questions, issues, concerns, and frustrations with an experienced peer whose sole purpose was to provide support, advice, and direction” (as cited in Parylo et al., 2012, p. 124).

The key stakeholders interviewed for the study perceived the purpose of the collaborating was to groom promising principals, and was built on researched based practices. The interviewees believed the current model is a viable program that meets district needs. Through partnership, planning, and collaboration, PCS-MU provided varied leadership experiences to include a culminating internship and support and

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guidance through mentorship. The partnership's commitment to infused design was evident in the district-driven interests and use of materials to include district data and documents. What also resulted was the commitment to the cohort members and their success. The stakeholders not only expressed confidence in their program but also in the processes that guided the program and aided in the design.

Recommendations for Practice

The PCS-MU partnership design provides a service to its student population by training aspiring leaders. The researcher determined the focus of the study was to learn how the training of PCS-MU Cohort members was tailored to groom these aspiring leaders for the specific task of addressing the district's instructional needs. As the division continues to improve its cohort design, there are recommendations for improvement. Finding collaboration to be rooted in trust and mutual respect, the district and university team worked well to provide innovation and implement practices that would continue to evolve and improve their leadership training. The key element in developing leaders aside from strong collaboration was the provision of support and practical training through mentorship and real world experience. The Administrative Allies program exemplified PCS-MU's analysis of their program for improved practices. Another strength of the program was the practical experiences afforded the cohort members. Literature has asserted that strong internship experiences exceed 300 hours and are assigned over the regular school year. The financial and learning impact on the division makes this type of internship impractical, so internships are performed in the summer semester of the final year of the program.

Realizing this was a weakness to the program, PCS fortified leadership training by assigning projects and duties to ensure that cohort members have varied and multiple experiences, beginning in the first semester. Another design strength of the PCS-MU partnership was the opportunity for the division to tailor the training for the specific needs of the division. This strength was evidenced in the conversations with the three DLT advisors, who described infusing theory-based instruction with data, policies, and practices of the division, thereby ensuring that the potential leaders were given broad instruction concerning supervision, school law, and other areas related to the division's evaluation processes and forms, cases, and legal issues.

PCS-MU's partnership was doing many things well for the purpose of equipping potential leaders to address the specific needs of the division through collaboration, internship, and mentorship; however, there are two recommendations to further improve the design. The first recommendation is to involve more stakeholders in the process. Vetting previous cohort participants may richly apprise of experiences from participants' perspective, especially those who have secured leadership positions. Principals may also be a valuable resource as they serve in various capacities in the partnership. Their multiple roles as recruiters, supervisors, and mentors establish their necessity to grooming these potential leaders and since they will eventually hire them, are very vested in the participants' success and will provide varied perceptions for improved practices. These stakeholders' viewpoints may generate amended procedures and program implementation. Such data also will provide a framework for other divisions considering partnerships and seeking improvements to established ones.

The second recommendation concerns the program design. The overall experiences reported by the leaders participating in the study revealed of the 13 participants, 3 were well versed and informed, 3 had a general idea of the processes used for selection and assignment of mentors and internships, and the remaining 7 were completely uninformed, speculating about how decisions were made and how the program had evolved. A manual or formal, written document containing information about the mission, purpose, design components, staff, curriculum, selection, mentoring and internship processes would be beneficial to current and future employees. It would serve to promote and advertise the program and establish the expectations for leadership training.

The research literature and the participants suggested continued efforts to inform on district-university partnerships' impact on instruction and learner outcomes. Linking student achievement to leadership preparedness through partnership was an area under-represented in research although the perceptions were that if the districts are recruiting, instructing and supervising the candidates to address the precise needs of the divisions, these candidates should increase achievement. The research of learner outcomes should also inform on a larger body of district-university partnerships, finding most studies concentrate on case studies of programs.

Research efforts on partnership design constructs should also be an aim of future studies. There are programs consistently implementing improved practices and initiatives effectively grooming potential leaders. The model data generated from further studies of design will expose strengths and weaknesses as well as inform on design innovations. Desiring to learn if district-university partnerships were effectively training promising

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principals was the overarching goal of the study. What surfaced was the realization that grooming your own leaders is a viable model, but due to limited studies and the continuous evolution, the research needs to not only consider achievement but continued focus on the design constructs.

When evaluating from a superintendent perspective, the study informs on the design tenets and key stakeholders that should be included in the process. Even if all DLT members are not directly involved in the design components they should be well versed in the overall mission, design elements and implementation of the design to effectively support and market the program. Along with the DLT, other stakeholders' perceptions are vital and should be represented in the process are building level leaders and previous cohort members who now serve in leadership. Finally, when considering succession and providing a reference for others to, having a formal document will provide a roadmap and not require others to start over or implement a tenet that has been improved and tested.

Building level principals the study offers a glimpse into the tenets, how they are intended to groom leaders and their rationale for

Conclusion

The themes established through the rich conversations and observations of the PCS-MU partnership for leadership training provide a framework for future design. Although the district–university partnership was an evolving concept, these themes and findings can aid in future development for divisions. The study highlighted key design constructs that aided in developing leadership attributes for candidates desiring to become principals within the districts they instruct. Concentrating on these constructs

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unveiled that collaboration is the agent that drives successful planning, internships are not a stand alone training, and mentorships begins with leaders who not only can identify potential principals but can also coach them.

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APPENDIX A**Peninsula City Schools and Madison University****Research Documents**

Proposal Number: _____
(To Be Assigned by the College Committee or IRB)

APPENDIX B OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH

Note: For research projects regulated by or supported by the Federal Government, submit 10 copies of this application to the Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, submit to your college human subjects committee.

Responsible Project Investigator (RPI)		
The RPI must be a member of ODU faculty or staff who will serve as the project supervisor and be held accountable for all aspects of the project. Students cannot be listed as RPIs.		
First Name:	Middle Initial:	Last Name:
Telephone:	Fax Number:	E-mail:
Office Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Department:		College:
Complete Title of Research Project:		Code Name (One word):
Investigators		
Individuals who are directly responsible for any of the following: the project's design, implementation, consent process, data collection, and data analysis. If more investigators exist than lines provided, please attach a separate list.		
First Name:	Middle Initial:	Last Name:
Telephone:	Fax Number:	Email:
Office Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Affiliation: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
First Name:	Middle Initial:	Last Name:
Telephone:	Fax Number:	Email:
Office Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Affiliation: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
List additional investigators on attachment and check here: _____		

Type of Research	
1. This study is being conducted as part of (check all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Research <input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> Masters Thesis	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Thesis Graduate Student Research <input type="checkbox"/> Honors or Individual Problems Project <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Proposal Number: _____
 (To Be Assigned by the College Committee or IRB)

Funding

2. Is this research project externally funded or contracted for by an agency or institution which is independent of the university? Remember, if the project receives ANY federal support, then the project CANNOT be reviewed by a College Committee and MUST be reviewed by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

☐ Yes (If yes, indicate the granting or contracting agency and provide identifying information.)
☐ No

Agency Name:

Mailing Address:

Point of Contact:

Telephone:

Research Dates

3a. Date you wish to start research (MM/DD/YY) ____/____/____
3b. Date you wish to end research (MM/DD/YY) ____/____/____

Human Subjects Review

4. Has this project been reviewed by any other committee (university, governmental, private sector) for the protection of human research participants?

☐ Yes
☐ No

4a. If yes, is ODU conducting the primary review?

☐ Yes
☐ No (If no go to 4b)

4b. Who is conducting the primary review?

5. Attach a description of the following items:

- ☐ Description of the Proposed Study
- ☐ Research Protocol
- ☐ References
- ☐ Any Letters, Flyers, Questionnaires, etc. which will be distributed to the study subjects or other study participants
- ☐ If the research is part of a research proposal submitted for federal, state or external funding, submit a copy of the FULL proposal

Note: The description should be in sufficient detail to allow the Human Subjects Review Committee to determine if the study can be classified as EXEMPT under Federal Regulations 45CFR46.101(b).

Proposal Number: _____
 (To Be Assigned by the College Committee or IRB)

Exemption categories
<p>6. Identify which of the 6 federal exemption categories below applies to your research proposal and explain why the proposed research meets the category. Federal law 45 CFR 46.101(b) identifies the following EXEMPT categories. Check all that apply and provide comments.</p> <p>SPECIAL NOTE: The exemptions at 45 CFR 46.101(b) do not apply to research involving prisoners, fetuses, pregnant women, or human in vitro fertilization. The exemption at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). for research involving survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior, does not apply to research with children, except for research involving observations of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.</p>
<p>____ (6.1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>____ (6.2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>____ (6.3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) The human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>____ (6.4) Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>____ (6.5) not applicable</p>

Proposal Number: _____
 (To Be Assigned by the College Committee or IRB)

____ (6.6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Comments:

PLEASE NOTE:

1. You may begin research when the College Committee or Institutional Review Board gives notice of its approval.
2. You MUST inform the College Committee or Institutional Review Board of ANY changes in method or procedure that may conceivably alter the exempt status of the project.

Responsible Project Investigator (Must be original signature)

Date

Proposal

Description of the Proposal of Study

This proposed phenomenological study seeks empirical data on the experiences of a district-university partnership as experienced by key stakeholders. The primary goal of this proposed study is to learn how the stakeholders perceive leadership preparedness under the design constructs of planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship. A purposive sample of 12-18 district-university members will be used to conduct semi-structured interviews to elicit salient themes on program design.

Research Protocol

Research Questions

The research design and goals of the study were formed to add further literature on principal preparedness as it relates to district-university partnerships design tenets. With these constructs in mind (planning and collaboration, internship, and mentorship, this study of Peninsula City Schools-Madison University Cohort sought to ascertain stakeholders' perceptions of leadership preparedness. Specific research questions are:

1. What are the experiences of stakeholders related to developing and sustaining the university-district educational leadership partnership?
2. What are the experiences of stakeholders in educational leadership partnership related to the internship and mentoring program features?

The research protocol

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research "employs different philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (Crestwell, 2009, p. 173). The reality of qualitative research is that it is fluid and shaped and influenced by social interactions aimed at answering questions of meaning from those who have directly experienced it (Arghode, 2012; Roberts, 2013). In designing this study on principal preparedness, the researcher desires to construct theories inductively through interviews, documents, and observations. This proposed study design yields discipline-specific theoretical framework and produce a rich description of leadership constructs implemented by the district-university partnership to groom its leaders. Framing the study as a qualitative, phenomenological design the perceptions of the district-university stakeholders is imperative in forming theories as they provide lived experiences. Phenomenology involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive engagement to determine themes.

Participants

For a robust study, a purposive sampling will be applied to include 12 to 18 participants. The researcher, as a principal for the division and a doctoral candidate at the university, will inform on the constructs of the district-university partnership as perceived by the stakeholders. Due to the researcher's knowledge of the division, the participants will be selected based on their participation with the cohort. This approach was enlisted because purposive sampling is appropriate when collecting descriptive data. Purposeful sampling will be implemented because the stakeholders selected can articulate the phenomena being investigated. The study will be conducted using semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, providing participants opportunities to fully disclose and pace the questions. Probing questions will be included to provide clarification. Qualitative interviews are open-ended, clear, neutral and sensitive in nature based on behavior or experience, opinion or value, feeling, knowledge, sensory experience and demographic or background details (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

Protocols for the study begin with adhering to the ethical standards. The researcher will complete of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program's Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Research (HSR) course. This course is designed to train on the moral obligations concerning consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, justice and veracity. The researcher will protect the identities of participants using coding. Bracketing will also be implemented to inform of biases as well as member checker to further identify prejudgments and validate accuracy.

The instrumentation is in the form of a semi-structured interview that will be recorded and transcribe. The initial invitation and study intent will be emailed. Those who agree to participate will provide date, place and time desired to interview. An additional follow up interview may take place to follow up on themes and address any questions tat emerged from the aggregate interviews. The interviews transcriptions will be reviewed to determine and organize information according to themes. Triangulations for theme justification will be implemented to correlate data sources to ensure procedural rigor and credibility.

Letter of Study Purpose

I am a doctoral candidate conducting a study on district-university partnerships under the design constructs of planning and collaboration, internships, and mentorship for the purpose of principal preparedness. I am requesting your participation because of your unique role in the district-university partnership. Your experience and contribution to the study will provide empirical evidence, which can inform on design improvements. All information gleaned will be used solely for educational purposes.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview, to take place in a setting of your choice and convenience. All information obtained will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In addition, your identity will also be anonymous and if you should desire to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation, you may do so at anytime.

Please email me if you would like to participate and please provide a date, time and the best location for the interview. If you have questions, please contact Raymond L. Haynes at (757) 218-6912. Thank you.

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewer:

Description of Project:

The aim of this interview is to glean lived experience of the district-university partnership stakeholders for the purpose of determining principal preparedness under the design constructs of planning and collaboration, internships, and mentorships.

Interview Questions

Leadership questions.

1. What was your pathway to leadership?
2. What were your leadership program experiences?
3. What have been your experiences with the current PCS-MU Leadership Cohort?
4. What is your level of involvement with the Leadership Cohort? Why?
5. What is your perception of the PCS-MU partnership as an initiative for training instructional leaders?
6. Do you feel the PCS-MU partnership is a successful model to prepare aspiring school leaders to address the specific student needs of the division? Why or why not?

Partnership, planning, and collaboration questions.

7. How did the cohort evolve into the current design?
8. What planning and collaboration processes drove the design?
9. How much of the design is influenced by the specific needs of the division?
10. What stakeholders are involved in the partnership design and decision making? Why?
11. What training is afforded mentors and supervising principals to ensure program efficacies?

Internship questions.

12. What are the guiding factors or parameters for assigning cohort members to their internship experiences?

13. How are internship projects developed?
14. What is the purpose of the internship?
15. What are your perceptions of how the internships are developed, and how are interns assigned to sites?
16. What is your perception of the expectation for you to groom cohort participants?

Mentorship questions.

17. How does the role of mentor differ from the role of supervising principal?
18. How are mentors selected to work with cohort members?
19. How are the mentors trained and informed on expected roles and duties?
20. How have mentors contributed to the design of the program?

APPENDIX B

Peninsula City Schools

Admissions Documents and Program Description

Educational Leadership & School Administration (M.S.Ed.)

Degree Level: Graduate

College: Education (/education)

Department: Educational Foundations & Leadership (/efl)

Degree Earned: Master of Science in Education

Course Delivery Mode(s): Online Synchronous [REDACTED] educational-leadership-administration-and-supervision)

Admission

Application Dates

	Fall	Spring	Summer	Financial Assistantship
Domestic	Rolling Admissions	Rolling Admissions	Rolling Admissions	
International	April 15	October 1	February 1	

Requirements

Tests GRE/MAT optional, not required
(<http://www.ets.org/gre/>)

Recommendations Provide two letters of recommendation on school or district letterhead. One must be from your principal (or immediate supervisor if you work outside of the school within a district) and one from another supervisor

Essay Write a one page, single-spaced statement that explains the following:

Your professional experiences and professional goals.

Specific ways you hope to improve public education as an educational leader.

How this degree will help you address your professional goals.

Write a one page, single-spaced statement about a contemporary and critical issue facing educational leaders. Address the following:

What is the contemporary issue and why is it critical?

Why is this issue relevant to school and/or division leaders?

What role should school and/or division leaders play in addressing this issue and how?

Transcripts From all prior institutions

Additional Instructions Applicants should be currently be employed by a public or accredited nonpublic school division/district. Applicants must also include a resume. Applicants must also include a resume.

Contact

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

12/13/13

Educational Leadership - Admin. & Supervision K-12 (MSEd)

Transforming today's educators into tomorrow's leaders, with web-based live classes, taught by professors with real world experience.

This Master of Science in Education prepares you for leadership roles in schools and school districts. The program leads to full Commonwealth of Virginia Licensure in Educational Administration and Supervision, Pre-K-12.

Your course work will provide conceptual and theoretical knowledge, as well as practical field experience. Program themes include:

- Leadership for school improvement
- Data analysis and decision making
- Strategic human resource and fiscal management
- Establishing and leading professional collaborative communities

Program at a Glance

Degree: Master of Science in Education

Cost: \$412 per credit hour *

Required: 30 credit hours

Locations: 1

Course Delivery Modes: Online synchronous, Practicum / Internship

Curriculum

Content Courses (24 credits)

- ELS 700 Strategic Leadership and Management for School Improvement (This course is required during the first semester of the program.)
- ELS 701 Accountability and Organizational Improvement
- ELS 702 Educational Politics and Policymaking
- ELS 710 Strategic Communication and External Relations
- ELS 727 Learning Theories and Professional Development
- ELS 728 Instructional Leadership and Supervision
- ELS 753 Educational Finance and Budgeting
- ELS 757 Educational Law and Ethics

Clinical Experiences (6 credits)

- ELS 868: Internship in Educational Leadership (100 hours)
- ELS 869: Instructional Internship (100 hours)
- An additional 120 hours of internship hours are embedded throughout the Content Coursework above.

* While applicants do not have to have three years of educational experience to apply to the program, to become eligible for an Administration and Supervision preK-12 license in the Commonwealth of Virginia the candidate must have completed three years of successful, full-time experiences in a public or accredited nonpublic school in an instructional personnel position that requires licensure in Virginia.

Additional details can be found on the [department's web pages](#).

Calculating Cost

Virginia residents (with Virginia domicile)	\$412
Students living outside of Virginia	\$412
* In Virginia but without Virginia domicile	\$1048

Rates are effective Summer 2013 and subject to change. Please visit the [Office of Finance web site](#) for complete tuition details.

* For questions about domicile or "in-state" status as it applies to tuition rates, please visit the [University Registrar web site](#).

Educational Leadership Careers

- Assistant Principal
- Principal
- Superintendency
- Department Lead
- Curriculum Leader
- Lead Teacher
- Curriculum Supervision
- Data Instructional Leader

Admission Information

To be considered for admission to this Master's program, you must:

1. meet all standard University requirements for admission;
2. have an undergraduate point average of 2.80 overall and 3.00 in the major;
3. provide two letters of recommendation on school or district letterhead. One must be from your principal (or immediate supervisor if you work outside of the school within a district) and one from another supervisor;
4. write a one page, single-spaced statement that explains the following:
 - Your professional experiences and professional goals.
 - Specific ways you hope to improve public education as an educational leader.
 - How this degree will help you address your professional goals.
5. write a one page, single-spaced statement about a contemporary and critical issue facing educational leaders. Address the following:
 - What is the contemporary issue and why is it critical?
 - Why is this issue relevant to school and/or division leaders?
 - What role should school and/or division leaders play in addressing this issue and how?
6. be currently be employed by a public or accredited nonpublic school division/district.

Learning Environment

Courses in this program may be offered in these technologies:

APPENDIX C

Peninsula City Schools

Administrative Allies Documents

Fishbowl Timed Writing Questions

1. When entering a new school as the building leader, what priorities should you value during your 1st year? Why?
2. How might you consider the complexities of existent school culture? What variables constitute school culture?
3. Where is the line drawn when considering building morale and teacher input versus academic goals?

**PCS Administrative Ally-Promising Principal
Initial Meeting Agenda
November 2013**

It is the responsibility of the Promising Principal to summarize the conversation with the Administrative Ally by typing “minutes” within this agenda and emailing a copy to Dr. XXX and Dr. XXX within 48 hours.

Topic	I/D/A Information/ Discussion /Action	Desired Outcome	Leader
Entering the conversation (10 min)	I	Ally and Promising Principal exchange cell phone numbers, email address, other pertinent info	Ally
Review Ally-Promising Principal Agreement (10 min)	I/D	Both parties will read and review the Administrative Ally & Promising Principal Agreement, making certain to ask clarifications and inserting any items to customize the agreement.	Promising Principal
Conversation (30 min)	I	<p>Introductions- share educational background and experiences, look for similarities and differences</p> <p><u>Possible exploratory questions:</u></p> <p>1. <i>Talk about an experience as a teacher that persuaded your decision to become an administrator</i></p> <p>2. <i>What is the most difficult task you face in your position?</i></p> <p>3. <i>What is your best hope and worst fear as a building leader?</i></p>	Both
Exiting the conversation (10 min)	I/D/A	<p>Summarize key points from today’s conversation, including topics or issues to explore and discuss during next conversation</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	

**PCS Administrative Ally-Promising Principal
Initial Meeting Agenda
November 2013**

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Conversation (30 min)	I	<p>Introductions- share educational background and experiences, look for similarities and differences</p> <p><u>Possible exploratory questions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Talk about an experience as a teacher that persuaded your decision to become an administrator</i> 2. <i>What is the most difficult task you face in your position?</i> 3. <i>What is your best hope and worst fear as a building leader?</i> 	Both
Exiting the conversation (10 min)	I/D/A	<p>Summarize key points from today's conversation, including topics or issues to explore and discuss during next conversation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 	

PCS Administrative Ally –MU Promising Principal Agreement

The following agreement was developed in partnership with the Peninsula City Schools building administrators, i.e. Administrative Allies and PCS teachers participating as “Promising Principals.”

The Promising Principal Agrees:

- To approach the ally-promising principal relationship with openness and honesty.
- To fully avail him/herself to the support offered by the Administrative Ally.
- To take full advantage of written materials, notes, and other resources made available by the Administrative Ally.
- To maintain confidentiality of information shared during conversations.
- To honor the demanding schedule of the administrator, keeping to the mutually agreed upon schedule.

The Administrative Ally Agrees:

- To approach the ally-promising principal relationship with openness and honesty.
- To commit to supporting the success and effectiveness of the Promising Principal as the primary focus and purpose of the Ally relationship.
- To provide opportunities for the Promising Principal to view the roles and responsibilities of a building administrator
- To maintain confidentiality of information shared during conversations
- To honor the demanding schedule of the teacher, keeping to the mutually agreed upon schedule.

Promising Principal

Administrative Ally

Date

PCS ADMINISTRATIVE ALLY MU PROMISING PRINCIPAL OVERVIEW

Fall 2013

PRINCIPAL

PCS – MU ASPIRING ADMINISTRATORS' PROGRAM

Fall 2013

PROMISING PRINCIPALS

MU Coursework- Year One

Summer Semester (2013)

- Principal Orientation
- School and Community Relations

Fall Semester (2013)

- Data-based Decision Making
- Program Evaluation and Research

Spring Semester (2014)

- Learning Theories and Professional Development
- Educational Finance and Budgeting

PROMISING PRINCIPALS

MU Coursework- Year Two

Summer Semester (2014)

- Internship
- Instructional Leadership and Supervision

Fall Semester (2014)

- Educational Law and Ethics
- Educational Politics and Policymaking

Spring Semester (2015)

- Internship Part II

ROLE OF THE PROMISING PRINCIPAL

- » Definition: *noun*, 1. an PCS teacher that is associated with an PCS building administrator for some common cause or purpose

In this particular context - *to ask questions, observe actions, tell stories, listen to stories, develop leadership skills, and experience the life of a school administrator* within a safe learning environment with your administrator ally

ROLE OF THE ALLY

- » Definition: *noun*, 1. an PCS administrator that is associated with another for some common cause or purpose 2. a person who associates or cooperates with another; supporter

To act as a mentor or coach to a future building administrator and "Promising Principal"

ALLIES AS MENTORS...

- ✓ Expand knowledge of leadership skills
- ✓ Increase access to challenging opportunities & responsibilities
- ✓ Develop an administrative perspective
- ✓ Associate with a successful role model
- ✓ Provide opportunity to discuss administrative and educational issues with a respected practitioner
- ✓ Offer on-going support and encouragement
- ✓ Give honest and constructive feedback
- ✓ Access to inside information and organization dynamics
- ✓ Help in building a professional network
- ✓ Increase self-confidence...heightened career aspirations

www.nesep.org

ALLIES AS COACHES

- ✓ Believe in the potential of the Promising Principal
- ✓ Listen carefully and identify themes
- ✓ Speak with a "Can Do!" attitude
- ✓ Ask "What Do You Think?"
- ✓ Collaborative in nature, toward problem-solving and imagining the possibilities
- ✓ Look at/for the positive
- ✓ Coach Promising Principal in the organization in order to build capacity within PCS

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PCS ADMINISTRATIVE ALLY OVERVIEW

Contact your MU Cohort teacher and set up a time to meet by November 8th

Set up a monthly day/time to touch base

Utilize AA-PP agenda to guide your conversation

Be an Ally!

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

The collage includes several documents:

- AA-PP Agenda**: A table with columns for Date, Topic, and Notes.
- AA-PP Checklist**: A list of tasks and responsibilities for the Administrative Ally.
- AA-PP Informational Document**: A document providing background information on the role.
- AA-PP Training Materials**: Various slides and handouts from training sessions.

ALLY-PROMISING PRINCIPAL OUTCOMES

- ♦ To showcase leadership
- ♦ To promote learning experiences that develop leadership skills and provide professional guidance
- ♦ To provide direct access to a support system
- ♦ To promote the foundation of a lasting professional network

MENTORING & COACHING SOURCES

The following sources were used in the development of the presentation
Blue type material can be found on the Title I website under the Leadership Coach section

WEB SOURCES:

www.ashap.org/mentor
<http://coach.hhsa.org/mentor.html>
http://www.merit.org/balanced_leadership/
<http://www.seattleuachieves.com/news/achievements/mentor.html>
<http://www.amschoolship.org/>

PRINT MATERIAL:

"Leadership Practices Accelerate into High Speed", Dorl Novak, Marcella Reilly, & Diana Williams,
Journal of Staff Development, June 2010 Vol. 31 No. 3
"The Emerging Field of NeuroLeadership" by Dr. A. R. Ringing and David Rock
"Why the Brain Needs Coaching: Our Future: NeuroLeadership"
RESULTS COACHING: The New Essentials for School Leaders, Kathy Kim, Vicky Dearing, et al.
Coaching Conversations: Transforming Your School... One Conversation at a Time, Linda Gross, Chalhoun,
and Marlene Fleming Reilly

