NEW PRINCIPALS PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE MENTORING THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR FORMER PRINCIPALS

by

MICHAEL ANTHONY RHETT

(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The study examined the perspectives of two new principals and the mentoring they received from their former principals. The researcher sought to uncover the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants, two elementary school principals from a large district in Georgia, to determine how this assistance prepared them for the principalship. Data were obtained from interviews with the principals and the data were then analyzed using the constant comparative method. The data obtained from each case were analyzed individually and then across cases in which the following common themes emerged: 1) A sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience, 2) Practical experiences from the mentoring experience were important to the assistant principals when they assumed the principalship, 3) A sense of trust emerged in the mentoring relationship.

Findings indicated that the mentoring relationship between the assistant principal and the principal was an important factor in the preparation of these principals before they assumed the position of the principalship. Practical experiences during the mentoring experiences enabled the principals to make a better transition into the principalship.

INDEX WORDS: Assistant principal, Mentoring, Principal preparation
NEW PRINCIPALS PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE MENTORING THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR FORMER PRINCIPALS

by

MICHAEL ANTHONY RHETT

B.S., State University of New York at Albany, 1979
B.S.Ed, University of Central Oklahoma, 1989
B.A., University of Central Oklahoma, 1990
M.Ed., University of Central Oklahoma, 1992
Ed.S., Georgia State University, 1996

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004
© 2004

Michael Anthony Rhett

All Rights Reserved
NEW PRINCIPALS PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE MENTORING THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR FORMAL PRINCIPALS

by

MICHAEL ANTHONY RHETT

Major Professor: Sally J. Zepeda
Committee: John Dayton
C. Thomas Holmes

Electronic Version Approved:
Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2004
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Harold Rhett, a decorated combat veteran who served his country in the United States Army and who was a consistent model of a good work ethic; my brother Curtis Rhett, who is my best friend; my sister Sheila Rhett, for her portrayal of faith and determination and most importantly my mother, Lillie Rhett. My mother provided the vision, faith, love, and she placed God in our family’s life. My mother and God are the wind beneath the Rhett family’s wings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In life, it is not the destination but the journey and the people we meet along the way that gives life its zeal. There are many people who traveled and provided me with guidance along the way. Among those people are my parents, my family, my friends, teachers, students, and the principals who served as participants in this study. Most significant, however, is my major professor, Dr. Sally J. Zepeda, for her consistent pursuit of scholarship and excellence. I thank God for bringing her into my life. Gratitude is also due to the professors who served on my dissertation committee, Dr. C. Thomas Holmes and Dr. John Dayton.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## INTRODUCTION

- Statement of the Problem ......................................................... 2
- Purpose of the Study ................................................................. 3
- Background of the Study ............................................................. 3
- Research Questions ................................................................. 4
- Theoretical Framework .............................................................. 5
- Significance of the Study .......................................................... 5
- Assumptions ................................................................................. 7
- Definition of Terms ...................................................................... 7
- Limitations of the Study ............................................................. 7
- Overview of the Research Procedures ............................................ 8
- Organization of the Study ......................................................... 8

## REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE .............................................. 10

- The Landscape of the Principalship .............................................. 10
- Era of Accountability ................................................................. 12
- Principal as the Instructional Leader .......................................... 14
- Stressors of the Principalship ................................................... 15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................... x
Principal Shortages.............................................................................................................................17
Requirements for a Principal Certificate in the State of Georgia..............................................19
Preparation of School Administrators .................................................................................................20
Professional Development of Principals ...............................................................................................24
The Assistant Principal.........................................................................................................................25
Mentoring and the School Administrator............................................................................................28
Chapter Summary.................................................................................................................................30

3 METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................................34
Guiding Research Questions for the Study ...........................................................................................34
Symbolic Interactionism........................................................................................................................34
Design of the Study...............................................................................................................................36
Site Selection........................................................................................................................................37
Data Collection.......................................................................................................................................38
Data Analysis Techniques.....................................................................................................................42
Trustworthiness.....................................................................................................................................45
External Validity....................................................................................................................................47
Internal Validity......................................................................................................................................48
Chapter Summary..................................................................................................................................51

4 FINDINGS.................................................................................................................................................52
Anderson County.................................................................................................................................53
The Anderson County School District ..............................................................................................55
Swanson Elementary School...............................................................................................................60
Trinity Elementary School .................................................................65
Participant Profiles ...........................................................................69
Transitioning from Assistant Principal to Principal .........................73
Gaining Entry into Administration ......................................................77
The Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship .................81
Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility .............................................84
Preparation in the Area of Curriculum ...............................................87
Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship ...............................91
Defining Roles as an Assistant Principal ...........................................96
Resolving Issues Between the Assistant Principal and the Principal ....99
Preparedness to Assume the Principalship .........................................102
The Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal ....105
Cross Case Analysis ...........................................................................108

5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS ...........................120

Previous Studies .............................................................................121
Summary of the Findings ...................................................................122
Discussion .......................................................................................122
Implications .....................................................................................136
Concluding Thoughts ........................................................................138

REFERENCES ..................................................................................139

APPENDICES

A INFORMED CONSENT FORM .......................................................145

viii
B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS .........................................................147
C THE RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVES .................................................................149
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Example of an Open-ended Question, Participant’s Reply, and Exploratory Questions .................................................................40
Table 3.2: Artifacts Used to Profile the Context of the Study ........................................41
Table 3.3: Research Related Interview Questions .........................................................41
Table 3.4: Codes and Meanings ........................................................................44
Table3.5: Primary Research Questions and Corresponding Categories .....................45
Table 3.6: Example of Researcher’s Fieldnotes ............................................................46
Table 3.7: Example of Member Check .....................................................................49
Table 4.1: Demographic Population by Race ............................................................53
Table 4.2: Population Percentages ........................................................................54
Table 4.3: Income Demographics ..........................................................................54
Table 4.4: Educational Attainment (2000)
  Population over 25 Years ..................................................................................55
Table 4.5 Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 1 ....................56
Table 4.6 Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 2 ....................57
Table 4.7 Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 3 ....................57
Table 4.8 Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 5 ....................57
Table 4.9 Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 1 ..............................58
Table 4.10 Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 2 ..............................58
Table 4.11 Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 3 ........................................69
Table 4.12 Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 5 ........................................69
Table 4.13 Race/Ethnicity Enrollment at SES.................................................................71
Table 4.14 Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced-price Lunches .................................71
Table 4.15 Students Enrollment in Special Programs .........................................................71
Table 4.16 Retained Students by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender .........................................72
Table 4.17 Swanson Elementary School Certified Personnel Data ....................................72
Table 4.18 Criterion-Reference Assessment Swanson Elementary School (SES)/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 1 .................................................................73
Table 4.19 Criterion-Reference Assessment Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 2 .................................................................74
Table 4.20 Criterion-Reference Assessment Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 3 .................................................................74
Table 4.21 Criterion-Reference Assessment Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 5 .................................................................74
Table 4.22 Race/Ethnicity Enrollment at TES .................................................................75
Table 4.23 Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced-price Lunches .................................75
Table 4.24 Enrollment in Special Programs at TES .........................................................76
Table 4.25 Retained Students by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender .........................................76
Table 4.26 Trinity Elementary School Certified Personnel Data ........................................76
Table 4.27 Criterion-Reference Assessment Trinity Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 1 .................................................................77
Table 4.28 Criterion-Reference Assessment Trinity Elementary School /Anderson County
Schools/State Grade 2 ..............................................................................................................68

Table 4.29 Criterion-Reference Assessment Trinity Elementary School /Anderson County
Schools/State Grade 3 ..............................................................................................................68

Table 4.30 Criterion-Reference Assessment Trinity Elementary School /Anderson County
Schools/State Grade 5 ..............................................................................................................68

Table 4.31 Participant Profiles .................................................................................................69

Table 4.32 Transitioning from Assistant Principal to Principal .........................................75

Table 4.33 Transitioning from Assistant Principal to Principal .........................................77

Table 4.34 Gaining Entry into Administration ......................................................................79

Table 4.35 Gaining Entry into Administration ......................................................................81

Table 4.36 Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship .......................................82

Table 4.37 Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship .......................................84

Table 4.38 Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility ...............................................................85

Table 4.39 Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility ...............................................................87

Table 4.40 Preparation in the Area of Curriculum .................................................................89

Table 4.41 Preparation in the Area of Curriculum .................................................................90

Table 4.42 Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship ...............................................93

Table 4.43 Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship ...............................................96

Table 4.44 Defining Roles as an Assistant Principal ..............................................................97

Table 4.45 Defining Roles as an Assistant Principal ..............................................................98

Table 4.46 Resolving Issues between the Assistant Principal and the Principal ...............100

Table 4.47 Resolving Issues between the Assistant Principal and the Principal ...............101
Table 4.48 Preparedness to Assume the Principalship .........................................................103
Table 4.49 Preparedness to Assume the Principalship .........................................................105
Table 4.50 Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal .........................107
Table 4.51 Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal .........................108
Table 4.52 Common Themes ..............................................................................................108
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. The researcher sought to uncover the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants of this study to determine how this assistance prepared them for the principalship. Moreover, the researcher sought to identify the attributes of “mentoring” as described by the participants.

A shortage of principals compounded with inadequate training for the principalship has created a crisis for those responsible for hiring the chief executive officer of the school—the principal (Doud & Keller, 1998; Hopkins, 1998; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). In an era of accountability, principals face an array of challenges as they learn on the job. The learning curve is exacerbated by the “contextual nature of school leadership” in that no two schools are the same relative to the students served, expectations of the community, and competence of the teaching staff (Hausman, Crow, & Sperry, 2000, p. 1).

Hopkins (1998) reported, “Schools are going without principals. Retired principals are being called back to full-time work, and districts have to go to great lengths to recruit qualified candidates” (p. 2). Young, Petersen, and Short (2002) asserted that schools are experiencing shortages in administrators due to:

- Expanded expectations, responsibilities, and stressful conditions for school and school-system leaders;
- Inadequate training;
- Insufficient salaries and fringe benefits; and,
- A lack of general awareness of the positive aspects of administration. (p.145)
Attempts have been made to understand the many frustrations and stressors that new principals experience during their first year at the helm of a school (Donaldson & Hausman, 1999; Rooney, 2000). However, very little is known about the mentoring assistant principals receive before the assent to the principalship. This is an area of interest to the researcher and an area worthy of investigation given the shortages in qualified applicants for the position of principal.

Statement of the Problem

As principals retire and others appear reluctant to assume the challenges of becoming a principal (Hopkins, 1998; Wax, 2002; Winter & Morgenthal, 2002), it is necessary to understand how newly appointed principals perceive the mentoring they received from the principals who they worked with as assistant principals (Short & Rinehart, 1993). An understanding of the activities associated with preparing assistant principals by the principal to become principals would be beneficial for the school systems in which they work. Such an understanding could provide stability and a blueprint for adequately developing assistant principals to assume the position of principal. In their study of principal shortages, Doud and Keller (1998) discussed the following:

A 42% turnover in the principalship during the last ten years is likely to continue into the next decade. While this is good news for those who aspire to the principalship, there is a need to develop a pool of well-qualified candidates to fill positions as they arise. (p. 4)

A study that reflects on a newly appointed principal’s perspectives regarding preparation as an assistant principal could perhaps address the development of well-qualified candidates or at the least, shed insight on what principals can do to help assistant principals move into the principalship.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received by their principals as assistant principals before becoming principals. Elsberry and Bishop (1996) reported the following in relation to beginning principals who assume the position for the first time:

Unfortunately, aspiring principals often have only a vague understanding of what the position entails—the loneliness, the conflicts, the dull routines, the paperwork, and the anguish involved in attempting to solve complex educational and organizational problems with extremely limited resources. (p. 32)

The researcher wanted to understand the perspectives new principals had about the assistance they received before becoming principals and their perspectives about the impact this assistance had on their work as new principals. From such a study, perhaps a better understanding can be uncovered about the importance of mentoring for assistant principals before assuming a principalship.

Background of the Study

To explore the perspectives of assistant principal’s preparation by their principals before becoming principals, a review of the literature and relevant research was insightful. Bloom and Krovetz (2001) discussed the lack of experiences before assuming the principalship and reported, “Many assistant principals and resource teachers are moving into principalships after serving relatively short periods of time in these preparatory roles” (p. 12). Young and Peterson (2000) commented on the lack of a qualified pool of principals with the following:

The factors identified as contributing to the shortage are increasing expectations, responsibilities, and stressful conditions for school administrators. Insufficient salaries and fringe benefits; lack of needed resources and support for school leaders; a lack of general awareness of the positive aspects of administration; limited and ineffective recruitment efforts; and a history of discriminatory hiring practices.
The interactive complexity of these issues addressing the shortage will require a thoughtful, informed, and well-planned strategy. It is doubtful that creating one more alternative-certification program will either significantly reform the principalship or adequately address the shortage. (p. 47)

As principals retire, they need to be replaced. It is important to review current practices to ensure that assistant principals can adequately be prepared to assume the role of principal.

Peterson (2002) stated the following:

Over the next five years, districts are expected to replace more than 60% of all principals. This new cohort of principals will lead their schools for some 15 to 20 years, through the first quarter of the new century. It is crucial to provide high-quality preparation programs for these principals. (p. 213)

From a review of the literature and relevant research can perhaps come a better understanding of the assistance an assistant principal receives before becoming a principal. The researcher sought to understand from the assistant principals’ perspectives if their tenure as assistant principals adequately prepared them for the principalship, and this study sought to examine the perspectives the assistant principals had about the mentoring they received from their principals.

Research Questions

The broad question investigated in this study was what were the perspectives of new principals about the mentoring that they received on the job as assistant principals. The researcher’s intent was to learn specifically about the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants of this study. The researcher sought to answer:

1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job for the principalship?

2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?

3. What assistance was most helpful?
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided the interviews, analysis, and interpretation of the data in this study was symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) asserted that symbolic interactionism allows the researcher to “see meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 5). Blumer also pointed out that people often fail to see that actions contribute to the interpretative process. The interpretive approach was used to study two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. The researcher sought to determine the value of this assistance from the perspectives of those who received assistance. Because the researcher sought the meaning about the value of the assistant principals’ interaction with their principals, symbolic interactionism was an appropriate theoretical framework.

Significance of the Study

As it becomes more essential to prepare new principals to replace those who retire, school systems are perplexed as to how they can provide the resources to assist those who aspire to the principalship (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). The work of the principal has become particularly complex and challenging. The complexities of the work of principals have led to notable shortages in applicants for vacancies, and Copland (2001) reported the sentiment felt by many school systems in that:

Growing anecdotal evidence suggest that it is increasingly difficult to find school principals at a time when the demand for them is on the rise. A recent survey jointly commissioned by two national principals’ groups indicates that fewer and fewer qualified people want the principal’s job. (p. 529)
In the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics’ *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2000), the following insight on the job outlook for administrators was provided:

A sharp increase in responsibilities in recent years has made the job more stressful, and has discouraged teachers from taking positions in administration. Principals are now being held more accountable for the performance of students and teachers, while at the same time they are required to adhere to a growing number of government regulations. In addition, overcrowded classrooms, safety issues, and the teacher shortage all are creating additional pressures on principals and assistant principals. The increase in pay is often not high enough to entice people into the field. (p. 44)

A substantial body of literature exists on the characteristics of principals and leadership. However, looking in the literature yielded no studies that examined the perspective of elementary school principals reflecting on their preparation and mentoring they received from the principals who they worked with as assistant principals. Perhaps this study will add a contribution to the professional literature.

Weller and Weller (2001) addressed the development of leadership competencies, and they reported, “Certain aspects of leadership can be acquired by participating in training, observing role models, engaging in work experience, reading research and theory, and practicing self-leadership” (p. 16). Weller and Weller’ research on the assistant principal provides important insight into principal preparation and the need to view leadership assistance provided by former principals from the perspectives of the new principals.

As public concern increases about schools in this era of accountability, the role of the principal has been redefined due to the pressure of legislation such as *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. As the instructional leader within the school, the principal sets the direction of change. Accountability has not only affected the role and response of principals to the new challenges of assuming full responsibility for student achievement, but also this press for accountability has contributed to the shortage of qualified candidates to fill the vacancies of the principalship.
(Cooley & Shen, 2000). These conditions forward the need to examine the type of mentoring new principals receive from their former principals to prepare them for the principalship.

Assumptions

In this study, the following were assumed:

1. The opinions expressed were the principal’s own opinions.
2. The participants provided responses to the interview questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

Definition of Terms

To clarify terms used throughout the study, the following operational definitions are offered:

Mentoring: Support, assistance, and guidance.

Assistant Principal: Administrators in training to one day assume the role of the principalship.

New Elementary School Principal: A principal of an elementary school with three or less years of experience.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the individual principals involved in a particular place and time. Another research study conducted with different individuals in alternative settings or at a different time might result in dissimilar findings. Although safeguards against research bias were built into the data analysis, the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of the researcher affected the study design. In a similar study focus, a different researcher might use a different procedural manner and get either similar or dissimilar results. This also pertains to the analysis of the data. Another researcher’s analysis of the data might result in contrasting conclusions.
Overview of Research Procedures

Since the purpose of this study was to examine a new principal’s perspectives about the assistance they received while serving as assistant principals, a qualitative case study approach was selected. The study was conducted in a single public school district located in a southeastern state. Data collection consisted of interviews. Potential research sites were sought from professional colleagues during informal conversations and professional gatherings. The administrators were contacted directly about their availability to participate in this study.

In this study, data were collected through three semi-structured interviews with two principals who had less than three years experience. After the first interview, data were coded according to categories and then analyzed. Each subsequent interview involved questions that emerged from previous interviews. To ensure the trustworthiness of findings and data analysis, two auditors—a practicing principal with three years experience and a professor of educational administration—were asked to examine the transcript, coding schemes, and the formulation of themes.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, conceptual framework, definition of terms, and the significance for studying the perspectives of principals with less than three years experience, and the assistance that they received from their principals as assistant principals before becoming principals. In Chapter 2, the review of the literature includes an examination of mentoring, the role of the principal, and the shortage of principals. In Chapter 3, the data collection and analysis procedures are discussed as well as the methods for ensuring validity and reliability. The findings from the data
are presented in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5, a discussion of the findings with conclusions and implications are provided.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job for the principalship?

2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?

3. What assistance was most helpful?

This study was designed to examine the new principal’s perspectives about the assistance that their former principals provided in their preparation for the principalship. To date, not much research has examined the principal’s work in the preparation of assistant principals to assume the position of the principalship. Therefore, this study is significant and timely as school systems experience a shortage of candidates for the principalship.

The review of the literature included the landscape of the principalship, the pressures and stressors of the position, the mentoring of principals, and the shortage of principal candidates. Also included is an examination of the route to the principalship—namely, the movement from the assistant principalship to the principalship.

The Landscape of the Principalship

At the top of the organization chart within each school is the principal. Griffith (1999) summarized that the principal sets clear achievement goals while providing direction for the day-to-day management of the educational activities within the school while maintaining the school
environment, encouraging the teaching of the basic curriculum, monitoring academic
achievement, and developing good community relations. Fenwick and Pierce (2001) recognized
the dwindling number of applicants for the position of principal. They noted that principals were
overworked, tangled in bureaucratic red tape, and faced problems with parents and students.

Kerrins (2001) indicated, “Principals are leaving their jobs at younger ages, principals
report that high stress, time demands of the job, broadening requirements of the job far exceed
salaries and new state accountability legislation make retirement appealing” (p. 20). Groff,
(2001) recognized the enormity of the work of the principal. Personnel issues, budgets,
schedules, playground issues, student discipline, and community relations, place principals under
a tremendous amount of stress (Groff, 2001). Moreover, the era of accountability in legislation
such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created challenges for principals.

Murphy (1992) questioned whether administration preparation programs were relevant as
qualified principals were sought after to meet the challenges associated with leading a school.
This study sought to examine the perspectives of new principals about the assistance they
received from the principals they worked with before assuming the principalship.

Lyons (1999) conducted a study on how principals perceived their roles, rewards, and
challenges. The participants were 194 principals from 14 different school districts. Five school
districts were large serving more than 20 schools; 5 were medium, serving 15 schools; and 4
were small, serving 6 schools. The principals reported their most important duties in rank order
as:

1. Providing a safe school environment and a positive school climate?
2. Fostering good teaching and learning.
3. Communicating with parents and promoting good school-community relations.
4. Hiring and developing a good staff.
5. Monitoring student progress.
6. Managing school resources.
7. Determining school goals.
8. Leading, inspiring, and motivating staff.
9. Maintaining a child oriented school and being an advocate for children.
10. Maintaining positive staff relations and staff harmony. (p. 22)

These same principals ($N=194$) reported, in rank order, their greatest frustrations in the job as:

1. Managing time demands and paper work
2. Dealing with the bureaucracy.
3. Lack of parental support
4. Inability to get resources that are needed in the school.
5. Dealing with irrational and narrow-minded people.
6. Trying to do a thankless job and receiving few rewards and little recognition.
7. Inability to improve test scores.
8. Watching the disintegration of society and its effect on students.
9. Watching students fall between the cracks.
10. Dealing with management problems such as busses, building maintenance
11. Dealing with unmotivated students and teachers.
12. Inability to find a sufficient number of motivated teachers. (p. 22)

Due to the myriad of challenges principals encounter on a day-to-day basis, the relevancy of a principal preparation program is important in any attempt to produce qualified principal candidates to meet these challenges. Perhaps more relevant is an understanding of the assistance that principals provide to assistant principals.

**Era of Accountability**

Principals are now held more accountable for the performance of their teachers and students while adhering to mandated legislation. Moore and Slade (1996) reported that principals had experienced increased pressure as the shift toward student achievement became the centerpiece of their yearly performance evaluation. In the past, principal evaluations were not designed to note the results of student achievement on standardized tests. To meet the demands of accountability, the principals are being forced to establish an instructional monitoring system that allows them to get into classrooms to observe their teachers.
Student achievement is one barometer of a principal’s performance, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) legislation exhibits, perhaps, one of the strongest series of legislation placing emphasis on accountability for academic achievement results of students on the principal. Wax (2002) believed that it was a top priority to ensure students pass state and national achievement tests to meet the new educational standards under NCLB. Wax also believed that under NCLB, public schools were not the only choice for schooling for students and parents.

The idea of alternatives to education has proven most challenging to principals. Murphy and Louis (1994) indicated that accountability of principals against a set of standards is not new. The main focus for the call of educational accountability is the belief that the United States is losing its leadership in the global economy. According to their work:

In recent years, accountability has emerged as a central educational issue. Commentators on schooling from many quarters-assuming that the “principal is the, major influence on the quality of education in a school have demanded that administrators demonstrate their competency by producing objective evidence that students and teachers are achieving desired outcomes. (p. 5)

Principals are no longer an entity standing alone with unquestioned authority and Murphy and Louis (1994) also indicated:

Most analysts agree that schooling systems are and should be open and that parents, community members, government officials, and other stakeholders should participate actively with administrators and teachers in decisions regarding the shape and scope of educational activities. What does, however, concern us is the possibility that principals have been silent and passive partners in this enterprise, allowing others to define what school leadership is. (p. 4)

However, principals need to be at the forefront in looking for new ways to solve the problem of student achievement since they will be judged as either effective or ineffective instructional leaders based on the results of how students perform.
Principal as the Instructional Leader

Student achievement is the cornerstone in the success of principals, and teachers are a key factor in the area of student performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Wax 2002). The old ways of authoritarian rule over teachers as a source of motivation may not be as productive as it might have appeared in the past (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). If the principal’s success depends on teacher and student performance, the principal’s approach as an instructional leader is crucial in the area of student performance.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) reviewed quantitative research from 1980 to 1995 pertaining to the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. The review concluded that principals do affect school achievement. The affect is achieved, in part, through relationships outside of the school, within the community. The principal must develop a sense of educational purpose within the community by building social networks.

The principal influences student-learning outcomes by setting the school’s goals and instructional practices. Goal setting by the principal in the role as an instructional leader underscores his or her ability to focus others on the school’s academic improvement plan.

Fullan (2002) encouraged school systems to redefine the role of principals as instructional leaders. According to Fullan, the instructional leader is more than just a charismatic leader with inspiring slogans and phrases for the moment. The principal’s success depends on the success of his or her teachers. Principals must be able to make a fundamental transformation of the school culture by addressing work conditions and teacher morale issues. This fundamental transformation is a first step toward developing a climate where instructional success can flourish. By cultivating a better teacher, instructional success can be sustained. Blase and Blase (1999) indicated:
To be effective instructional leaders, principals should emphasize autonomy and choice for teachers, not control of and competition among teachers. Instructional leaders should avoid restrictive and intimidating approaches to teachers, as well as approaches that provoke little more than teachers jumping through hoops and giving dog and pony shows based on reductionist algorithms presumed to define good teaching. The prevalent negative associations that derive from the myriad behaviors that, to teachers, represent control supervision must give way to behaviors that promote collegiality among educators. (p. 362)

Weller and Weller (2001) suggested that principals could increase their effectiveness as instructional leaders by encouraging assistant principals to assist with the work of the instructional program.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) examined the role of the principal related to the influence exerted over student achievement. They concluded that the principal’s influence is significant because it is the principal who implements educational programs and builds relationships with their staff. A new principal must be ready to assume responsibility over the success or failure for student achievement.

Stressors of the Principalship

When people have a voice about the issues that concern them, they have the ability and opportunity to influence the matters that concern them. Gage and Berliner (1984) stated:

Individuals who generally attribute their success and failure to their own behavior are said to have an internal locus of control. I succeed because I have the ability or can put in the proper amount of effort. Pride is absolutely maximized when achievement outcomes are ascribed internally and are minimized when success and failure are attributed to external causes. (p. 399)

When a person perceives he or she is not in control of their destiny, the result can produce a stressful situation. Principals are under stress because they have to answer to so many people whom voice concerns about the directions and standards by which their schools are judged. Such people are teachers, parents, central office personnel, and the board of education. In some ways, principals are faced with the dilemma of having to please and to be accountable to increasing
constituencies, and this can be quite stressful for principals. Murphy and Louis (1994) discussed this dilemma in the following way:

What does, however, concern us is the possibility that principals have been silent and passive partners allowing others to define what school leadership is. While acknowledging that part of the stress experienced by many principals today is the result of complex challenges and demands facing them and their schools, we suspect that another contributor to personal and professional tension is that principals themselves have not thoughtfully and proactively define- for themselves and others-their educational purposes or their roles in helping to achieve these ends. (p. 4)

Principals have to take a more prominent role in articulating their concerns about the stressors of their job while defining the parameters of the accountability standards by which their performance will be judged.

Ladd and Zelli (2002) looked at the effects of school accountability in the state of North Carolina. Many principals highlighted the challenge of recruiting and retaining high-quality staff members in schools designated as low performing. Accountability has made these schools less desirable for teachers because they can receive financial bonuses and professional recognition at other schools. This is quite a challenge for the principal who is responsible for school accountability.

Carr (1994) found in a study of Australian principals that a significant number of principals experienced anxiety and depression. The study found that 35 out of 94 school principals (37.2%) had a high level of anxiety or depression. Principals within the sample who experienced high levels of anxiety and depression were screened to gain information about the factors that caused the anxiety and depression. Factors identified as the major sources of stress were the lack of support from the central school administration, coping with the demands of student performance, and the strained relationship with their staff as a result of having to hold them accountable for student achievement.
Additional stress for principals has come from national achievement tests and standards that have created competition between public, private, charter schools, and home-schooling alternatives. Manthey (2002) discussed the ways in which some administrators coped with the stressors of the job. Each week the principals would meet at the district office for their weekly administrative staff meeting. One week each month, the district office administrators stayed out of the meeting while the principals spent time with a licensed counselor on the topic of stress reduction.

Principal Shortages

If there is a shortage of qualified candidates to fill current principal openings, what are the reasons for the absence of candidates to fill these positions? An exploratory study conducted in 1998 by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) looked at the factors contributing to the nation-wide shortage of applicants to the position of the principalship. They concluded that the number of principal job openings will be numerous until 2005 due to the need to replace retiring principals. Although these retirements create an opportunity for applicants who aspire to become principals, the study pointed out that there is a shortage of “qualified” candidates for principal vacancies in the United States. Moreover, the findings of this study indicated the main concern that discouraged applicants for the principal position was the inadequate compensation, the responsibilities of the principal’s duties, the stress of the job, and the long hours. Tirozzi and Ferrandino (2000) examined the principal shortage, and they concluded that in the near future, the number of retirees would outnumber the aspiring number of applicants to the extent that a leadership crisis will result. This leadership crisis will have an adverse result on student performance. In an article appearing in the Baltimore Sun Daily, White (2002) reported the following:
Today, the job of the principal is so pressure packed, and sometimes little respected, that school officials are worried about how they will fill the 600 vacancies—nearly 45 percent of the state’s principals—expected during the 2003-2004 hiring season. Looking even further ahead to 2005, 75 percent of the state’s middle and high school principals will be eligible for retirement. (p. 1)

Barker (1997) pointed out that there are a smaller number of available candidates for the position of the principalship. As principals retire, the number of applicants for the position has dwindled. In 1995-1996, retired administrators in the state of Washington opened about 30 principal positions that could not be filled. School systems asked retired principals to return to fill these positions because the search for new principals proved to be disappointing. Because of the complex demands placed on educators, teachers and counselors are reluctant to apply for the position of principal (Wax, 2002). In an effort to encourage and to nurture future principal candidates, Barker suggested that school systems take steps to make clearer the role of the assistant principal as a career path toward the principalship. Cooley and Shen (2000) examined the factors that influenced the retention of principals in urban school districts. The following is a summary of the findings of Cooley and Shen:

The complexity of society and the problems that students bring to school have contributed to the leadership void. Pressures to reform schools, the politicization of school districts, board micromanagement, and the increased demands placed on principals have contributed to the diminished number of principalship applicants. The data revealed similar principal and teacher perceptions in applying for principalship positions. Teachers cited the relationship between the board, administration, and teachers as the most critical factor in applying for an administrative position. Discord between the board, teachers, and administrators have contributed to organizational upheaval and instability. This uncertainty impacts the applicant pool. (p. 450)

A structured process to identify and to nurture potential candidates could make the principalship more appealing.
Another major factor, that discouraged applicants for the principalship was the inadequate salary compensation, according to the findings of Cooley and Shen (2000) and Tirozzi and Ferrandino (2000). Pounder and Merrill (2001) sought to discover what factors influenced the choice of seeking a high school principalship. The one issue that stood out was the choice between job compensation and the loss of personal time. Superintendents in the study stated that 60% of applicants who declined a high school principalship indicated that the principal’s pay was insufficient. The work routine of an administrator is challenging. Pounder and Merrill described the features that discourage potential principal candidates from applying for the position of the principalship like this:

The unattractive work features included the time demands of the position (e.g., evening and weekend work, balancing work and family demands) and to a lesser degree, the kinds of problems and dilemmas that often accompany the position (e.g., ethical dilemmas, student behavior problems, termination of unfit employees, union grievances). (p. 37)

The complexity of the principal’s job has discouraged many applicants for the position. School systems will have to take the initiative at defining the role of the principal and develop nurturing steps to sustain them in the position.

Requirements for a Principal Certificate in the State of Georgia

The state of Georgia has specific requirements for a candidate to qualify for a professional certificate as a principal. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission sets the certification requirements for the state of Georgia. According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2002), the following is required for a candidate to qualify for a professional certificate in the area of educational leadership:

1. The candidate must possess a Master’s Degree or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution;
2. Have completed three years of acceptable school experience;
3. Complete an approved program at the Master’s Degree level or higher in Educational Leadership and obtain the professional recommendation from the preparing institution or provide documentation of out-of-state certification.
4. All candidates applying for a certificate are required to present passing scores on either the Georgia Teacher Certification Test (Not administered after June 1997) or the Praxis II: Subject Assessments. (p.1)

Many school systems are working within to nurture potential principal applicants. According to Suzette (1999), school systems are structuring a career ladder to develop future leaders from within the systems they are employed. The intent of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistance principals.

As society evolves and the social dynamics of communities change, principals must be versatile in their approaches to leading schools. The principal of today must be an administrator, manager, politician, and possess the capacity to develop a leadership style that encompasses these qualities while developing a successful academic program for students (Groff, 2001).

Preparation of School Administrators

Despite the mounting challenges that many principals face, there are applicants who seek the position of the principalship. If a person aspires to become a principal, he or she must graduate from a postgraduate program to obtain the academic credentials to be eligible for a principal certificate.

Murphy (1998) provided a short chronology of the preparation for principalship in the United States. From 1820–1889, minimal formal preparation designed for teachers was sufficient for administrators. An administrator learned by trial and error, and a certificate to become an administrator was not required. By 1900, no institutions of education were offering study in the area of school management. By 1910, the scientific management movement that was used in the business world influenced the little training available for school administrators.
However, after World War II, 125 institutions of higher education were preparing school administrators. From 1947 through 1985, the trend was to infuse content from social sciences into the preparation for administrators. During this era, administration preparation programs flourished.

Currently, many preparation programs are under review due to increased accountability. The emphasis is on a practice-based learning experience focusing on values, social context, and new forms of leadership. Administrator preparation programs must meet standards such as those of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC (2002) listed the following standards for administrators:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

2. Advocating nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment

4. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger population, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (p. 1)

Murphy’s (1998) research indicated that traditional educational preparation programs are in need of revision to prepare candidates to meet academic standards of accountability. Murphy and Louis (1994) also encourage principal preparation programs to become active in defining the expectations and standards against which the public will use to scrutinize their performance and
then to prepare principals to meet these expectations. They found that the demand for accountability, the country’s standing in the global economy; the changing dynamics of communities and schools, and the evolution toward an information age are forces that will shape the conception and direction of schools and the standards by which schools will be judged. The principal is no longer the traditional caretaker of a school.

Since student test results are an accountability concern, university administration preparation programs are under review to assess the relevancy of its curriculum for the current work demands placed on the principal according to Gooden, Petrie, Lindauer, and Richardson (1998) who reported:

Many of the preparation programs for administrators are irrelevant, out of date, abstract theoretical course driven, and impractical. As a result, many administrators are ill prepared for the demands of schools. They do not take into consideration that the principal is no longer a passive manager but an active leader involved in many issues within and outside the school. Current practices for selecting, preparing, and rewarding school administrators do not always identify and develop needed competence. (p. 1)

Gooden et al. (1998) suggested that administrators need to spend more time refining their skills in the area of group dynamics. With the move toward sight-based management and shared decision-making, administrators must understand the social dynamics of group interaction as they strive to include more in the decision making process. Gooden et al. (1998) surveyed 108 Georgia school principals about the importance of learning group processing skills. Respondents emphasized the importance of these skills for job success as a principal.

Since university preparation programs are unlikely to teach these skills, Gooden et al. (1998) encouraged professional development programs to include group process skills. Gooden et al. reported, “The administrator is no longer a passive manager. The administrator is an active leader involved in instructional matters, personnel issues, and management duties” (p. 596). To accomplish these duties, Gooden et al. suggested that principals learn small group process skills.
Consensus building within the school and the community is an important part of the administrator’s job. As schools move toward site-based management, it is important for administrators to understand group dynamics. Murphy (1992) stated the following:

A critical challenge facing those involved in preparation and training programs for school leaders is to help these potential leaders purposefully shape their own leadership paradigms in ways that enable them to take on the role of school leadership with vision-driven, action-oriented, and reflective confidence in their ability to instigate reform and stimulate success. (p. 139)

Murphy (1992) further suggested that learning should be cooperative and based on real world problems of practice as opposed to untested theories. Richardson, Short, and Prickett (1993) suggested the following:

The educational administrator for the next century must be an individual with a global perspective, and an appreciation of all cultures, as well as be an effective leader. Preparation programs for educational administrators must provide training and development in these areas. The educational leader of this changing era must be prepared to meet the challenge of the future. New paradigms, new skills, and new competencies are required for new leaders. (p. 46)

Short (1997) looked at the preparation of school administrators and indicated:

The preparation of school administrators to provide leadership in schools operating in complex times requires programmatic approaches that will foster and develop leadership practices involving problem solving, decision making, and complex thinking. Implementing processes that develop administrative expertise in decision-making problem solving is a significant role for preparation programs. (p. 86)

Principals must have a set of principles that guide them in their daily work to ensure consistent, honorable, and ethical decisions are made (Short, 1997). Beck and Murphy (1994) advocated that ethics should be a part of administration preparation programs:

In an effort to identify ways educators might respond to multifaceted challenges and value-linked conflicts, some scholars have emphasized the importance of identifying principles that can guide leaders in untangling quandaries and resolving dilemmas. Ethics provides principals to guide administrators toward morally sound decisions. (p. 3)
When promoting the welfare of young people and those who teach them, an ethical perspective can provide appropriate guidelines for principals to follow. In a time of challenge or stress, these guidelines can be used to assist principals about the relevancy of the decisions that they make.

**Professional Development of Principals**

Professional development is an ongoing feature during the principal’s professional life. It is an opportunity for them to learn and to grow throughout the different stages of their careers. School systems realize that they have a vested interest in the nurturing of principals outside of training received in formal university preparation programs. Willen (2001) described an in-service training program for inexperienced principals offered by the New York City Public Schools. The program matches experienced principals whose skills are in line with challenges at another school in which a principal is inexperienced at working with those challenges. For example, if an inexperienced principal is at a school with at-risk students, a principal who is experienced with at-risk students works closely with the principal and provides on the job training and mentoring.

Olson (1999) examined a program in Philadelphia called Leadership in Education Apprentice Design (LEAD). The LEAD Program was designed to prepare people for the principalship. Peterson (2002) emphasized the importance for school systems, states, and organizations to develop professional programs to develop future school leaders such as in a professional development program called (CLASS). The CLASS Program is an association between the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Public Administrators Association (CPAA). CLASS offers training programs for principals at various stages of their careers. CLASS has three main programs. LAUNCH for aspiring principals, LIFT for 1st-year principals, and the Chicago Academy for School Leaders (CASL) for experienced principals and assistant
principals. The LAUNCH curriculum addresses school leadership, parent and community relationships, instructional leadership, school management, and interpersonal skills. The LIFT initiative nurtures and supports the 1st-year principal. The program mentors and supports new principals. LIFT reinforces critical job functions of university preparation programs by reviewing daily administrative district procedures, budgetary skills, and contractual concerns. The CASL program is designed to work with principals and assistant principals with more than two years of experience. These programs offer opportunities to develop qualified candidates for the principalship.

The Assistant Principal

Another route to the principalship is the assistant principalship. Porter (1996) indicated that for many, the assistant principal position is usually the next step to the principalship. Weller and Weller (2002) noted that the assistant principal position is a good springboard to learn leadership skills and to move into the position of the principalship. Although job descriptions for assistant principals vary, there are some basic job activities or roles that most assistant principals have in common. Many of the activities that assistant principals engage in are delegated to them from the principal. Golden (1997) pointed out the basic job description of an assistant principal in the following way:

Although the primary role of the assistant principal is staff development and supervision, the amount of time available for those activities has decreased. Increases in paperwork, discipline referrals, meetings that have little to do with classroom instruction, and supervision of non-instructional activities, and a growing number of administrative procedures have taken time away from the primary role of supervising instruction. (p. 103)

Weller and Weller (2002) listed what assistant principals do with their time:

- Supervise Students.
- Complete routine reports, enforce policy, and write grants.
- Participate in the selection of teachers, and department heads.
• Evaluate teachers and staff personnel performance and provide remedial assistance.
• Coordinate and/or conduct staff development programs and mentoring or peer tutoring programs.
• Develop the school’s master schedule.
• Coordinate and place student teachers and paraprofessionals.
• Prepare the school’s budget.
• Act as the school’s liaison to community and civic organizations.

Most assistant principals aspire to become a principal and fewer aspire to become career assistant principals (Daresh, 2001a). However, the daily routine of an assistant principal is a challenging job. Porter (1996) reported that 50% of the assistant principals will move on to higher positions within the next five years. Porter described the position and the role of the assistant principal in this way:

Responsibilities for this position are almost universally under the umbrella of daily operations chief, with major focuses on discipline, substitute teachers, student activities, and attendance. The assistant principal, by large is not viewed as a career position due to its ‘non-educational’ nature with student discipline the number one job dissatisfaction. (p. 27)

With principals retiring and people reluctant to step into the position of the principalship, one has to wonder if the job description for an assistant principal adequately prepares them for the principalship. The New York Times (2002) reported:

New York is hemorrhaging principals at a time when talented newcomers are bypassing for better-paying, less-stressful jobs elsewhere. Developing a fresh supply of school managers will not be easy. Last year, New York lost a record 200 of its 1,100 principals—about double the annual number of a decade ago. Principal flight has become a disturbing trend. Right now, more than a third of city principals have three years of experience or less. Many of the remaining veterans will be eligible to retire soon. (p. 18)

Archer (2002) reported in Education Week that the retirement situation in Florida has left the state looking for new ways to recruit principals for their school systems. To enhance the recruitment process, the Florida legislature now allows the State Department of Education to continue to offer administrator credentials to individuals that desire the credentials. However,
school districts can hire people into the principal position without state approved administrator credentials.

Mustafa (2001) stated, “It is imperative that there be a concrete job definition of assistant principalship, otherwise efforts to prepare assistant principals and to study current problems will be ineffective” (p. 67). Weller and Weller (2002) indicated, “Taking a leadership role in the instructional area is an essential first step for assistant principals who aspire to the role of principal” (p. 41). Leadership is not something that happens by chance, and an assistant principal who aspires to become a leader must seize the initiative, see the opportunity to learn in various situations, and take meaningful steps to become a leader. Weller and Weller found that an assistant principal could become a principal by adhering to the following prescription:

To become leaders and move up in the administrative ranks, if that is their desire, assistant principals must plan and implement strategies to develop leadership skills and knowledge, and their position affords them plenty of opportunities to do so. Assistant principals must become pro active and spend time shaping ideas, changing attitudes, challenging others to do their best, creating high expectations, and maximizing the talents of others. Assistant principals must enhance the effectiveness of their schools by taking advantage of the leadership skills of department heads and lead teachers and the teacher-as-leader concept. (p. 50)

The assistant principal position is usually a trial run for the principalship, and the experience under the principal, if adequate, can better prepare the assistant principal for the role of principal. However, many assistant principals receive duties and projects that the principal does not want to handle, primarily discipline. Daresh (2001a) found that most assistant principals want to advance to the principalship; however, they are type cast into roles such as dean of discipline or attendance. Weller and Weller (2002) reported, “77% of the respondents identified discipline and attendance as their major job assignment” (p. 11). The research indicated that job dissatisfaction among assistant principals is high. Marshall (1992) suggested changes in the work of assistant principals include experiences in other areas.
Daresh (2001b) reported:

Providing fair and effective student discipline is important, but a good principal (and good principal candidates) need to do much more. Financial management and budgeting, staff development, community relations, instructional improvement, and so many other responsibilities make up the life of a modern principal. (p. 63)

Daresh (2001b) went further to suggest that an assistant principal or a beginning principal would do well to find a mentor (experienced principal). Peterson (2002) reported that mentoring for an assistant principal is vital, and Brady (1996) suggested the use of professional development programs that are tied to contextual real life situations are important to nurture assistant principals.

Principals need to be adequately prepared for their ascension into the principalship so they can maintain the mandated academic standards and carry out their daily managerial functions. This is why a study about principals’ perspectives about the assistance they received by their principals prior to assuming the principalship is important.

Mentoring and the School Administrator

Samier (2000) defined mentoring in the following way:

Formalized mentorship is seen to be an innovative means of supporting conventional organizational goals and practices by offering technique for coping with change. Mentorship programs are seen to bridge the gap between professional post-secondary programs and the independent exercise of professional roles, adopted in many organizations as a human resource strategy to improve personnel training at all organizational levels, from orientation of incoming personnel to more advanced preparation for those ascending higher levels of the organizational ladder. (p. 84)

Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, and Weindling (1995) in their study on the mentoring of new headteachers (school administrators) defined mentoring as “The process of peer support” (p. 33), and that mentoring should promote opportunities for growth and development. They further stated that a mentoring program should allow mentees to reflect on their transition into the job, look objectively at their managerial abilities, gain knowledge about their job complexities, and
evaluate the outcome of their decisions. Data from the Bolam et al. study were gathered through surveys from 238 new headteachers (mentees) and 303 experienced headteachers who acted as mentors. The results showed that the majority of the participants in the mentoring program considered the assistance helpful in gaining insight on how to deal with the problems that they faced. Moreover, the mentors enjoyed the opportunity to extend their professional experience through the dialogue about issues that were perplexing to the new headteachers.

Playko (1995) made observations about strengths and weakness of mentoring in the educational setting. He reported that university-based programs do a good job at providing a basic foundation in the preparation of administrators. However, practical insights about the day-to-day function best come from someone who is actually doing the job. Playko pointed out that school systems benefit from mentoring programs because system personnel can identify potential leaders, and the lessons learned through such programs can provide building blocks for new administrators through their tenure within the school system.

Daresh (1995) made a case for mentoring for administrators, especially assistant principals. Daresh concluded:

The primary rationale for making use of mentoring for the professional development of educational leaders is grounded in the assumption that the role of the leader is a lonely effort, and that having the ability to relate to peers concerning personal and professional concerns is a way to reduce that sense of isolation. Further, mentoring represents an important way to enhance university-based preparation programs by enabling individuals to find a colleague in the real world who will be available to provide practical solutions to problems in the field. (p. 16)

Bush and Coleman (1995) examined mentoring, and their findings indicated that mentoring provided the opportunities to work out ideas, further develop concepts, and to reduce isolation. The mentoring program benefited the school system by providing effective coaching at the critical early stage of a new principal’s career. A non-judgmental approach between the mentor
and the mentee allowed the mentees to better assess their attributes. The experiences of mentors and new heads in two school systems in English East Midlands were explored. Bush and Coleman reported:

Mentoring can be a significant element in the professional development of headteachers. The opportunity to receive support and guidance from a more experienced colleague may help to reduce the uncertainty experienced during the early stages of headship. Our findings suggested that effective mentoring reduces professional isolation, provides support and feedback on performance and gives confidence to new heads during a period of change and uncertainty. It is evident, that the benefits are not confined to new heads. The mentors also refer to their gains from the process, including reappraisal of their own practice prompted by the ideas of the new head. (p. 74)

Mentoring builds structure for principals as they adjust to their new role, and mentoring has the potential to enhance career development at each stage of an administrator’s career. The work principals do to mentor assistant principals is an important part of preparation for the principalship and noteworthy to study.

Chapter Summary

The work of the principal has changed over the years due to the demand for achievement in the area of student performance and the accountability placed on schools by society to measure the effectiveness of principals based on student performance. Because of these accountability measures, the insight that principals can provide about their preparation to assume the principalship is vital. Legislation such as The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has backing of national, state, and local leaders. This is the banner for accountability in today’s society. Student performance was once a side note when it came to the principal’s evaluation; today it is the main barometer. The principal is no longer a caretaker, but a leader who should possess vision and direction for the programs within schools.
As the instructional leader, the principal’s success depends on teachers’ performance. Principals must be consensus builders within the school and community. They must create a sense of purpose by articulating the vision and setting the direction for student achievement. The principal as the instructional leader must provide more than just slogans and student achievement assemblies. Principals must be able to make a fundamental transformation of the school culture by addressing teacher work conditions, student needs in the classroom and in the community, and by providing the instructional tools for student achievement.

A shortage of qualified candidates to fill current principalship openings is a challenge for school systems. Principals are opting out to retire when eligible and the challenge to fill these openings has created vacancies across the United States. Applicants for the position of the principalship are reluctant to join the ranks because of inadequate compensation, the duties and stressors of the job, and the long hours. In the near future, the number of retirees will outnumber the aspiring number of applicants. The result is a leadership shortage. The experience from the veteran group will not be transferred to the new administrators. Because of this leadership crisis, it is important to look at the mentoring process new principals receive before they become a principal.

Early in the history of school administrators, there was minimal formal preparation because administrators were not considered a necessary part of the school. The administrator learned by trial and error and an administrative certificate was not required. Moving into the 20th Century, scientific management, which was reflected in the corporate world, started to influence the scant training available for administrators. After World War II, institutions of higher education were formally preparing administrators as an applied science. Today, many preparation programs are under review to ensure a practice-based learning experience. The
administrator must not only be an instructional leader accountable for student achievement, he or she must also be skilled at group dynamics to build coalitions within the school and in the surrounding community. Realizing the value of a skilled principal to meet today’s challenges, many school systems have placed a premium on professional development programs to nurture principals and to develop a pool of talented applicants to ascend to the position of the principalship. Yet, no studies could be found that examined from the perspectives of new principals what experiences while as an assistant principal were of most benefit.

The assistant principal position is typically the next step to the principalship for many. The assistant principal’s job description includes many activities from discipline, supervision, and teacher evaluation, to doing projects the principal declines to. These tasks are time consuming and do not necessarily prepare assistant principals for the responsibility that they will assume in the principalship. Many assistant principals lack the opportunity to learn from their principal the critical skills needed to lead a school. The lack of adequate mentoring for assistant principals creates a crisis of expertise as the assistant principal steps into the position of the principalship. A good mentoring program provides practical guidance about the complex nature of the position. Mentoring also enhances the quality of the profession, and reduces the trial and error rite of passage from the assistant principalship to the principalship.

We can no longer give the keys to new principals and let them fumble their way to becoming school leaders. University based administration programs and school systems must realize the importance of providing training programs that are based on the practical reality that administrators will face. Developing new potential principal candidates, mentoring, and ongoing staff-development are vital for principals to grow, survive, and adapt to the complexities of their communities. It is also vital for school systems to fill the void in applicants for the position of
principal. There is an exodus of principals who retire and a reluctance of potential principal candidates to assume the position of the principalship. The result is a principal shortage. As the role of the principal evolves, so research must be responsive to these changes. That is why this study is important to understand the perspectives of new principals on the mentoring they received from their principals while as assistant principals.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. The researcher sought to uncover the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants of this study to determine how this assistance prepared them for the principalship. This chapter outlines methods used throughout the study and reviews the research design and procedures of data collection and analysis.

Guiding Research Questions for the Study

The broad question investigated in this study was what were the perspectives of new principals about the mentoring that they received on the job as assistant principals. The researcher’s intent was to learn specifically about the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants of this study. The researcher sought to answer:

1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job for the principalship?

2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?

3. What assistance was most helpful?

Symbolic Interactionism

The study explored the perspectives of new principals and the mentoring they received on the job as assistant principals. According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism rests on the following premises:
The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (p. 2)

The first premise refers to how people act toward material things, people, ideas, and institutions based on the meanings they have for them. How the person categorizes the things determines their relationship or lack of during these encounters. How did the principal feel about the types of mentoring?

The second premise is that the meaning of a relationship is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others. According to Blumer (1969), “Meaning arises in the process of interaction between two people. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products, creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 4). How did the social dynamics of their relationship help to prepare the assistant principals for their future roles as principals?

Blumer’s third premise looks at how a person interprets meaning and takes action based on the interpretation. Blumer (1969) stated:

Interpretation should not be regarded as a mere automatic application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action. It is necessary to see that meanings play their part in action through a process of self-interaction. (p. 5)

In summary, the first premise of symbolic interactionism details that people are inclined to act in relation to things based on the meaning derived by them and not by another person’s observation outside of the interaction. The second premise helps us to see how the participants explain and understand each other’s actions. In the third premise, the participant interprets and understands things encountered to decide which course of action to take. What symbolic
interactionism does is provides the observer an overall view of a person’s conduct and
determines how the participant defines and interprets their actions.

Design of the Study

The purpose of this case study design was to describe the new principals’ perspectives
about the mentoring they received as assistant principals from their principals. Creswell (1998)
defined case study as “an exploration over time through a detailed, in-depth data collection
involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). Information gained through
case study provides valuable information that could influence current and future practices of
principal preparation for school systems.

Merriam (1988) believed that a case study was an examination of a specific situation in
an attempt to provide a descriptive analysis. The case study method is suited for this examination
because this method can provide the opportunity to understand the insights of the principals
relative to the mentoring they received from their former principals.

A case study might provide a better understanding of the relative importance of the
mentoring received as an assistant principal before ascending into the principalship. Creswell
(1998) asserted that when more than one case is studied it is referred to as a collective case
study. Collective cases provide rich information for the reader to better understand the topic
under investigation.

A researcher faces many challenges while constructing a case study. The quality of the
data collected depends on the researcher’s skill and knowledge. Creswell (1998) stated the
following:

A closely interrelated step to find participants that will provide good data involves
determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites. This is not a
probability sampling so that statistical inferences can be made; rather, it is sampling so
that on can best study the problem under examination. The researcher needs to determine
the type of purposeful sampling from the array of possibilities and present a rationale for the selected approach. Being aware of potentially difficult field issues that may compromise the data, lead to premature exit from the field or site, and/or contribute to lost information is an important consideration. (p. 110)

Site Selection

Data collection is a sequence of connected activities which purpose is to gather information in response to the guiding research questions. Initially, the investigator started with identifying the individuals for the study. However, to collect data that were consistent and, reliable, purposeful and meaningful sampling to find representative subjects became an important consideration. Creswell (1998) noted the following:

A closely interrelated step in the process involves determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites. This is not a probability sampling so that statistical inferences can be made; rather, it is sampling so that one can best study the problem under examination. The researcher needs to determine the type of purposeful sampling from the array of possibilities and present a rationale for the selected approach. (p. 111)

Gay (1987) stated:

The individuals selected comprise a sample and the larger group is referred to as a population. The purpose of sampling is to gain information about a population; rarely is a study conducted that includes the total population of interest as subjects. Further, if a sample is well selected, research results based on it will be generalizable to the population. (p. 101)

The extent to which the participants chosen were an adequate representation of the population for this study is tied to the extent to which the results are relevant to other similar situations. In this study, the researcher selected two new principals with less than three years of experience. Three years would be enough time so that the principals’ memory about the assistance they received as an assistant principal would not be tempered by time. Since the two participants were not far removed from the experience, the data gathered would perhaps provide a better understanding about the importance of mentoring before assuming a principalship.
Wolcott (1999) noted the importance of selecting the site sets the direction one’s fieldwork takes in pursuit of an answer for the research questions. To develop an information rich study, purposeful sampling was used. Creswell (1998) suggested that the location is important for the researcher to collect relevant data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell stated, “The researcher should track norms and values of which participants in the culture may not be aware” (p. 114). Selection for this study involved finding a school system that would be willing to let participants participate in such an investigation. In this study, the dissertation committee assisted in the selection of the sight and participants by providing the names of school systems in which they knew beginning principals. From the four school systems suggested, one was chosen within a two hour driving radius of the researcher. The researcher contacted a principal in one of the school systems recommended by the dissertation committee, who then provided the name of a second principal who was willing to participate in this research study. The researcher contacted the second principal, and she agreed to participate in this study.

Data Collection

When it comes to data collection, Walcott (2001) stated, “Data might be likened to collecting and identifying the parts of a wheelbarrow” (p. 109). A diverse array of data provides its own unique insight into the same phenomenon, and the researcher’s primary job is to assemble the data into a sequence that helps to discover any relationships that might exist (Wolcott, 2001). For this examination of the perspectives of principals on the mentoring they received while serving as assistant principals, interview and observations were included as part of the data collection method. The interview was the main method of collecting data.
Kvale (1996) noted, “The interview is a situation of knowledge production in which knowledge is created between the views of the two partners in the conversation” (p. 296). Interviews, three in total, were held with the principals to make explicit the perspectives of the participants. Kvale (1996) reported the purpose of the interview “is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6). Wolcott (2001) stated the following:

Researchers seeking a broader perspective do not venture out on branches that commit them to a single strategy (i.e., to a study conducted solely through interviewing). They seek a vantage that allows them a position from which they are able to draw on whatever combination of strategies seems appropriate. Their studies employ a wide array of techniques encompassed by the broad label participant observation. (p. 88)

In this study, the interview process was used to examine the perspectives of new principals about the assistance they received from their principals as assistant principals before becoming principals. Each participant experience consisted of three years or less in the principalship. Each person participated in three-interview sessions. Institutional Review Board protocols were followed, and each participant signed a consent form. The participants remained anonymous to protect their confidentiality

The interviews were completed over a period of six months. Kvale (1996) described the research interview as such: “The research interview is characterized by a methodological awareness of questions forms, a focus on the dynamics of interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and a critical attention to what is said” (p. 20). Each interview session lasted approximately 90 minutes. Each interview included open-ended questions to provide the participants opportunity to discuss their thoughts.
Wolcott (1994) described data analysis as “the quantitative side of qualitative research” (p. 26). Data analysis is a way of constructing meaning for the data collected. During data analysis, it is important for the researcher to reexamine and to maintain the focus of the study. Kvale (1996) indicated, “The central task of interview analysis rest, however, with the researcher, with the thematic questions he or she has asked from the start of the investigation and followed up through designing, interviewing, and transcribing” (p. 187).

In this study, the interview questions were refined as data unfolded during the interviews with the participants. The overall research questions served as guide to developing more specific, case-bound questions. From the predetermined research questions and the related interview questions emerged more probing questions to encourage each principal to detail their experiences (see Appendix B). The open-ended questions provided the participants a chance to give a descriptive explanation about their perspectives on the mentoring that they received from their principals. Depending on the participants’ response, further exploratory or probing questions enabled the researcher an opportunity to seek deeper meaning and an understanding about the participants’ thoughts. Table 3.1 provides an example of the process used by the researcher to obtain further understanding and meaning.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-ended Interview Question</th>
<th>Participant’s Reply</th>
<th>Exploratory Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your thoughts about the reality of the principalship versus your perception from the mentoring you received as an assistant principal?</td>
<td>If you are not passionate about education it will wear you out!</td>
<td>Explain to me what you mean by that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher was able to obtain artifacts and fieldnotes at each school site. These items enabled the researcher to develop a portrait about each elementary school, and the school district. Table 3.2 lists the artifacts used to describe the county and each elementary school.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifacts Used to Profile the Context of the Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Swanson Elementary School 2001-2002 Report Card
- Trinity Elementary School 2001-2002 Report Card
- Anderson County, Georgia’s 1990 and 2000 U. S. Census

Each principal was asked similar open-ended questions to reveal their perspectives about the mentoring that they received as assistant principals from their principals before assuming the post of the principal. Table 3.3 displays the overall research questions with a sampling of related interview questions. Appendix B details more fully the interview questions posed throughout the three interviews.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Related Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job for the principalship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What assistance was most helpful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions exhibited the finite perspective of assistant principals as they detailed their attitudes and beliefs about the mentoring they received from their principals and its impact on their current practices. A cross case analysis of the data was conducted to further portray the findings. Broad categories that emerged in the data were used to organize the data to give further analysis. The data were cultivated until individual perspectives were explained. The refined perspectives provided similar themes that were further delimited to answer the primary research questions established as the framework of this study exhibited in Table 3.3.

Data Analysis Techniques

Creswell (1998) noted that during qualitative data analysis, the researcher takes qualitative information apart while looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information. The coding process consisted of searching for emerging themes or patterns: conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, and feelings to find patterns that stood out in the data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested, “You must force yourself to search through your data for emerging themes or patterns” (p. 143). Coding is a structured effort to interpret data collected from interviews. Wolcott (1994) reported that noteworthy data should be placed in broad categories to provide a “good description” of the issue under study. From there, Wolcott (1994) said, “if a study is built around a carefully specified problem, the descriptive account may be revealed through a progressive focusing that goes in either direction, slowly zooming from broad context to the particulars of the case” (p.18). This broad coding of the information obtained from the interviews and fieldnotes helpful to identify important information about the case. Then, the data were arranged or refined into conceptual themes across the data.
As the data were analyzed, themes that emerged were compared to see whether there was a common thread or meaning. Wolcott (1994) noted that as themes are highlighted in the data, the researcher should compare statements and acts with one another to see whether there is a concept that unites them. For data to be classified as a theme, underlying similarities within the data must be present. The themes should be identified for underlying similarities.

Part of the refinement process in data analysis included developing the emerging themes based on the set of statements that further focused on the purpose of the study. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) emphasized that while refining codes, the researcher must remember that the codes should fit the data and not the other way around. The statements obtained from the principals during the interviews were compared as they were coded and sorted into categories. Any discrepancies were clarified by seeking input from the participants during subsequent interviews.

The researcher reviewed the transcripts and produced codes that distinguished specific concepts, which were used in the identification of categories and common themes from the interviews with each participant. These categories and themes were analyzed across the interviews of each of the participants.

After each interview, the researcher used codes to identify common themes and ideas in each transcript. The codes provided clearer identification of emerging themes across the overall interview process. This procedure enabled the researcher to produce new categories and alter current categories as the data permitted as displayed in Table 3.4.
Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Formal Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Informal Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Team Player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPE</td>
<td>No Practical Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Practical Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC</td>
<td>Good Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTR</td>
<td>Lack of Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROEXP</td>
<td>Productive Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGEXP</td>
<td>Negative Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBM</td>
<td>Budgetary Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCM</td>
<td>Curriculum Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMP</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each emerging category was arranged to match the primary research questions pertaining to this study. Table 3.5 exhibits a sample from one of the research questions and the corresponding categories.
Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Research Question</th>
<th>Corresponding Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?</td>
<td>Perspective on budgetary training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective on curriculum preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective on building trust &amp; leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective on the realities of the principalship versus perception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis involved organizing and creating an understanding or interpretation of what was learned from the interviews and researcher’s notes. A determination was made from the data as the perspectives of the assistant principals about the mentoring they received as assistant principals evolved.

Trustworthiness

The issues of reliability, validity, and neutrality were addressed throughout this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted the importance of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity when it comes to establishing a sound criterion of trustworthiness in a study. It is important in a qualitative study for the researcher to substantiate the accuracy of his or her work. The verification process helps to ensure trustworthiness.

Reliability

Kvale (1996) indicated, “Reliability pertains to the consistency of the research findings” (p. 235). Since no two people are alike and people are subject to change, consistency must be established and ensured during the interview, transcription, and data analysis process. Kvale (1996) noted, however that “though increasing reliability of interview findings is desirable in
order to counteract haphazard subjectivity, a strong emphasis on reliability may counteract creative innovations and variability” (p. 236).

Decisions about how to proceed with the study or rationale for data collection procedures and analysis were recorded in a log maintained by the researcher. Kvale (1996) indicated:

It may be worthwhile for the interviewer to set aside 10 minutes of quiet time after each interview to recall and reflect on what has been learned from the particular interview, including the interpersonal interaction. These immediate impressions, based on the interviewer’s empathic access to the meanings communicated, may—in the form of notes or simply recorded onto the interview tape — provide a valuable context for the later analysis of transcripts. (p. 129)

This process can serve as an important control for the consistency between data collection and interpretation. An example of the researcher’s fieldnotes is exhibited in Table 3.6:

Table 3.6
Example of Researcher’s Fieldnotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time: 5:55pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

As the researcher was about to end the interview session, the participant taps her fingers while sitting at her desk, looks at the paperwork on her desk, takes a deep breath and starts talking about how the day-to-day grind of the principalship can wear you out if you are not truly committed.

The researcher constantly checked the data to confirm its relevancy, and Creswell (1998) suggested:

The researcher poses questions that relate the categories and then returns to the data and looks for evidence, incidents and events that support or refute the questions, thereby verifying the data. This procedure is called discriminant sampling. (p. 209)

Triangulation across data sources was sought to ensure consistency of the data analysis. Creswell (1998) indicated that in triangulation, “researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. Typically, this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 202). Data were compared and crosschecked across interviews, observations,
fieldnotes, and artifacts collected from the participants, two elementary school principals.
Differences within data were noted and placed within the context of the overall findings of the study.

Validity

The researcher intended to ensure that the purpose of this study was actually investigated. Internal and external validity must be established to maintain the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Creswell, 1998). Each item will be addressed in this study.

External Validity

External validity reflects the level at which the results from a qualitative study can be generalized to other groups or to similar situations, and Creswell (1996) indicated that external validity helps “to make sure that the findings can be transferable between the researcher and those being studied a thick description is necessary” (p. 197). Detailed descriptions help to ensure validity and help the reader to transfer information to other situations to determine if the findings can be generalized because of similar characteristics the data.

This study sought to determine information about principal perspectives on the preparation they received as assistant principals before becoming a principal. The intention from the start is not to transfer the findings to other settings but rather to understand more fully the perspectives of the participants.

The intention of this research study is to describe things as they are and allow future researchers to determine the degree to which the findings could be generalized. The data and its analysis, coupled with the details of the methodology in this chapter, allows the reader to determine if information can be transferred based on similar characteristics of new principals.
Internal Validity

The adequate identification of subjects and the correct descriptions of the topic are vital to the believability of the results. Creswell (1998) stated, “The researcher relates multiple types of data to support or contradict the interpretation” (p. 198). In this study, the researcher used strategies including member checks and peer review to increase the believability of the findings.

The setting from which the participants were chosen was carefully reviewed. The criteria for selection must be relevant to the study, Creswell (1998) related:

An important step in the process is to find people or places to study and to gain access and establish rapport so that participants will provide good data. A closely interrelated step in the process involves determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites. This is not a probability sampling so that statistical inferences can be made; rather, it is sampling so that one can best study the problem under examination. The researcher needs to determine the type of purposeful sampling from the array of possibilities and present a rationale for the selected approach. (p. 110)

The process for sample selection influences who and what will be observed and ultimately what will be learned from the study.

Qualitative researchers work with member checks to define their interpretations and to enhance the internal validity of their studies (Kvale 1996). Member checks help to make sure that descriptions are reported with accuracy. During member checks, participants review transcripts and make adjustments when needed by extending and clarifying what was shared in earlier interviews. The participants reviewed the researcher’s notes and interpretations. This feedback enhances the value of the study’s findings before publication. Table 3.7 provides an example of a member check.
Table 3.7

Example of Member Check

**Interviewer:** You felt that being ultimately accountable as the principal was the biggest lesson you learned than when you were an assistant principal.

**Principal:** That is correct.

**Interviewer:** What did you mean?

**Principal:**
When things go well it is about the school but when things go wrong, you are responsible for everything that happens.

**Interviewer:**
So you are ultimately responsible for everything that happens in the school unlike when you were an assistant principal?

**Principal:** That is correct. The buck stops here!

Peer review were used as the interpretation and themes developed. Professional colleagues and peers were asked to review and to question the interpretation and the themes to ensure that they adequately reflected the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that the role of the peer reviewer is to keep the researcher on task by looking at the methods, meanings, and interpretations.

**Generalizability**

To what extent can the findings from one study be used as a model in the future for a similar study? Kvale (1996) believed:

There is an issue here of who should conduct the analytical generalization from the qualitative research case – the researcher or the reader and the user? How much should the researcher formalize and argue generalization or leave the generalizing to the reader? (p. 234)

The extent to which generalization can be applied from this study depends on the rich, dense, and thick description provided by the researcher. This study provides an adequate amount of
information for the reader to make the determination about the generalization of the findings to larger audiences beyond the scope of this study.

Neutrality

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) described neutrality in the following way:

What you see and report as findings depends on who you are and how you see the world. Findings do not exist independently of the consciousness of the observer. All observations are filtered through the researcher’s selective lens. This is not to suggest that findings are solely social artifacts or products of the researcher’s imagination. In traditional research, bias is to be avoided at all cost. It is assumed that researchers can conduct studies with no values, commitments, theoretical perspectives, or worldviews. In our view this is impossible. Rather than act as though you have no point of view, it is better to own up to your perspective and examine your findings in this light. This is the reason we advise researchers to record their own feelings and assumptions in observer’s comments throughout their studies. Critical self–reflection is essential in this kind of research. (p. 161)

It is important that the researcher’s bias be monitored so that these biases are not an influential factor in the findings and the implications drawn from the results. The findings should reflect findings not personal assumptions. A balance must be negotiated between the researchers’ bias and the interpretation of the findings. The researcher defined assumptions with the intent of controlling personal bias (see Appendix C). The recording of the researcher’s personal feelings and assumptions and the bracketing of the researcher’s thoughts throughout the study, along with the stated assumptions, provided critical self–reflection questioning to monitor researcher bias.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to two principals with three years experience as a principal. Another research study conducted with different principals in a different school setting or at a different time might result in different findings. Although safeguards against research bias were built into the analysis of the data, the researcher’s perspective still had an affect on the study. In a similar study, a different researcher might use a different procedure and get different results.
Chapter Summary

The study examined the perspectives of two new principals about the assistance they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. A qualitative case study allowed the researcher to look at developing patterns or concepts that emerged from the interviews while leaving room to adjust the framework of the findings as themes emerge.

Data collection included interviews and document review. An open-ended interview approach was used to interview the principals. The interviews were a one on one format between the participants and the researcher. The researcher’s goal was to develop a conceptual picture from the principals’ perspectives. Data categories were reviewed and related to the findings of the study and emerging themes were examined and refined to reflect the meaning of the data.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. The researcher sought to uncover the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants of this study to determine how this assistance prepared them for the principalship. Moreover, the researcher sought to identify the attributes of “mentoring” as described by the participants.

Broadly the researcher sought to answer:

1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job for the principalship?

2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?

3. What assistance was most helpful?

In relation to these questions, the researcher collected data using a qualitative, case study approach and a naturalistic method of data analysis. The participants included two elementary school principals from schools in a single southern metropolitan school system. The data were obtained from various sources that included transcriptions from interviews, the researcher’s fieldnotes, and artifacts related to the school site. Data collection occurred in the fall of 2003. The participants were interviewed twice over a period of several months. Participants were selected because of their position as elementary school principals.

This chapter offers the context of the study, data related to the guiding research questions, and a summary of the findings. The chapter displays the findings and reports common themes. Each finding was reviewed and related to the participant’s perspectives about the mentoring they
received from their principals while serving as assistant principals as well as the meaning the experiences had for them. The names of the school’s county, the participants, and the schools in which they served as principals are all pseudonyms.

Anderson County

Anderson County is located in the metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area. Anderson County had a population of roughly 621,528 residents. From 1990 to 2000, the population rose from 352,910 to 588,448. In 2001, the population was estimated at 621,528. Some of the county’s demographics from the United States Census Bureau are provided in Table 4.1

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>320,971</td>
<td>427,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18,175</td>
<td>78,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8,470</td>
<td>64,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10,219</td>
<td>42,360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographics for Anderson County have changed with the Hispanic population was moving from fourth to third place over Asian Americans between 1990 and 2000. Table 4.2 highlights the changes in demographics by percentages.
Table 4.2
Population Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage of the population in 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The median income of Anderson County residents increased by about $13,000 between 1990 and 2000 while the median family income increased by almost $16,000 in the same time frame as indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Income Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income (Dollar)</td>
<td>$29,021</td>
<td>$42,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income (Dollars)</td>
<td>$33,529</td>
<td>$49,280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 shows that the majority educational attainment by the general population included the Bachelor Degree with 24.1%. Some college, but no degree comes in second at 23.9%, and high school graduate was a close third at 22% for the residents of Anderson County.
Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th Grade</td>
<td>16,966</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12th Grade, No</td>
<td>30,376</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>81,979</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Includes Equivalency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College, No Degree</td>
<td>89,224</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>27,146</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>89,735</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>37,172</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The census data displays that not only had the population of Anderson County increased in 2000 but also the population was somewhat more diversified when compared to 1990 demographic data. Although the White population was the predominant race in the county, the Asian, Black, and Hispanic cultures showed a significant increase. A large migration to the county was attributed to this sharp increase in the population, and census projections predict continual growth and diversification over the next decade in Anderson County.

The Anderson County School District

Anderson County Public Schools, located 30 miles Northeast of Metro-Atlanta area, is one of the largest school systems in Georgia and continues to grow as the system welcomes approximately 6,000 new students each year. It is also the largest employer in Anderson County. The average teacher salary is $46,000.
In the 2001-2002 school year, the county consisted of 59 elementary schools, 16 middle
schools, and 15 high schools, serving 128,856 students within the 437 square miles of the
county. The student population of the district was mostly White (58.1%), Black (17.9%),
Hispanic (12.1%), and Asian (9.3%). The male population (51.2%) was slightly more than the
female population (48.8%). The students eligible for free and reduced lunch included 26% of the
students attending Anderson County Schools.

At the time of this study, the Anderson County Report Card on the results of the
Criterion-Referenced Assessments for the elementary grades was available for only the
2001-2002 school year. Table 4.5 illustrates that 87% of the first graders met or exceeded
academic standards in reading, and 88% of the first graders met or exceeded academic standards
in math.

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 shows that 88% of the second graders met or exceeded academic standards in
reading, and 88% of the second graders met or exceeded academic standards in math.
Table 4.6

Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 shows that 88% of the third graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading, and 88% of the third graders met or exceeded academic standards in math.

Table 4.7

Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 shows that 90% of the fifth graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading, and 87% of the fifth graders met or exceeded academic standards in math.

Table 4.8

Public Education Report Card for Reading and Math Grade 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the students met or exceeded the standards set for reading and math on the state’s Criterion Referenced Assessment. At least 80% of the students met or exceeded the standards in grades one, two, three, and five. The school systems’ test scores are compared in the next tables to the rest of the state. Data indicated that the school system exhibited high performance results.

In Table 4.9, Anderson County first graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading and math with scores of 87% and 88%. The state’s scores were 86% in reading and 85% in math.

Table 4.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 1</th>
<th>Anderson Math</th>
<th>State Math</th>
<th>Anderson Reading</th>
<th>State Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.10, Anderson County’s second graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading and math with scores of 88%. The state scores were 84% in reading and 83% in math.

Table 4.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion-Reference Anderson County/State Grade 2</th>
<th>Anderson Math</th>
<th>State Math</th>
<th>Anderson Reading</th>
<th>State Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 4.11, Anderson County’s third graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading and math with scores of 88%. The state’s scores were 84% in reading and 82% in math.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion-Reference</th>
<th>Anderson County/State Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anderson Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.12, Anderson County’s fifth graders met or exceeded academic standards in reading and math with scores of 90% and 86%. The state’s scores were 82% in reading and 77% in math.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion-Reference</th>
<th>Anderson County/State Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anderson Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student achievement in the school system was relatively high when compared with the rest of the schools in the state of Georgia. The Criterion Reference Assessment scores were at the median and in some cases higher than the rest of the state’s reading and math scores especially at the third and fifth grades. In reading for the third grade, Anderson County students scored 88% when examining combined the met and exceeded standards category. The state of
Georgia scored 84% in the same category. Forty percent of the third grade students met the standards, and 48% of the students exceeded standards in Anderson County in reading while the state students posted a score of 45% in the met standard and 39% exceeded standards. In math, third grade students made a combined score of 88% while the state’s score was 82%. Fifty-eight percent of the students met the standards, and 30% of the students exceeded standards for Anderson County while the state posted a score of 59% met standard and 23% exceeded standards.

In the fifth grade, the county’s combined reading score of students who met or exceeded standards was 90% and the state’s score was 82%. Forty-three percent of the students met the standards, and 47% of the students exceeded the standards for Anderson County in reading while the state posted scores of 49% met standards and 33% exceeded standards. In math, the county scored a combined total of 86% while the state scored a combined total of 77%. Fifty-seven percent of the students met the standards, and 29% of the students exceeded the standards for Anderson County while the state posted scores of 59% met standards and 19% exceeded standards. To summarize, Anderson County Public Schools exceeded state averages in grades 3 and 5 in reading and mathematics.

Swanson Elementary School

Swanson Elementary School (SES) is located in Anderson County, and the school serves a student population of 1,321 according to the Georgia Public Education Report Card. The SES student population included 685 (51.9%) male and 636 (48.1%) female students during the 2002-2003 school year, and Table 4.13 landscapes the enrollment at SES by race and ethnicity.
Table 4.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity Enrollment at SES</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Multi-Racial</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>936</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swanson Elementary School students eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches were compared to the rest of the Anderson County School System in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced-price Lunches</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swanson Elementary School</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson County</td>
<td>24,371</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The district provided several programs to meet the diverse needs of the student population. Table 4.15 illustrates the participation rates of students at SES in which 9.3% were in the special education program, 4% in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and 8.1% in the Early Intervention Program (EIP).

Table 4.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Enrollment in Special Programs</th>
<th>Program Enrollment</th>
<th>% of Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Programs (EIP) (K-5)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of students retained in the school by race/ethnicity and gender are displayed in Table 4.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retained Students by Race/Ethnicity and Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.17 shows that the majority of the faculty was female. Faculty with Bachelor’s Degrees numbered 50, Master’s Degree 41, and Specialist Degree in Education 8. None of the personnel possessed a doctoral degree.

Table 4.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swanson Elementary School Certified Personnel Data</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Personnel</th>
<th>PK-5 Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Average Contract Days</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>211.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>190.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate Level</td>
<td>4 Yr. Bachelor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Yr. Master’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Yr. Specialist’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Yr. Doctoral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Swanson Elementary School Certified Personnel Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Experience</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Personnel</th>
<th>PK-5 Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swanson Elementary School’s first graders test scores were compared to the county and state in Table 4.18. In reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined, Swanson Elementary scored 90%, the state scored 86%, and the county scored 87%. In math Swanson Elementary scored 94%, the state 85%, and the county scored 88%.

Table 4.18

Criterion-Reference Assessment
Swanson Elementary School (SES)/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19 shows that Swanson Elementary School’s second graders scored 95%, the state scored 84%, and the county scored 88% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, Swanson Elementary scored 94%, the state 83%, and the county scored 88%.
Table 4.19

Criterion-Reference Assessment
Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20 shows that Swanson Elementary School’s third graders scored 89%, the state 84%, and the county scored 88% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined.

Table 4.20

Criterion-Reference Assessment
Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table shows that 4.21 Swanson Elementary School’s fifth graders scored 94%, the state scored 82%, and the county scored 90% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, Swanson Elementary scored 90%, the state 77%, and the county 86%.

Table 4.21

Criterion-Reference Assessment
Swanson Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trinity Elementary School

Trinity Elementary School (TES) is located in Anderson County, and the school serves a student population of 860 according to the Georgia Public Education Report Card. The TES student population included 434 (50.5%) male and 426 (49.5%) female students during the 2002-2003 school year. The race/ethnicity enrollment in the school is presented in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity Enrollment at TES</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Multi-Racial</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>394</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.23, the students at Trinity Elementary School eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches were compared to the rest of the Anderson County School System. The number of students receiving free lunch at the school is 20% compared to the county’s 21%.

Table 4.23

Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced-price Lunches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School System</td>
<td>24,371</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The district provided several programs to meet the diverse needs of the student population. Table 4.24 illustrates the participation rates of students at TES in which 11.4% of the student population were in the special education program, 5.7% in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and 5.9% in the Early Intervention Program (EIP).
Table 4.24

Enrollment in Special Programs at TES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Program Enrollment</th>
<th>% of Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Programs (EIP) (K-5)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.25 shows the number of students retained by race/ethnicity and gender at TES.

Table 4.25

Retained Students by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.26 shows that the majority of the faculty was female. Faculty with Bachelor’s Degrees numbered 24, Master’s Degrees 32, and Specialist in Education Degree 8. None of the personnel possessed a doctoral degree.

Table 4.26

Trinity Elementary School Certified Personnel Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Personnel</th>
<th>PK-5 Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers 3.00</td>
<td>Average 2.5</td>
<td>56.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average 200</td>
<td>190.00</td>
<td>190.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contract Days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trinity Elementary School Certified Personnel Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate Level</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Personnel</th>
<th>PK-5 Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Yr. Bachelor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Yr. Master’s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Yr. Specialist’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Yr. Doctoral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Experience</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Support Personnel</th>
<th>PK-5 Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.27 shows that Trinity Elementary School’s first graders scored 87%, the state scored 86%, and the county scored 87% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, Trinity Elementary scored 86%, the state scored 85%, and the county scored 88%.

Table 4.27

Criterion-References Assessment
Trinity Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State Grade 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did Not Meet Standards</th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.28 illustrates that Trinity Elementary School’s second graders scored 93%, the state scored 84%, and the county scored 88% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, TES scored 86%, the county scored 88%, and the state scored 85%. 

67
Table 4.28
Criterion-Reference Assessment
Trinity Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29 shows that Trinity Elementary third graders scored 89%, the state scored 84%, and the county scored 88% for reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, Trinity Elementary scored 87%, the state 82%, and the county scored 88%.

Table 4.29
Criterion-Reference Assessment
Trinity Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.30 shows that Trinity Elementary School’s fifth graders scored 89%, the state scored 82%, and the county scored 87% in reading when the met and exceeded standards categories were combined. In math, Trinity Elementary scored 87%, the state 77%, and the county scored 86%.

Table 4.30
Criterion-Reference Assessment
Trinity Elementary School/Anderson County Schools/State
Grade 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading 2001-2002</th>
<th>Math 2001-2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Meet Standards</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Standards</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeded Standards</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Profiles

The participants for the study included two elementary school principals. Both participants were White, female, and held advanced graduate degrees. Table 4.31 gives an overview of the participants, Renee Candice, principal of Swanson Elementary School, and Viola Sands, principal of Trinity Elementary School.

Table 4.31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>Years as a Classroom Teacher</th>
<th>Years as an Assistant Principal</th>
<th>Years of Experience as a Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renee Candice</td>
<td>Swanson Elementary School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola Sands</td>
<td>Trinity Elementary School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal Viola Sands

Viola Sands has been employed in Anderson County for 14 years. She went into education right after receiving her undergraduate degree from COE College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. After graduation, Viola taught three years in the city of St. Louis Missouri. After marriage, her husband entered school. She taught 3 years in an urban school system and has worked 20 years in the Anderson County School System. She entered graduate studies at the University of Georgia, and she completed her Specialist in Education Degree.

Viola was an elementary school teacher in Anderson County before becoming an assistant principal. As assistant principal, Viola was primarily responsible for coordinating and implementing the curriculum in the primary grades. She was an assistant principal for seven years prior to assuming the position of principal, and 2003 marked the start of Viola’s third year
as principal of Trinity Elementary School. Viola stated, “that seven years was perhaps the average amount of time for assistant principals to spend in residency before becoming a principal in the Anderson County School System.” Viola pointed out, “However that has accelerated a bit for some people because the opening of new schools and the retirement of principals.”

Trinity Elementary School had an enrollment of 860 students from grade kindergarten through the fifth grade. Assessment of student achievement exhibited that students performed well on standardized tests; however, with the No Child Left Behind Act, Viola indicated, “there was a need to not only address achievement on the standardized test but the students’ individual needs.” At the time of this study, Viola was analyzing last year’s achievement test scores. The demographics of the school showed a somewhat even distribution between Black and White students with a smaller population of Hispanic and Asian students. However, she felt it was “important to be inclusive” of the diverse needs of the population. Her school plans for improvement have been aligned with the mandates from the No Child Left Behind legislation. In the past, the Trinity Elementary School student improvement goal was to have “(x) amount of growth in academic achievement but now children within each of the different subgroups that were economically disadvantaged, speakers of other languages, special education or different ethnicity, must show growth.” Viola said, “It was not enough for the third grade to show five-percent growth in writing, but each subgroup must show growth.”

At Trinity Elementary School, the school improvement plans have been adjusted to make sure that growth occurs for every child. Since certified teachers are required to complete 20 hours of professional development, teacher professional development programs at the school have been tailored to address the local school plans for improvement and the No Child Left Behind law.
Because her school used a site based management approach, Viola Sands viewed the principalship “as a kind of middle management position.” The school’s decisions address the concerns of the federal, state, and county government along with the needs of community, parent, and child. Regardless of the advice or input she received, Viola stated, “that when things go well, it was all about the school, but when things do not work out quite as well as anticipated, the buck stops at my desk.”

**Principal Renee Candice**

Renee Candice was the principal of Swanson Elementary School. Renee obtained her Educational Specialist in Education Degree from the University of Georgia, and she was currently completing her dissertation at the same university. Prior to becoming a principal, Renee’s teaching experience was at the elementary school level where she taught pre-K and third and fifth grades, coordinated after school programs, and served as a grade level chairperson for several years. Renee taught five years and worked as an assistant principal for six years. Renee’s first experience with leadership came through serving as the after school program coordinator. As the after school program coordinator, she worked with the curriculum and managed the budget. Renee’s primary task was to make sure the after school curriculum was inclusive of the Anderson County’s curriculum objectives. She was also responsible for hiring teachers and ensuring they had adequate supplies. While serving as the after school program coordinator, Renee’s principal encouraged her to look at a future in leadership.

At the time of this study, it was the first year of Renee’s assignment as a new principal. Renee was named the principal of Swanson Elementary School for the upcoming school year in February, and from that point she started planning for the school year. Over the summer she, “closed out” as the assistant principal at one school while transitioning to the upcoming school
year as principal at her current school. When asked how she felt about being in the position of principal of a school for the first time, Renee said, “I was very excited with anticipation about my first school year at the helm of Swanson Elementary School.”

Renee’s school has an enrollment of over 1,150 students and a faculty and staff of 100 members. She highlighted the diversity within her school among the students. The special education program served children with many challenges from learning disabilities to orthopedic impairments and autism. There was a “blend of different cultures;” however, the student socio-economic status level was stable, and the free and reduced lunch rate was a low. The attendance rate was 98% each school month, and the staff was “very stable.” There were a few teachers at the school whom had been teaching nearly 20 years, and there were a few new teachers at the school. Most of the teachers had teaching experience that ranged from 5 to 15 years.

Renee’s said, “Staff meetings are not a meet and greet affair; they are a time for professional development.” Renee shared that her leadership team participates in “book study together about professional development.” As an instructional leader, Renee stated, “it was important for me to be current on the latest research pertaining to student progress and model it as well because principals were ultimately responsible for student achievement.” Renee believed that it was important to address the issues of “how to support teachers with their teaching strategies while focusing on what was best for the students and procuring adequate resources to complement school-wide needs.” Renee’s outlook on her first school year as a principal was tempered yet optimistic because of her preparation as an assistant principal.
Transitioning from Assistant Principal to Principal

Renee Candice

When asked to describe transitioning from assistant principal to principal, Renee was in a unique position to respond as she had only been in the position as principal for three months. Renee reflected back to the first time she was hired as an assistant principal and talk about the feeling of “empowerment” bestowed on her from the principal. She shared, “I was not only given responsibility but also the authority to go along with the position of assistant principal.”

Renee explained that she and her principal had developed a “good professional relationship.” The principal had “complete confidence” in her “judgment” and “ability” to assess situations. Renee explained further:

When I was hired as an assistant principal, the principal I worked under gave me the responsibilities and left the judgment up to me. She and I had a working relationship enough to know that I would not knee jerk and make a decision and do things that were not appropriate. She also knew that I am the type of person if I really do not know and need to talk things through and get feedback and suggestions; I am going to do that.

The confidence of the principal encouraged Renee “to define my role while learning other areas of administration that would be useful” once she became a principal. Renee reported she was “totally surprised” when she was offered the job as a principal; however, she felt she was “prepared because of the experience” she had as an assistant principal under her principal. Renee explained it this way:

I was more surprised that on July 1st when I took the job here as principal of this school that I had been more prepared than I thought I would be. Thus far, there has not been anything that I was totally confused about.

“Learning about things in theory is one thing but practical experience is very helpful before assuming the job as a principal,” explained Renee. When asked which areas were critical
for an assistant principal to gain experience before becoming a principal, Renee thought about it for a moment, and she said:

I have been very fortunate learning how to do things as an assistant principal. I had experience as an assistant principal in hiring, budget, curriculum-mapping and revamping, and interventions with students and student support programs, working with special education, working with staff development, and all kinds of things.

Renee believed she was “fortunate” to have been in a situation where the principal was “not reluctant to take time to empower me in the position of assistant principal but also to teach me the things” she would need to know as principal.

Feeling empowered is important because very few assistant principals aspire to remain at that position. Preparation for the ascension into the position of principal is of primary consideration because most assistant principals aspire to become a principal and fewer aspire to remain career assistant principal (Daresh, 2001a). However, the daily work of an assistant principal is a challenging job. Porter (1996) reported that 50% of the assistant principals would move on to higher positions within the next 5 years. Porter described the position and the role in the following way:

Responsibilities for this position is almost universally under the umbrella of daily operations chief, with major focuses on discipline, substitute teachers, student activities, and attendance. The assistant principal by large is not viewed as a career position due to its ‘non-educational’ nature with student discipline the number one job dissatisfaction. (p. 27)

Renee was able to endure these features of the job as outlined by Porter; however, she was also able to experience other aspects of administration because of the “extra initiative” on her part to become knowledgeable about the job with a “supporting principal” who promoted her success. The key concepts in Table 4.32 emerged as Renee depicted her transitioning from the position assistant principal to principal.
Table 4.32

Transitioning from Assistant Principal to Principal

Key Concepts

A sense of empowerment
Practical experiences

Viola Sands

Viola addressed the transition from assistant principal to principal quite differently from Renee Candice. Perhaps the differences were due to the fact that this was the start of Renee’s third year as a principal so she has had time to experience the job of the principalship. Viola was quite pleased with her experiences as an assistant principal; however, the reality of the job as a principal was, according to her, “a sobering experience.” Viola described the transition from assistant principal to principal in the following manner:

I had tremendous opportunities as an assistant principal. I worked under two different principals that gave me a myriad of experiences but, I don’t know that there is truly anything that prepares you for what the principalship looks like.

When probed as to whether she was referring to a lack of adequate preparation by the mentoring Viola received as an assistant principal, she elaborated:

There are some aspects of the job of a principal I felt very well prepared for, and there are some aspects of the position that were very different from anything I experienced before. The role of an administrator whether assistant principal or principal changes every day. So while I was well prepared, most situations were new.

The ideas of “change,” “spontaneity,” and the “work life” of the principalship were ideas that repeated throughout the interviews with Viola. Viola thought that the spontaneity of the job and the high frequency of issues that needed her attention were more than she expected before becoming a principal. The experience of moving from assistant principal to principal was like
“being a backup quarterback and learning from the starting quarterback.” However, “once the starting quarterback goes out of the game and you are in his position, the view is quite different.” When asked to elaborate on the aspects that were different, Viola said, “It depends very much on your ability to make good judgment calls, your ability to listen, synthesize, and think in a farsighted way.” Viola thought about it more, and she elaborated:

Things that were very different were the high prevalence of personnel issues, needs for my staff, job vacancies, sometimes jobs changed, the need to readjust allotment plans to suit the number of students, and students’ needs that are certainly a departure from the assistant principal role. When things go well, it is all about the school, but when things go wrong, as the principal, you are responsible.

The responsibility that comes with each decision as a principal was quite different from decisions Viola made as an assistant principal. Viola still adjusts to the routine of the principalship, but she acknowledged that the principalship is the “type of job where the person must maintain some flexibility with their schedule. You can come in with a set agenda, but you must expect the unexpected and make adjustments.” Groff (2001) recognized the enormity of the work and the pressure of the principalship. Personnel issues, budgets, schedules, playground issues, student discipline, and community relations place principals under a tremendous amount of stress.

When asked her if her experiences as an assistant principal gave her insight into the responsibility of the job as a principal, she replied:

I think it gave me a lot of insight but I do not think my eyes were wide open until I got into this position. It was a very different position than being in the assistant principal position. When I’ve talked with my colleagues about this as an assistant principal, we felt what we did was close to what a principal does but the reality is when you become a principal, you see there is a world of difference between the two positions. You have to watch the ripple effect of what you do.

Viola recognized that her decisions about issues could have a long lasting effect beyond the immediacy of the situation, and she likened decision making to a “ripple effect.” When pressed to give an example of a ripple effect, Viola cited:
You know the budget takes on a whole bit of importance because of the way we do things. Our money is downloaded. So we have a lot of decision-making power into how we can best align that budget to students and instructions for our school. Our school system uses a system for personnel allotment. Some schools say you have (x) amount of kindergartners so you must hire (x) amount of teachers. That responsibility falls squarely on the principal.

Since Viola had two full years of experience as the principal of a school, she was in a good position to reflect on her anticipation about the principalship as an assistant principal versus her tempered reality about the job. Table 4.33 displays the concepts that emerged from Viola’s discussion about her transition from assistant principal to the position of principal.

Table 4.33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneity of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of decision making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaining Entry into Administration

Renee Candice

Renee believed her grooming to become an assistant principal began while she was still a classroom teacher. As a worker in the after school programs and a grade level chairperson, Renee had to take care of the budget and other responsibilities. The principal “took the time to explain how the budget worked” for her grade level. Renee said, “There was a lot of planning required as we learned about the budget and once I did these things, that was the point the principal started to encourage me to go into leadership.” Renee explained further that her principal “promoted her “by giving her “exposure.” Renee shared:
When she would do the budget, we would sit down with those green big print outs, and she said, this is what it looks like. It does not mean a lot to you, but I want you to get exposure.

Renee reflected about the “discussions” she had with her principal, and she recounted:

We did learn basic things. Some funds are restricted. You can not do anything with the money except what the government says you can do with it. There were some accounts where we had a little more flexibility. We can do certain things and move these accounts. We really started at a basic level with those things. She invited me into meetings to work through issues with parents. We maintained confidentiality. We worked with personnel issues. So she gave me good exposure.

Renee also took the initiative to prepare herself “just in case an opportunity for advancement presented itself.” Renee related that she often took “long introspective looks by examining her goals and the skills necessary to achieve them.” Renee shared that she would “seek out the necessary resources” to bridge the gap between her goals and deficiencies. She explained:

I felt that the opportunity for advancement into administration was there for me, and I think that was because of my initiative. I really sought out and looked for deficiencies in my own learning. I spent a tremendous amount of outside time, time outside of my work hours, attending conferences at night and on the weekends. I was doing a lot of professional reading and talking with colleagues about books that I read. I went to KAPPA meetings. I believed if I had not taken that extra initiative I would not be sitting here today as the principal. I think going to the University of Georgia and pursuing those advanced degrees was very important.

Renee was empowered by her principal and exhibited the confidence of a person with an internal locus of control. Renee exhibited the initiative, which helped to build her career. The key concepts that emerged in the interviews with Renee and her recruitment from the classroom to the position of assistant principal are presented in Table 4.34.
Table 4.34

Gaining Entry into Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from the principal to go into administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viola Sands

As a classroom teacher, Viola’s principal encouraged her to look at a career as an administrator. Viola did not seek out the administrative position but with laughter she shared, “My principal kind of grabbed me by the arm and said okay this is what you are going to do!” Viola stated:

I taught for five years, acquired my degree, but I did not have a great desire to go into administration, so I guess for me it was more of opportunity and doors opened than a driven desire to be an administrator.

Viola’s principal was the person who took a personal interest in her career beyond the classroom. She was the person who encouraged Viola to look beyond the position of classroom teacher. Viola explained:

My principal encouraged me not only to become an assistant principal but wanted me to stay at that school. I was thrilled being a teacher and had to think long and hard about it leaving the classroom. I was a successful teacher. I enjoyed what I did. I felt that I was effective with students. That is really what I wanted to do. I wanted to teach. My principal said that you could still teach. Instead of teaching children you would teach adults. You can still impact children not only in your classroom but also throughout the school. We had a lot of those kinds of conversations.

Leaving something you enjoy and transitioning into another position can present its challenges. Viola was hesitant to make the move, but her principal reassured her that it was a
good transition not only for her but also for the children. Viola talked about that transition from classroom to assistant principal in the same school, and the nurturing she received from her principal:

For me it was a cushioned birth into the assistant principal’s position because I was at the school where I taught as a classroom teacher. I knew the faculty well. I knew the families and the kids so it was an easy transition. Looking back on that scenario, I know the gift that my principal gave me is the same thing I try to do for the teachers at my school. As a principal I really push to do things that will stretch them and help them to grow a little bit because ultimately it comes back to our children.

Viola talked about a protégé among her staff with aspirations to move into administration, and she made comparisons to her own career progression into administration:

I just had a teacher who classroom was collapsed and she moved to another school as an assistant principal. It was very much what she wanted for many years. She will absolutely fantastic. Now because she had it at the forefront and articulated it does not make her any less a leader. She was goal oriented in a way different than I was. So I do not know if it matters whether you seek the position as she did or the position seeks you as in my case. I think you still have to have those talents and skills at the right place. Lucky for me I knew what this teacher wanted, and I was able to create some opportunities for her. She was able to say she needed some opportunities and it worked out well for her. I think people come about it in different ways. Just for me that was not my goal.

Viola was asked if she was pleased about her decision to accept a principalship looking back after completing two years in the principalship. She responded:

I am happy about everything I have done. I think the hardest thing for me was that I loved teaching. By becoming an administrator, I knew I was up giving something and that was the classroom and those kinds of intimate relationships you develop with the kids and parents. Now that I am an administrator, I loved being an assistant principal and enjoy being a principal. I did not necessary seek out the position of the principalship, but I was able to achieve it at a pace that was good for me.

Her principal encouraged Viola’s progression into the principalship, and it was at a pace in which she was able to “sort through feelings about future aspirations and feel comfortable” about them. Table 4.35 displays the key concepts that emerged from Viola’s discussion.
Table 4.35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaining Entry into Administration</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initially did not desire to become an administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal encouraged her to go into administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cushioned birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship

**Renee Candice**

Renee thought that the first principal she worked under as an assistant principal placed her in practical situations where she could get a realistic sense of the dynamics that a principal encounters. Renee said, “She put me in roles to experience things such as the good, bad, and the ugly.” Renee was willing to get a real sense of what it might be like if or when she became a principal. She felt that it would “lessen the shock or impact” and give her an idea how to work with the situation. Renee went into detail about the ‘ugly’ in the following:

The more difficult times were for example dealing with personnel issues that are very difficult. When you are working with parents and cannot come to an agreement. Teachers work with parents and cannot come to an agreement. As the assistant principal, I was that bottom layer where they had to come for the final intervention.

When it came to the ‘good,’ Renee explained that it was just “celebrating with people.” Her role was to solve issues with parents. She would work closely with teachers, students, and parents. Renee said, “I was the person responsible for resolving any situation.” My goal was to never have a need to go to the principal for a resolution.”
Renee related another experience she learned as an assistant principal from her principal—“documentation.” Documentation was a very important lesson to learn. Renee related an experience she was currently working on in which the documentation skills she learned from her principal were useful. Renee shared:

I think right now about a situation I am dealing with in which I learned to keep very careful documentation and to know every step of the process along the way. Right now I am thinking of a personnel issue. When there is a problem with it, what do you do? You can not go in and say ‘you are fired and you are out of here!’ So you have to know along the way what you need to do to document.

Renee discussed whether the documentation process was a means that led to termination or was it also an intervening and remedial process?

Along that same road, you have to know how to intervene and give that person the tools they need to be successful. At that point it’s whether or not they make the choice to utilize those tools. So I guess it is being careful every step along the way with issues like that to make sure that you are providing support but keeping documentation so that whatever the outcome, things are in place.

Renee felt the bottom line is that “we are all here for the children,” and “every aspect of any documentation process used” was for the “children’s best interest.” She wanted the children to achieve. Table 4.36 displays the key concepts that emerged from the discussion about the experiences that helped prepared Renee for the principalship.

Table 4.36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The good, bad, and ugly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Viola Sands

Viola felt prepared in the area of curriculum because of the experiences she had under her principal while she was an assistant principal. Curriculum was an area of preparedness that has proven to be essential in her work in as a principal. Viola saw the position of the principal as an instructional leader. She thought it was important to be knowledgeable in the areas of curriculum and instruction especially in the era of *No Child Left Behind*. Viola elaborated:

I see my role as an instructional leader. As an assistant principal, I worked with Pay for Performance. It was a recognition system from the state of Georgia. It had specifics that were measurable. You had to come up with a detailed plan and involve everyone at the school. The plans were not easy. Sixty percent of the plans were based on standardized test results.

Viola elaborated further on the program’s genesis, and the support she received from her principal at the time with the following:

When I presented the Idea of Pay for Performance to my principal, she immediately said absolutely. Get a team together. What can we do to support you? She did not hesitate. She wanted to know what we need to do to make it happen. From that point I was able to develop the teams and the plans.

Viola was pleased with the results of the Pay for Performance program at the school. She smiled as she related, “as a result of the program, the school had the highest jumps in Anderson County. It was an extremely successful program.” Viola said, “she was also proud about the teamwork on the project between the parents, teachers, and students.” Viola said, “When I look at something that really prepared me for the principalship as an assistant principal that was it.” She related that “success created a bond” between her and her principal. The bond gave her a sense of confidence to know that her principal supported her and was “there to help her in any way.” Viola said:

My principal was there with the safety net. She said ‘we are going to make this happen for you.’ This is your project to push forward with this group of people. We had to be involved and we had to agree to make it work.
Viola viewed her experiences within the present context as a principal with two years experience by explaining:

The principalship is a leadership position and you are the instructional leader. So when I became a principal, because of my experience with curriculum as an additional duty while in the position of the assistant principal, I was able to understand that aspect of being an instructional leader.

Viola stressed, “if you are going to survive in this era of *No Child Left Behind*, the role of the principal as an instructional leader is vital to success.” The research also reflects the importance of the principal assuming the role as the instructional leader and accountability. New principals are expected to step into the position and be prepared to address accountability, and Weller and Weller (2001) suggested that principals could increase assistant principals’ effectiveness as instructional leaders by encouraging them with becoming familiar with the workings of the instructional program. The key concepts that emerged from the discussion about Viola’s experiences that helped to prepare her for the principalship are presented in Table 4.37.

Table 4.37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences that Helped Prepare for the Principalship</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sense of empowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences as an instructional leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonding with the principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility

**Renee Candice**

Renee had two different sets of experiences from two different principals when it came to learning budgetary matters while she was an assistant principal. The first principal left most of
the bookkeeping to the bookkeeper because she was not very comfortable with the budget process. Renee remembered:

One principal I worked for while I was an assistant principal did not feel very comfortable with the budget. She left it up to the bookkeeper. She would say that you have this much money to spend. I would work more with the bookkeeper than I worked with the principal on budget matters.

Renee did not feel comfortable with handling the budget although she knew she was the type of person who had an “appetite for learning.” Viola also knew if she had any future aspirations of moving into the principalship, knowledge of the budget would be important. The last principal Renee worked with while she was an assistant principal was more knowledgeable about the budget process and not only taught her how it worked but also created an environment for her to gain practical experience with budgetary matters. Renee recalled:

The last principal I worked under as an assistant principal worked very closely with me with every component of the budget. We looked at how to set up a school wide budget and what it needed to look like in the curriculum and professional areas I was responsible for as an assistant principal. She gave me the allotment and I planned how we were going to use that.

Practical applications rather than theory are more conducive to preparing a principal for the realities of the principalship, and Murphy (1992) suggested that learning for principals should be cooperative and based on real world problems of practice as opposed to untested theories. Renee and her principal exhibited this cooperative and practical learning based on a realistic scenario, involvement with the budget as indicated in Table 4.38.

Table 4.38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85
Viola Sands

Viola’s experience was quite the opposite of Renee’s experience with learning about budgetary responsibility. As an assistant principal, Viola was not exposed to a detailed learning process about the school budget process. As a student in college, she did take a course in budget, but her “book knowledge” was quite different from practical experience. The budget process was an area in which Viola had very little experience as an assistant principal, and this lack of experience affected Viola’s performance during her initial tenure in the principalship. Viola explained:

The budget process was the area in which I was least versed as an assistant principal and still least versed in as a principal. I did not do a whole lot with the budget as an assistant principal.

Viola concentrated primarily on curriculum matters as an assistant principal. She thought, “that would be more important” as a principal. As the instructional leader, Viola believed she should be able to provide resources that “enabled teachers to make the curriculum practical for students.” Viola said, “I am responsible for the learning that happens in the school.” When prompted about the need to be knowledgeable in budgetary matters as a principal, Viola stated, “When I was named principal, the principal at my school took time to teach me about the budget process.”

Viola knew she did not have an extensive knowledge and experience about the budget before stepping into the principalship. She did take a course about budgets in college but that was not enough. However, she displayed some ingenuity as she explained:

In my first year, I followed the budget of the principal who preceded me. In my second year, I was able to adjust a little more. It was one of those pieces I did not comfortably prepare for.
Viola survived her first year as a principal in the budget area by studying the budget of the previous principal. She felt “a little better” about making adjustments to the budget in her second year. Weller and Weller (2002) listed budget preparation for assistant principals should be a part of their training. In Viola’s experience as an assistant principal, this was not the case. It took an even lower priority in her training. Table 4.39 displays the key concepts that emerged from Viola’s discussion on her preparation with budgetary matters.

Table 4.39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation for Budgetary Responsibility</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More emphasis on learning curriculum than budgetary responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No practical experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preparation in the Area of Curriculum

Renee Candice

Renee encountered her first experience with the No Child Left Behind legislation while working as an assistant principal. The experience acquainted her with the importance the legislation meant to schools and how to identify and analyze pertinent data. She recalled her responsibilities while working as an assistant principal:

When it came to No Child Left Behind at our school, it was my responsibility to take care of any data, writing of any goals, and those type of things. I was the one out in the field or school. I was the point person to contact. I collected all the data and analyzed it. I would then present it to my principal and he decided if it needed to be tweaked anymore. It helped with my transition to the principalship. Absolutely!

Renee thought for a moment and talked about the risk involved in the No Child Left Behind legislation.

87
The risk to me is that a child might not achieve what we believe they need to achieve. That is the risk! To me the other things are really incidental. I say that because I am in a system where I have resources, support, and professional people who for a living come in and help us to learn and do better. The risk is that the children might not get what they need to be successful. I know that it sounds idealistic. I do not have the blue-sky theory because I am new at this. I would have had that five years ago as an assistant principal.

Renee then related the experience with *No Child Left Behind* to what she faces as a new principal. She responded:

We always want to get better at everything. That truly is the bottom line. I have conversation everyday with classroom teachers, school nutrition managers, custodial teams, and bus drivers. To me our school is great school. It is one of the best. Does that mean we can not get better? We can always improve. We can adjust things to make our craft successful. One thing that is exciting to me about *No Child Left Behind* is it all about the children. I relate that to our local school plan for improvement. We always focus on reading, writing, and math. These are the primary core subjects. In the years past we have written our goals stating that 85% of our children will pass or do whatever. Then you get your black and white data that comes in with the test scores and you see how you have faired. I love the philosophy that all children will do it. My goal this year for our school is that 100% of our children will succeed. Is it a great challenge? Absolutely! I am not fearful of what might happen if we do not meet our goals.

Renee reflected on the affect the faculty and staff experienced as they responded to her vision regarding *No Child Left Behind* in the following way:

One thing we are doing with our teachers is to have them to identify how their children performed. I told them in staff meeting that I wanted to look at every teacher and say, little Suzie who is in that lower 25 percentile. I know that math probability is where she struggles. How were those interventions effective? Can you name them? What else can I get for you to help her? If we do not identify what the gaps are and be able to name and put specific characteristics on interventions we are doing, success will probably not happen. Let’s look at data, anecdotal data, and standardized test data. Some people when they hear standardized test groan. There is a place for that. There are some things we can learn from standardized test data. Is it hard work? Absolutely! However, we gain so much when we assess student performance. What kind of research can we find to help us? Let’s not reinvent the wheel by everyone in different classrooms throughout the building doing it alone. Let us look and learn together. Let’s dialogue about the children, about research, and put all our data together. Let’s put the minds of this team together so we can find ways to improve!
Despite the challenges, Renee felt good about her team effort approach to supporting the county's curriculum and meeting the demands of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. As an assistant principal, the practical experience of being the “data person” prepared her for the academic accountability she faced as principal. The key concepts in Table 4.40 emerged from Renee’s perspective on her preparation in the area of curriculum.

Table 4.40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation in the Area of Curriculum</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Sense of empowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Experience in analyzing student achievement test data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viola Sands

Viola believed that she had a good mentoring experience as an assistant principal in the area of curriculum. Viola also took the extra initiative to become familiar with the curriculum because of its importance to the students. She explained:

In my case, I felt that I was well prepared and well mentored as an assistant principal in the area of curriculum. I made it not my interest but my duty to know the curriculum. So when I worked along side teachers or worked with children and parents, I was very much talking about what I knew.

After reflecting momentarily, Viola compared her experiences as an assistant principal to what she experiences now after two years in her position of the principalship. Viola shared:

What has happened to me, as a principal, is that we have had very few changes in the curriculum but changes in the curriculum material. I am not as well versed in the new curriculum materials. I am versed in what the curriculum is about and the strategies used to implement the curriculum and how to get the resources to make it practical for teacher who are the experts to implement the curriculum. The principalship is a leadership position and you are the instructional leader. So when I became a principal, because of my experience with curriculum as an additional duty while in the position of assistant principal, I was able to understand that aspect of being an instructional leader.
Viola saw her role as being knowledgeable about the curriculum and also that of a “resource person.” She was familiar with different strategies to help implement the curriculum and a resource person for materials to assist in the implementation of the curriculum. Viola shared, “Goals, aspirations, needs, and results” began at her desk. She thought again about her role in the curriculum as an assistant principal and now as a principal:

My responsibility as an assistant principal and a principal now is to set the school improvement goals to ensure that our children learn the curriculum. Am I the person who sets the vision? Yes! In the end, I am the one responsible for all the learning that takes place in the school.

Viola was grateful for the relationship she experienced with her principal and the opportunity that provided her the opportunity to learn about curriculum. She elaborated on this opportunity in the following way:

I was pretty fortunate in my situation. I had a principal that was very open and I was able to set the curriculum direction at the school. I worked with Pay for Performance, which was a Georgia State program that was not setting the curriculum but setting curriculum goals.

Pay for Performance was a program in the state of Georgia, that financially rewarded schools for setting agreed upon and challenging curriculum goals for schools that successfully achieved them. Table 4.41 highlights the key concepts that emerged from Viola’s experience with Pay for Performance.

Table 4.41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation in the Area of Curriculum</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sense of empowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences with strategies to help implement the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical experiences at developing school improvement goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship

Renee Candice

Renee came away feeling that she learned and incorporated different aspects of
leadership from the styles of her administrators. She was able to adapt these aspects and styles of
leadership fit her role as principal. Renee described this shift in the following:

I think what you do is attempt to adopt the things you like and believe in from different
people and incorporate it into my style. One was well I do not want to say dictatorship
but top down. One was probably a pretty good mixture of leadership styles. She knew
when to say this is how it is going to be. She had a really good feel for when to get
feedback, at what point to stop it, what point to gather more feedback, at what point to
make decisions once you got enough feedback. I worked under different styles and
learned something from all of them.

As Renee stared for a moment, she reflected further on the leadership styles of her principals that
both stood out in her recollection and affected her style of leadership currently in the following
way:

Probably the primary difference between my principals and myself was in the area of
staff development. Staff development is the area where you can really make a difference
with teachers and paraprofessionals. Staff development is the area where you can really
make a difference with teachers and paraprofessionals. Our staff meetings are not sit and
get information meetings. If I can put times and dates in writing for you, I will do that
and not waste your time with it at a staff meeting.

Renee gave an example of how her “learned style of leadership” impacts staff meetings. She
continued:

Staff meetings are a teaching time for the staff. Last Tuesday’s staff meeting was a
seminar on professional development. With my leadership team and grade level chairs,
we did a book study together. We have never done that in the past. We used a portion of
that grade level meeting to take care of some business. Then a portion of our meeting is
used to talk about our reading and work with our work-study group. I think that is really
important for me to not only be active and research and do that but to model that for them
as well. I want for them to do that with their children, the students in their classroom. I
believe my role is to be an instructional leader. If I sit and only take care of managerial
things, then that whole component is lost.
Renee vividly described what she learned from observing her principals as an assistant principal. Staff meetings were an opportunity to be proactive in that these meetings were “an opportunity for the staff to learn, share, and keep abreast about the latest research that impacts learning.” She talked about how leadership styles impacts other capacities as a principal:

There are things we deal with that come from the top down. I mean from the superintendent. They are non-negotiable just like the No Child Left Behind legislation. That is not something we can negotiate on. It has to be done. Now is there some leeway in some of the components? Yes! Hopefully at that point we can use more of a participatory style of leadership.

Renee discussed her leadership approach related to standards and ethics and how these defined her approach from the position of the principalship. Renee shared:

My style of leadership is a mixture depending on the situation. If it is a situation where someone is blatantly doing something wrong, like a breech of the code of ethics, you do not discuss with them why did you do that or how did you feel? You gather information and move on it. That is a standard you do not have a lot of leeway on. It is a professional standard guideline you have to go by. If someone has intentionally broken one of the standards, we have responsibilities we must adhere to. If it is a Department of Children Services referral, we have responsibilities we have to adhere to. Leadership is very situational. You use a mixture of styles.

Renee talked about which principal’s style impacted her most and how she assimilated this style into her own style of leadership:

Probably the one who used a mixture of styles because I saw it more as a craft of leadership. I saw myself, as someone who worked for that person. I had a great deal of respect for how they did things. I was at the point where I would do what they asked even if sometimes I did not understand things because I had a tremendous amount of respect for how she led. I would do it and trust that it was going to work out well.

Trust was a big factor in the leadership style of the principal Renee admired. Renee was able to learn each principal’s style and put the experiences to practical use. Table 4.42 displays the key concepts that emerged from Renee’s perspective on her leadership style vs. her principal’s leadership style.
Table 4.42

Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship

Key Concepts

Learned that staff meetings are a time for professional growth

Learned the importance of documentation

Learned how to incorporate other styles of leadership into her own style of leadership

Viola Sands

Viola had an opportunity to work under two principals as an assistant principal. It was near the end of her tenure with the second principal that she took inventory of the two leadership styles and reflected on her own style. She said, “When I was the assistant principal at the second school for two years, I compared the leadership styles of the two principals I worked under, the two types of schools, and looked at my own style, and how it had changed.” Viola stared at the tape recorder and reflected on how these experiences impacted her style of leadership. She shared:

On self-assessment my approach to leadership looks more like the first principal than the second principal but I did have to come into this school as a new principal and build up the level of trust. I had to encourage the natural leaders and build some skills among some people who were not natural leaders. So as trust builds, so does productivity because the trust is high. People are willing and ready because I have a high trust in people. I can turn over responsibilities and the product I get is good. It was better than I imagined.

Viola felt very good about the mentoring she had regarding the development of her leadership style and the experiences she had from her first principal. To Viola, trust was a “key factor” in
empowering people. Viola smiled as she provided a concrete example that illustrated how trust works. She explained:

A concrete example is our local school goal. Although we made progress towards our goals, we did not hit a lot of our benchmarks. The next year I got better at aligning the budget, staff development and other support pieces. I aligned the personnel to help us make a better stride towards achieving our goals. Also, the level of trust was much higher. So people were willing to go out and trust some new things. So when I look at my own leadership I have to trust the people I empowered as leaders give them every tool for them to have success as leaders.

Viola talked more about the second principal’s style of leadership and its effect on the school environment and her tenure as an assistant principal. Viola elaborated:

The second was in her first year as the principal when I arrived as the assistant principal. Her style was very different than the first principal I worked under as the assistant principal. She came from the middle school setting into the elementary setting. I had fewer opportunities to be creative and make a difference. There were issues of trust in that school because she was still building trust with the teachers. Therefore the trust factor was not there for the assistant principals either. She was in the process of developing her leadership style. The first principal was better at empowering people. I watched the first principal’s progress at the school and the progress of the students. They were doing exciting things and the children were achieving at high levels. The parents and teachers perceptions were real high. That is the leadership style I modeled.

When asked about her current staff’s perception on her leadership style, Viola tightened her lips together, and she slowly responded:

I guess I am not sure if my style is truly democratic. It is more like a shared governance style. I would not call my school a truly democratic place. I think I have a shared governance type school. But that is a piece that has to evolve with time. I feel now if you ask my teachers do they feel that they have an influence, do they feel apart of the decision making, they would say yes. If you asked them two years ago, they would tell you no, it because they really did not know me yet. They did not know what my style looked like. When you try to find out what a person really thinks, you trust that there will be some positive action to come out of it. We also talk about that fair means not always getting what I want. What is fair means we all get what we need. That is a place that we all need to grow. I am not sure that is the truly democratic way of doing things. We do engage in a lot of communication among ourselves. I really try to be fair about things and at least let people know that their ideas are heard and how I came to decisions.
Viola continued to elaborate further on leadership styles from her current position as principal of a school.

Those decisions that people are involved in here have to do with long-range improvement, student achievement, and the things that are good for parents. I really do not involve people in everything like how many light bulbs or toilet papers to buy. In some schools, they share everything. I do not look at it that way. I look at what is good for kids and what in the long run is good for our school to succeed. That is how I base those decisions.

Viola could see herself initially starting out as the second principal she worked for as an assistant principal. They were both new and in the early stages of developing trust and learning how to empower their peers. However, at the end of Viola’s second year as the principal of a school, she began to see herself start to emerge as the first principal she worked for as an assistant principal. The trust building among her faculty and staff was growing, and Viola, believed she was empowering teachers to become a part of the decision making process. Viola felt more comfortable moving toward the leadership model of shared governance. Viola’s mentoring experiences from the two principals she worked for as an assistant principal helped her to grow as a leader in her current position as the principal.

Glanz and Neville (1997) believed that a collegial relationship between the faculty, staff, and administrators was essential for the growth and development of students, teachers, supervisors, and principals. In collegial relationships, there is a sharing of ideas by which learning flourishes. Each faculty member has the intelligence and competence to contribute ideas that stimulate growth and achievement among the students. In this study, Renee and Viola realized from their mentoring experiences how important it was to build trust, to empower their coworkers, and to use the talents of all members of the school community to help their schools achieve their goals. Table 4.43 exhibits the key concepts that emerged from Viola’s experiences.
Table 4.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applying Leadership Styles to the Principalship</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learned how to empower people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned how to build trust among the staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defining Roles as an Assistant Principal

**Renee Candice**

Renee viewed her role as an assistant principal as that of placing the concerns of the students first. A good relationship between parents and students was essential toward enhancing student achievement and overall development. Renee shared:

As an assistant principal, I worked with the third, fourth, and fifth grade. I saw my role as working with students and doing anything that would help improve learning for those students. Discipline, head lice, intervening with mom, helping with the curriculum, whatever it was that the students had a need for. That is how I saw my role.

Renee smiled and continued as she remembered a particular experience she had supporting students.

Using the example of the bus discipline, I was the contact person. I was in the classroom, I knew the children. I worked with their parents and because of that relationship and rapport I had with them, I was probably an effective person in dealing with those things. I think the assistant principal’s role is whatever it takes to help that child succeed.

Renee described her approach with parents as a team approach with a goal of helping the students to succeed at school. Then she talked about her role and relationship with the principal at the school.
I have been very fortunate with the principals I worked for as an assistant principal. The last principal I worked with, I felt her and I were a WWF team. We were a wrestling tag team. Truly if one of us was involved in something else, the other stepped in to assist. If there was something on paper that the principal should have dealt with and she was not available, I stepped right in and handled it. It also worked visa versa. If I was not there and a discipline problem came up and it was my grade level, or a parent called, or someone needed something in curriculum, she stepped right in and took care of it. You have to work as a team or there are dividing lines that can hurt the school when you are in the position of assistant principal or the principalship.

Renee felt that her primary obligation was to support the principal and the principal’s mission for the school. Teamwork is vital between the assistant principal and the principal. Table 4.44 displays the concepts that emerged during the interviews with Renee.

Table 4.44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saw her role working with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to work as a team with the principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viola Sands

Viola talked about her role defining experiences under two different principals. She felt better about the experience learning under the first principal than she did with the second principal. However, Viola was able to learn and to grow under both situations. She described the experiences in the following way:

I worked for two different principals including one particular principal for two years just prior to becoming a principal. When I contrast the two experiences, the first experience was not only a positive one but also quite a growing experience. I identified with teachers for the needs they had first at school. We worked very much on student development. The principal was opened to this. We worked on task together and went forth and made changes. In the school many teachers were treated as leaders so it was easy to be the leader of leaders in that situation. In the second school the principal was new and her style was rigid. So in that school I functioned more as a manager than a leader. I was not there long enough to change that role. When you look at the two
different situations, I could say yes to the first situation because of the leadership of the school and the readiness of teachers and community. We did a great deal. In the second school, the teachers were not at the same readiness level. The principal was brand new and just trying to figure out what she was doing. Her style was different than mine.

Viola gave examples of some of the duties she performed as an assistant principal while working for the first principal.

We were a kindergarten through fifth grade school, so I worked with curriculum for the primary grades in many other aspects such as student support teams, testing, implementing the curriculum, working with teachers and leadership teams. Other years I worked with grades 3-5 and special education. For example, in the area of curriculum, if I had the primary grades, kindergarten through second grade, I needed to be the expert on language arts for the entire school. So it was my responsibility to be that leader in the school in that area. The area of curriculum is one of my strengths as a principal today.

Viola liked the readiness level of the staff at the first school. The teamwork with the principal and the empowering experience allowed her to grow professionally from the experience. In the second experience, she just did what the principal told her to do, and she did not have as many opportunities to be creative. Table 4.45 displays Viola’s reflections about her attempts to define her role as an assistant principal.

Table 4.45

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defining Roles as an Assistant Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned how to treat teachers as leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned how to manage under a rigid leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of trust within the mentoring relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resolving Issues Between the Assistant Principal and the Principal

Renee Candice

When asked to reflect on how she resolved issues with her principal while she was an assistant principal, Renee’s eyes brightened, she had a broad grin on her face, leaned forward with laughter, and she responded:

I never had any of those! It is scary to do that but I am not one who makes knee jerk decisions. Just like in anything in life, you try to gather as much information as possible at the time and try to put as many pieces of the puzzle together that you can and make the best darn decision that you can based on what you know. Sometimes later you learn more information and you think oh, if I had known that I would have…. But you have to be someone who will step back and objectively look things and go forth and be confident in your decision.

Did Renee and her principal “agree to disagree” and to work out an understanding that would help further the mission of the school? Healthy discourse can be a good thing, creating an opportunity for learning and defining the parameters of the mentoring relationship between the assistant principal and principal. Renee elaborated:

What we did with a problem or with a vision of where you are going with something was defined by our relationship as principal and assistant principal. We had enough of a professional relationship where we could talk and share why we had ideas. The bottom line, I was there to support her mission. I don’t mean her mission, I mean the mission of the school. Sometimes that did mean according to her interpretation. What you do behind close doors is talk with her about it. I would say this is what I feel, this is why I believe it, and this is the data I have to support what I am saying. Sometimes we would laugh and say you know what we are agreeing to disagree but we are going to go out there and get it done. When that door opened, I supported her no matter what! That is my role. It is just like my philosophy working for the school system. If I do not believe in the mission and vision they are trying to accomplish, I should not work for them. My role is to help further those goals.

This dialogue between Renee and her principal illustrated the mentoring process, which provided them an opportunity to refine their concepts and goals regarding the mission set forth for the school. Bush and Coleman (1995) examined mentoring, and their findings indicated mentoring provided the opportunities to work out ideas, further develop concepts, and reduce isolation.
Table 4.46 exhibits the key concepts that emerged about Renee’s reflections on how she resolved issues between the principal and herself.

Table 4.46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolving Issues between the Assistant Principal and the Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to support the principal’s and the school’s mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with the principal as a team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viola Sands

Viola talked about the importance of good communications between the principal and assistant principal in order to create a conducive environment where children can grow and learn.

She explained that relationship in the following way:

The relationship between a principal and assistant principal has to be one in which you always share things. If I have a parent that calls me I immediately need to share that with the principal. We need to be aligned and have great communications. We need to communicate things you need to know. Not unnecessary information but we had to be clear about everything that is important to the school.

When asked about her feelings coming away from these communication sessions and if she could describe a situation where this had taken place during her mentoring experience, Viola took a deep breath and replied:

I guess there were times when I shared doubts. The only example I can think of is that it is not always about being right. Many times it is about solving a problem. Conceding so that in the long run the best happens. For lack of a better term perhaps a win-win situation. Let’s say you are absolutely stern about a policy and you decide to fight a parent or teacher on that policy. You just ride down that line because you know you are right. In the end you lost a parent and probably lost that child or that teacher. Another example that is closer to home is with my brother’s child. The child has a particular challenge. It took some time for my brother to understand that the school’s diagnosis was correct and that they had his child’s best interest. The school worked with him until he understood and in the process they were able to do what’s best for the child. My principal’s lesson while I was an assistant principal was that you learn to give so in the
end you do not loose that child. We have this child for a short time but we are responsible for the child’s long-term growth. It was about teaching me to be very farsighted which allowed me not to get caught u in the details. You look at the big picture and see how it affects all of us.

Viola thought for a while, and she elaborated further about the relationships she had with two principals.

One principal was high on relationships with people. The things she chose to confront everyone knew were most important. The second principal confronted almost everything. So there was an edgy feeling that people had to work with. They were not sure if they were doing this or that right. The second principal was very successful but I want to be like the first principal who was a high relationship principal with the parents and the kids. I do want people to be tied into the decisions that we make. It is closer to my belief system. I learned from the second principal about organization, how to have clear communication, being very detailed about things and documentation. Those were her strengths. She was highly productive. Those were the things I took from that experience.

Viola was able to learn valuable skills from her experience with both principals. She was able to come away from both principals with a feeling of how to balance decision making, tie people into the decision making process, when it is was important to follow up on the execution and results of the decision. Table 4.47 highlights these concepts that emerged from Viola’s experiences.

Table 4.47

| Resolving Issues between the Assistant Principal and the Principal |
|-----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Key Concepts    |
| Shared doubts with the principals |                  |
| Learned how to resolve issues with parents |                  |
| Learned which issues to confront |                  |
| Learned to work as a team with the principal |                  |
Preparedness to Assume the Principalship

Renee Candice

Renee appeared to be the type of person who was able to visualize her goal to assess her strengths and weaknesses, and to build the structure needed to assist her in obtaining her goals.

Renee talked about her readiness to apply for the position of principal in the following:

I do not think I had any doubts that I could become a principal. I was very frank in recognition to myself when I was ready or not ready. I could stand back and objectively say I know that I need more experience and please help me get that.

Renee was confident in her readiness to become a principal, and she explained what the phrase “please help me get that” meant to her.

Who can I go to and learn about such and such? It was never in my mind the thought that I could not do it. It was here is what the picture needs to look like in the end. I have the characteristics and I feel good in my knowledge about that or I need to learn more about this. Where can I go to find that?

Renee explained her thoughts as she approached her principal about her career aspirations pertaining to the principalship, and she shared:

About two years ago, I felt that my experiences and my vision of when to take over a school finally meshed. That is when I felt that I was ready. I have the experiences that I need. Am I going to continue to learn? Yes! You have pieces and components of your vision that all come together. So I was strongly encouraged by my principal!

It was obvious that Renee built the structure she needed to get to the point that she felt confident to assume the principalship. Renee was encouraged to apply for the principalship by her principal. Her principal recognized that Renee was ready for the challenge. Table 4.48 shows the key concepts that emerged related to Renee being prepared to assume a position as a principal.
Table 4.48

Preparedness to Assume the Principalship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals and experiences came together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No doubts about becoming a principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viola Sands

Viola took a somewhat chronological look at the experiences that led to her decision to apply for the principalship.

Some people know at an early age what they want to be when they grow up. I was not like that. I ebb and flowed with where my experiences went. I had a supportive family and my mother probably could have told you I would be a principal. I am not sure I was ready to hear her telling me that. When it came to my first teaching job, I was really considering going into business. I got the teaching job and I loved it from the minute I started. The same thing happened to me with the assistant principal’s role. I can not say I lacked confidence or was not a goal setter, I was very much a goal setter. When my principal came to me and said I want you to be an assistant principal, it was the right time. It was a natural transition for me but it was not something I needed to overtly strive for.

Viola talked about the transition into the position of principal while supervising people who were once her peers.

I was an assistant principal at the same school I was teaching at. It was a very smooth transition for me. A bigger problem with transition was the decision to leave that school and become an assistant principal at another school. That was the time I overtly started to say ok, maybe I would like to be a principal. I needed a different experience with a different size school and population. That was a bigger conscience decision on my part. Moving from teacher to assistant principal at the same school was not as much of a challenge as moving to another school as an assistant principal.

Viola shared her thoughts as she began to entertain the idea of applying for the position of principal.
When I was the assistant principal at the second school for two years I compared the leadership styles of the two principals I worked under, the two types of schools, and looked at my own style and how it had changed. In the second year at the second school, I submitted an application to the county to become a principal. You may have it in the back of your mind and you might not be ready to go there, but as soon as you put it in writing, then you are saying, this is what I am ready for. So those were the times that I had doubts or questions. You stay in a position for a while and get comfortable in that position. I do not mean in a stagnant way, but your peers see you as a go to person. You are someone who knows what types of resources are needed or a leader in your field.

Viola explains how she was at a “readiness state” to give back and to help others by taking on the responsibility of the principalship.

By the time I was ready to become a principal, I was running the assistant principal’s mentoring program. I was also in a leadership program. I was comfortable that I could give back. That was when I pushed myself to leave school and be fully responsible for the decisions I make. I became a principal very quickly after I sent that letter of eligibility to the county office.

Viola felt that her principal had been encouraging and supportive while she was an assistant principal. It was important to develop a good and open relationship between the principal and the assistant principal. The principal’s support is a vital factor if one aspires to become a principal. Viola explained that relationship this way:

My first principal and I had a high trust level. I taught with her for five years. She had empowered me to take on leadership roles without titles. I was not interested in titles. So we had a trust level that was important. The second principal was extremely supportive. She really felt my time with her would be short. She encouraged me to apply for the position of the principalship. I would never apply for a principal position without talking it over with her. The support of your principal is essential to becoming a principal.

Daresh (2001) suggested that assistant principals would do well to find a good mentor (experienced principal) to support them. Viola’s experience with her principal illustrates Daresh’s suggestion. Table 4.49 reflects the key concepts of Viola’s chronological look at the experiences, which led to her decision to apply for the principalship.
Table 4.49

Preparedness to Assume the Principalship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged by the principal to apply for the principalship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared to assume the responsibilities of the principalship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal

All fantasies experience a touch of reality. Looking at the principalship from the position of the assistant principal is a different perspective from actually sitting in the position of the principalship. The newly tenured principals were asked to reflect on their perspectives about what the position of the principalship would be like while they were assistant principals versus the reality they were experiencing in the position of the principalship.

Renee Candice

Renee had only been in the position of the principal for about two months when this study began. She seemed enthusiastic about her mentoring preparation under her principals. So far, Renee had not come on any job expectations or challenges that she was not well prepared to handle. Renee talked about the biggest challenge she had learned under her principal while she was an assistant principal. She shared:

One of the biggest challenges was not to let oneself get caught up and completely eloped in management. It could happen very easily. You have to make sure you structure your time so that you take care of leadership and other things. Renee’s earlier discussions seem to indicate that she was well prepared because of her mentoring experiences. However, was this recent response a well-placed warning from her principal about the stressors of the job to come? Was it anticipation on Renee’s behalf? Or have signs of fatigue already developed in Renee’s new tenure in the principalship? When asked
about the reality of the principalship versus what her principal said about handling management,

Renee leaned back in her chair, and she replied candidly:

You want an honest answer? You work a lot until 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. There are long hours. There are not 40-hours of work in a week or anything nearly resembling that. This is why you really need to be passionate about not only education but also about leadership and the school programs because if you are not it will wear you out. In the role of a principal, you handle this many problems during a day. That is when I talked to colleagues about it. I had no idea you handled this many problems during the day. You cannot let dealing with those problems take your focus off your agenda. There are many days you come in with a to-do list, tasks that need to be taken care of, and you never touch one. Then you realize what is important and take priority over other things you intended to do. Helping a child is more important than checking something off on a to-do list. However, those things on the to-do list still have to be done. You still have deadlines. You have to prioritize things. That can change moment to moment in a school.

Renee paused for a moment and continued about structuring the end of the workweek and the preparation for the upcoming week. Renee explained:

I try to do structure my times on Fridays to not set a meeting on a Friday. I try not to do parent or teacher conferences or anything like that so that I can get into classrooms that I need to visit. I have time to tie up correspondence and make phone calls. I can plan for the next week. It does not always happen quite that way. However, that is my goal. I think it is hard to start new projects on a Friday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. Maybe I set things out so that Monday morning I can get a fresh start over the weekend. I can get an idea what I need to shake around in my brain. I know what I need to be thinking about. During our last staff meeting, I did the PowerPoint for it about a month ago. I can’t tell you how many times I wanted to go back and change things or include things. You do not ever turn it off mentally.

The stressors of the daily grind of the job had shown some affects on our newly tenured principal, Renee Candice. As a relief or search for guidance, she remembered the advice of her principal about handling the stressors of the job. The principal advised her not to get caught up and completely “eloped in management.” That would be one of her biggest challenges as a principal. Time management would be a key tool to handle this challenge. Renee also asked her colleagues for advice about how to handle the stressors of the principalship. Table 4.50 displays the key concepts that emerged from Renee’s discussion.
Table 4.50

Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal

Key Concepts

Must prioritize the activity of the principalship

Must be passionate about the job or it will wear you out

Viola Sands

Viola reflected on her mentoring experiences she had received as an assistant principal and her experiences in the principalship at the beginning of her third year. She thought about the “accountability of each decision” made in the principalship and the effect these decisions had on many situations and people. Her perspective about this responsibility was different looking at it from the assistant principal position and now in the principalship. According to Viola, “results of a decision good or bad reflects back on the principal.” Viola looked up, leaned toward me, and talked about this in the following way:

When you talk about being ultimately accountable as the principal, we are ultimately accountable. That was different from being an assistant principal. That was the biggest lesson and the first lesson that I learned when I assumed the position of the principalship. Even though you may get advice from other people, the reality is that the decisions you made for your teachers, students, and community had a profound affect. When things go well, it is about your school and when things do not go well, you are responsible for everything that happens. The buck truly stops here. The understanding that everything rises and falls on the decisions you made and the quality of the decisions that you made is the difference that I see between being an assistant principal and a principal. That is a big difference.

Viola paused for a moment and used her hands to describe the range of the information she encounters as a principal compared to when she was an assistant principal.

The scope of information is much larger at the principal’s level than at the principal level. In a large school, jobs are divided among the assistant principals. When you are a principal, you are responsible for all jobs. You must have an understanding not to micromanage but to make sure your decisions tie the parts together.
Accountability for her decisions and its effect on others was Viola’s view of reality of the principalship. Viola sought counsel from her associates and was told to “be careful not to over manage or micromanage.” Table 4.51 displays the key concepts that emerged from Viola’s discussion.

Table 4.51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reality of Being an Assistant Principal vs. Being the Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Concepts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accountability of the principalship was a big lesson to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scope of information is much larger at the principal’s level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross Case Analysis

The purpose of the cross case analysis is to further develop meaning from the key concepts and to portray the perspectives of the principals about the mentoring they received as assistant principals from their principals. The common themes derived from the data are compared, reviewed for disparities, and displayed in this section. These major themes are presented in Table 4.52.

Table 4.52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Themes</th>
<th>Common Themes</th>
<th>Common Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience</td>
<td>Practical experiences from the mentoring experience were important to the assistant principals when they assumed the principalship</td>
<td>A sense of trust emerged in the mentoring relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Theme One: A Sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience.**

Both participants in this study talked about the importance of their mentoring experience they received from their principals while they were assistant principals. They felt as though their principals encouraged them and gave them a sense of empowerment to strive toward a career in administration. They attributed their present status as a principal to the foresight and career development their principals laid out for them both personally and professionally through mentoring. Renee Candice talked about how well prepared she felt when she took the job as principal and the feeling of confidence she had throughout her transition from the position of assistant principal to principal. Renee said:

I was more surprised that on July 1\textsuperscript{st} when I took the job here as principal of this school that I had been more prepared than I thought I would be. Thus far, there has not been anything that I was totally confused about.

Renee attributed this sense of empowerment to the mentoring experiences she received from her principals. Renee recalled from the beginning how her principal would take time to explain things to her. This principal explained how the budget worked for her grade level, while Renee was a grade level chairperson, and the principal continually encouraged Renee look at leadership as a career option. The principal then took time to teach Renee about the management of the school’s budget. Renee said, “There was a lot of planning required learning about the budget and once I did these things, that was the point the principal started to encourage me to go into leadership.”

Once in the position of assistant principal, the mentoring experiences continued to give Renee a sense of empowerment to not only do the job but also to direct her in the manner to accomplish her work and long-term goals. Renee said, “when she was hired as an assistant principal, the principal I worked under gave me the responsibilities and left the judgment up to
me.” Renee felt that she and her principal had a good working relationship. Renee recalled as an assistant principal that she was not only given the responsibility of the job but the authority. Renee said, “When I was hired as an assistant principal, the principal I worked under gave me the responsibilities and left the judgment up to me.” This endorsement of confidence in Renee’s ability to adequately assess a situation and administer the proper solution was a great boost to her self-confidence and a vote of confidence in her judgment.

Viola appreciated the experiences she received under her principal while she was an assistant principal. She said, “I had tremendous opportunities as an assistant principal. I worked under two different principals that gave me a myriad of experiences.” Viola was happy as a classroom teacher, and she did not seek a career in administration. Viola’s principal was the one who suggested administration as a career path and encouraged her to think about becoming an assistant principal. Viola laughed as she said, “my principal kind of grabbed me by the arm and said, ‘okay, this is what you are going to do!’” The principal not only urged her to go into administration but she also created a nurturing environment to enhance Viola’s professional development. Viola recalled,

My principal not only encouraged me to become an assistant principal but also wanted me to stay at the same school. It was more of opportunity and doors opened than a driven desire to be an administrator. I did not necessary seek out the position of the principalship but I was able to achieve it at a pace that was good for me. While as an assistant principal, Viola came up with an innovative idea to facilitate the curriculum direction of the school. The principal empowered Viola to not only seize the initiative but also supported her with material and people. This principal not only gave Viola the responsibility, but the principal also gave her the authority to accomplish what needed to be done. Viola recalled that her principal said, “We are going to make this happen for you. This is
your project to push forward with this group of people. What can we do to support you?” The principal did not hesitate to provide the vital resources to make Viola’s idea a reality.

In retrospect, Viola looked back at that project from the position of the principalship. The program not only enhanced her self-confidence as an assistant principal but also prepared her as an instructional leader for her current school. Viola said, “When I look at something that really prepared me for the principalship as an assistant principal, that was it.” Viola felt that it was important for a principal of a school to be the instructional leader. In the era of No Child Left behind, it was important for her to understand the curriculum and how to provide the vital resources for her teachers to implement the curriculum.

When it was time to consider stepping forward and becoming a principal, Viola appreciated the support of her principal as she pondered her decision. She recalled:

My first principal and I had a high trust level that was important. She was extremely supportive. She encouraged me to apply for the position of the principalship. I would never apply for a principal position without talking it over with her. The support of your principal is essential to becoming a principal.

Viola knew that the mentoring experience was important not only to her career but it also meant a “lot personally” to her. Out of their mentoring relationship, both Viola and her principal showed openness to new ideas and trust where they could talk and share ideas and thoughts.

**Theme Two: Practical experiences from the mentoring experiences were important to the assistant principals when they assumed the principalship.**

Renee felt good about the mentoring she received as an assistant principal from her principal. Renee felt that the skills she learned were critical for her transition into the principalship. Renee said:

I have been very fortunate learning how to do things as an assistant principal. I had experience as an assistant principal in hiring, budget, curriculum, mapping, revamping, special education, and staff development.
As a result of this mentoring experience, Renee felt in control when she transitioned into the principalship a few months ago. Renee recalled times as an assistant principal when she and the principal would spend “quality mentoring moments” together reviewing critical skills that were pertinent to Renee’s career progression. She talked about her mentoring experiences pertaining to budgetary matters.

The principal I worked under as an assistant principal worked very closely with me with every component of the budget. She would sit down with those big green print outs and say, this is what the budget looks like. It does not mean a lot to you but I want you to get exposure. We did basic things. Some funds are restricted. You cannot do anything with the money except what the government says you can do with it. There were some accounts where we had a little more flexibility. We can do certain things and move these accounts. We looked at how to set up a school wide budget and what it needed to look like in the curriculum and professional areas I was responsible for as an assistant principal. She gave me the allotment and I planned how we were going to use that.

This budget training was good for Renee because prior to this experience, the principal she worked for had very little knowledge about budgetary matters. Renee had to find a way to fill this lapse in her training. Therefore, she had to be resourceful and find a way to learn. She recalled the experience:

One principal I worked for while I was an assistant principal did not feel very comfortable with the budget. She left it up to the bookkeeper. She would say that you have this much money to spend. I would work more with the bookkeeper than I worked with the principal on budget matters.

In this mentoring situation, Renee was able to find a resource to learn about budget matters. Renee talked about another practical skill she learned as an assistant principal. At the present, she was applying this lesson to a situation as the principal of her own school.

Documentation was a very important skill for her to learn and it proved to be very useful. She recalled:

I think right now about a situation I am dealing with in which I learned to keep very careful documentation and know every step of the process along the way. Right now I am thinking of a personnel issue. When there is a problem with it, what do you do? You
cannot go in and say you are fired and you are out of here! So you have to know along the way what you need to do to document.

Renee felt good about not only her documentation skills in this situation but also her intervention skills as she provided an option for the individual to use the proper tools to be successful and to turn the situation into a positive one.

Renee felt good about the experiences her principal provided for her, and she said:

She put me in roles to experience the good, bad, and the ugly. I wanted to be the person responsible for resolving these situations. My goal was never to have a need to go to the principal for a resolution.

Renee thought that these experiences provided her on the job rehearsal for the principalship. If she became a principal, “the buck would stop” at her desk. Despite these practical experiences that Renee labeled as the “good, bad, and ugly” Renee did not see “any way” that these mentoring experiences could actually prepare a person for some of the realities of the principalship. Renee asserted, “the daily grind was something you always have to find a way to cope with.” Although these mentoring experiences provided Renee good exposure to the work of the principalship, she was absolute in her perspective that there are some things you do not realize until you are in the position of the principalship. Renee recalled:

One of the biggest challenges was not to let oneself to get caught up and completely eloped in management. It could happen very easily. You have to make sure you structure your time so that you take care of leadership and other things. You really have to be passionate about not only education but also about leadership and the school programs because if you are not it will wear you out. In the role of a principal, you handle this many problems during a day. That is when I talked to colleagues and had no idea about handling this many problems during the day. You cannot let dealing with those problems take your focus off your agenda. There are many days you come in with a to-do list, task that need to be taken care of, and you never touch one. Then you realize what is important and takes priority over other things you intended to do. You never turn it off mentally.
Renee continues to try to find that balance between doing the job and not becoming so “eloped in management” that she cannot see the big picture. Her mentoring experiences gave her “a good glimpse” of the principalship, but “some things can not prepare” a person for “all of the realities” a principal will face.

Viola Sands believed that she had tremendous opportunities and many good experiences while learning in the position of the assistant principal. She was aware about her experiences in the area of curriculum. She felt that it was important for an administrator to be the “instructional leader” of the school. In Viola’s words:

The principalship is a leadership position and you are the instructional leader. So when I became a principal, because of my experiences with curriculum as an additional duty while in the position of the assistant principal, I was able to understand that aspect of an instructional leader.

Viola’s mentoring experiences in the area of curriculum not only empowered her but also gave her practical experiences. Viola said, “When I look at something that really prepared me for the principalship as an assistant principal, the experiences in curriculum was it.” Viola learned a great deal about curriculum from her experiences while implementing a program called Pay for Performance, a state program that rewarded schools for achieving pre-determined curriculum goals. Viola initially suggested the idea of Pay for Performance to her principal and her principal, “empowered” her to go forth with the program.

Another lesson Viola learned while in the assistant principalship was in trust building among administrators and teachers. She talked about the trust building and ability to empower others that she learned from her principal, and how she had to build trust within her school once she became a principal. Viola explained:

On self-assessment, my approach to leadership looks more like my first principal. I had to come into this school as a new principal and build up trust level. My first principal was good at empowering people. I watched her progress at the school and the progress of the
students. They were doing exciting things and the children were achieving at high levels. The second principal I worked for as an assistant principal was in her first year. Her style was very different than my first principal I worked for as an assistant principal. There were issues of trust in that school because she was still building trust with the teachers. Therefore she was in the process of developing her leadership style.

Viola talked about how she learned from the leadership styles modeled by the two principals she served as an assistant principal and how to encourage leadership among faculty. Viola learned valuable lessons about promoting and sharing leadership, and she shared:

I had to encourage the natural leaders within my school and build some skills among some people who were not natural leaders. So as trust builds, so does productivity because the trust is high. People are willing and ready because I have a high trust in people. The next year I got better at aligning the budget, staff development, and other support pieces. I aligned the personnel to help us make a better stride towards achieving our goals. So people were willing to go out and trust some new things. I could turn over responsibilities and the product I got was good. I was better than I imagined.

Viola received very little practical experience in the area of the budget. She said, “The budget process was the area in which I was least versed as an assistant principal and still least versed in as a principal. I did not do a whole lot with the budget as an assistant principal.” When she received her assignment as a new principal, her principal took the time to teach her about the budget process. Viola talked about her first years as a principal as she worked with the budget.

In my first year, I followed the budget of the principal who preceded me. In my second year, I was able to adjust a little more. It was one of those pieces I did not comfortably prepare for.

Viola’s ingenuity helped her to cope with budgetary matters once she assumed the principalship. After the first year, she felt better about venturing out further with the school’s budget.

Despite her good feeling about her mentoring experiences as an assistant principal, Viola still did not realize the gravity of the principal’s position until she assumed the position. Viola said:

Despite the myriad of experiences I had as an assistant principal, I do not know that there is truly anything that prepares you for what the principalship looks like. There are some aspects of the job a principal I felt very well prepared for and there are some aspects of the position that were very different from anything I experienced before. The role of an
administrator whether assistant principal or principal changes every day. So while I was well prepared, most situations were new.

Viola thought that the “spontaneity of the job” and the “high frequency of issues” that needed her attention were more than she expected. She continued:

It depends very much on your ability to make good judgment calls, your ability to listen and synthesize and think in a farsighted way. Things that were very different were the high prevalence of personnel issues, needs for my staff, job vacancies, sometimes jobs changed, the need to readjust allotment plans to suit the number of students, and students’ needs that are certainly a departure from the assistant principal role. When things go well it is all about the school, but when things go wrong, as the principal you are responsible. Even though you may get advice from other people, the reality is that the decisions you made for your teachers, students, and community had a profound affect. The understanding that everything rises and falls on the decisions you made and the quality of the decisions that you made is the difference that I see between being an assistant principal and a principal.

The enormity and spontaneity of the job was quite overwhelming to Viola. Despite her mentoring and preparation, she did not feel anything could prepare her for this aspect of the principalship. The daily grind was challenging.

**Theme Three: A sense of trust emerged in the mentoring relationship.**

Renee felt that her primary obligation as an assistant principal was to support the principal and the principal’s mission for the school to succeed. Moreover, Renee believed and that teamwork and communication were vital between the assistant principal and the principal. She stated:

The last principal I worked with, I felt her and I were a WWF team. We were a wrestling tag team. Truly, if one of us was involved in something else, the other stepped in to assist. If there was something on paper that the principal should have dealt with and she was not available, I stepped right in and handled it. It also worked visa versa. If I was not there and a discipline problem came up and it was my grade level, or a parent called, or someone needed something in curriculum, she stepped right in and took care of it. You have to work as a team or there are dividing lines that can hurt the school when you are in the position of assistant principal or the principalship.
Trust had developed as an outgrowth from their work experiences. As a result, Renee was able to obtain valuable exposure handling the responsibilities for not only herself but also for her principal. Renee believed her principal had complete confidence in her judgment and ability to assess any situation that might arise. Renee shared:

My principal and I had a working relationship enough to know that I would not knee jerk and make a decision and do things that were not appropriate. She also knew that I am the type of person if I really do not know and need to talk things through and get feedback and suggestions, I am going to do just that.

The healthy discourse and trust between Renee and her principal created an opportunity for Renee to learn and to define the parameters of their mentoring relationship. In Renee’s words:

What my principal and I did with a problem or with a vision of where we were going with something was defined by our relationship as principal and assistant principal. We had enough of a professional relationship where we could talk and share why we had ideas. The bottom line, I was there to support her mission. I mean the mission of the school. Sometimes that did mean according to her interpretation. What you do behind close doors is talk with her about it. I would say this is what I feel, this is why I believe it, and this is the data I have to support what I am saying. Sometimes we would laugh and say you know what we are agreeing to disagree but we are going to go out there and get it done. When that door opened, I supported her no matter what! I gained a lot of good exposure.

Similarly, Viola was pleased with the bond that grew out of the mentoring relationship she had experienced with her first principal while she was an assistant principal. While the principal empowered her, there was a sense of confidence to know that her principal supported her. Viola said, “My principal was there with a safety net.”

Viola also learned from her how to build trust among people and to use trust to empower people to succeed. To her, trust was a key factor in empowering people. Viola described her mentoring experience about trust building in the following way:

On self-assessment my approach to leadership looks like my first principal. I had to come into this school as a new principal and build up the trust level. I had to encourage the natural leaders and build some skills among some people who were not natural
leaders. So as trust builds, so does productivity because the trust is high. I can turn over responsibilities and the productivity I got was good.

Viola related stark contrasts when she talked about the situation under her second principal. Viola learned what it was like to be in a situation when people are not empowered by building trust among colleagues. Viola said, “In the second school, the principal was new and her style was rigid, so in that school I functioned more as a manager than a leader.” Viola related that she was able to learn from the two very different experiences; moreover, these lessons proved to be helpful to her when she assumed the position of principal.

Viola found that communication is important in a mentoring relationship between the principal and assistant principal and that open communication helped to build trust and foster bonding. Renee described this relationship in the following way:

The relationship between a principal and assistant principal has to be one in which you always share things. It is not about always being right. Many times it is about solving problems. Conceding so that in the long run the best happens. For lack of a better term perhaps a win-win situation. I guess there were times when I shared doubts. There were times when I had a parent call me and I immediately felt a need to share that with my principal. We needed to be aligned and have great communications. We needed to communicate things you need to know. Not unnecessary information but we had to be clear about everything that is important to the school.

To Viola, it was important to develop open relationships between her, the principal, and faculty. Open relationships according to Viola, encourages a sense of empowerment among people as they strive toward achieving school-wide goals.

This chapter looked at the perspectives of new principals about the mentoring they received from their former principals as they talked about the kinds of support the principals provided to them. A cross case analysis of the data was used to further outline the findings. The categories that emerged in the data were organized to provide information for further analysis.
From these categories, the data were further analyzed and delineated into common themes that emerged. The common themes included:

1. A sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience

2. Practical experiences from the mentoring experience were important to the assistant principals when they assumed the principalship.

3. A sense of trust emerged from the mentoring relationship.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspective of new principals about the mentoring they received from their principals. The study specifically sought to examine the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants in this study and what the participants believed they received from the mentoring experiences that prepared them for the principalship. The following research questions provided the framework for this study:

1. What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals for the preparation of the job as principal?
2. Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship?
3. What assistance was most helpful?

This chapter presents an overview of the research design, a summary of the study, and the major findings. The researcher also presents recommendations for further research.

Using the symbolic interactionism framework, the researcher looked at two new principals’ perspectives about the mentoring they received from their former principals and looked at the impact this assistance had on their work as a new principal. Since the purpose of this study was to understand these individual perspectives and the value about the assistance they received from their principal, symbolic interactionism was chosen as the framework to clarify their stories and any similarities between them. Blumer (1969) asserted that symbolic interactionism allows the researcher to “see meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of the people as they interact” (p. 5). Symbolic
interactionism was the appropriate theoretical framework to get an up close understanding of the data collected.

**Previous Studies**

There are studies that look at different aspects of the principalship such as, the pressures and the stresses of the position and the shortage of principal candidates. However, these studies did not take an in-depth look at the perspectives of new principals about the preparation they received from their former principals before assuming the position of the principalship.

At the top of the organization chart within each school is the principal. Griffith (1999) summarized that the principal sets clear achievement goals while providing direction for the day-to-day management of the educational activities within the school while maintaining the school environment, encouraging the teaching of the basic curriculum, monitoring academic achievement, and developing good community relations. Fenwick and Pierce (2001) recognized the dwindling number of applicants for the position of principal. They noted that principals were overworked, tangled in bureaucratic red tape, and faced problems with parents and students.

Kerrins (2001) indicated, “Principals are leaving their jobs at younger ages, principals report that high stress, time demands of the job, broadening requirements of the job far exceed salaries and new state accountability legislation make retirement appealing” (p. 20). Groff (2001) recognized the enormity of the work of the principal. Personnel issues, budgets, schedules, playground issues, student discipline, and community relations, place principals under a tremendous amount of stress Groff (2001). Moreover, the era of testing accountability such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* legislation has created challenges for principals.
Murphy (1992) questioned whether administration preparation programs were relevant as qualified principals were sought after to meet the challenges associated with leading a school. This study sought to examine the perspectives of principals with less than three years experience, about the mentoring they received from their former principals before assuming the principalship.

Due to the myriad of challenges principals encounter on a day-to-day basis, the relevancy of principal mentoring is important in any attempt to produce qualified principal candidates to meet these challenges. Although this study is an outgrowth of previous studies pertaining to issues that affect the principalship, perhaps more relevant is an understanding of the mentoring that principals provide to assistant principals before they assume the principalship.

Summary of the Findings

Through the data and cross case analysis, the following common themes emerged:

- Theme 1: Sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience.
- Theme 2: Practical experiences from the mentoring experiences were important to the assistant principal when they assumed the principalship.
- Theme 3: A sense of trust emerged in the mentoring relationship.

Discussion

This section looks at the findings of the study. The findings are compared and contrasted to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Since this research was a case study of two principals’ perspective about the mentoring they received from their former principal, the findings are unique to this particular case. Any attempt by the reader to relate these findings to other demographics is not encouraged, as the intent is not to generalize across border
populations. A review of each common theme includes a discussion and its relevance to the literature.

**Theme One: A Sense of empowerment was derived from the mentoring experience.**

Both participants in this study talked about the importance of their mentoring experience they received from their principals while they were assistant principals. They felt as though their principals encouraged them and gave them a sense of empowerment to strive toward a career in administration. They attributed their present status as a principal to the foresight and career development their principals laid out for them both personally and professionally through mentoring. Renee Candice talked about how well prepared she felt when she took the job as principal and the feeling of confidence she had throughout her transition from the position of assistant principal to principal. Renee said, “I was more surprised that on July 1st when I took the job here as principal of this school that I had been more prepared than I thought I would be.”

Renee attributed this sense of empowerment to the mentoring experiences she received from her principals. Renee recalled from the beginning how her principal would take time to explain things to her. This Principal explained how the budget worked for her grade level while Renee was a grade level chairperson. The principal continually encouraged Renee to look at leadership as a career option. Renee said, “There was a lot of planning required learning about the budget and once I did these things, that was the point the principal started to encourage me to go into leadership.”

Once in the position of assistant principal, the mentoring experiences continued to give Renee a sense of empowerment to not only do the job but also to direct her in the manner to accomplish her work and long-term goals. Renee said, “when I was hired as an assistant principal, the principal I worked under gave me the responsibilities and left the judgment up to
me.” Renee felt that she and her principal had a good working relationship. Renee recalled as an assistant principal that she was not only given the responsibility of the job but the authority. Renee said, “When I was hired as an assistant principal, the principal I worked under gave me the responsibilities and left the judgment up to me.” This endorsement of confidence in Renee’s ability to adequately assess a situation and administer the proper solution was a great boost to her self-confidence and a vote of confidence in her judgment.

Viola appreciated the experiences she received under her principal while she was an assistant principal. She said, “I had tremendous opportunities as an assistant principal. I worked under two different principals that gave me a myriad of experiences.” Viola was happy as a classroom teacher, and she did not seek a career in administration on her own initiative. Viola’s principal was the one who suggested administration as a career path and encouraged her to think about becoming an assistant principal. Viola laughed as she said, “my principal kind of grabbed me by the arm and said, ‘okay, this is what you are going to do!’” The principal not only urged her to go into administration but she also created a nurturing environment to enhance her professional development. Viola recalled,

My principal not only encouraged me to become an assistant principal but also wanted me to stay at the same school. It was more of opportunity and doors opened than a driven desire to be an administrator. I did not necessary seek out the position of the principalship but I was able to achieve it at a pace that was good for me.

While as an assistant principal, Viola came up with an innovative idea to facilitate the curriculum direction of the school. The principal empowered Viola to not only seize the initiative but also supported her with material and the personnel needed to accomplish this work. This principal not only gave Viola the responsibility, but the principal also gave her the authority to accomplish the task. Viola recalled that her principal said, “We are going to make this happen for
you.” This is your project to push forward with this group of people. What can we do to support you?” The principal did not hesitate to provide the vital resources to make Viola’s idea a reality.

In retrospect, Viola looked back at that project from the position of the principalship. The program not only enhanced her self-confidence as an assistant principal but also prepared her as an instructional leader for her current school. Viola said, “When I look at something that really prepared me for the principalship as an assistant principal, that was it.” Viola felt that it was important for a principal of a school to be the instructional leader. In the era of No Child Left Behind, it was important for her to understand the curriculum and how to provide the resources for her teachers to implement the curriculum.

When it was time to consider stepping forward and becoming a principal, Viola appreciated the support of her principal as she pondered her decision. She recalled:

My first principal and I had a high trust level that was important. She was extremely supportive. She encouraged me to apply for the position of the principalship. I would never apply for a principal position without talking it over with her. The support of your principal is essential to becoming a principal.

Viola knew that the mentoring experience was important not only to her career but it also meant a “lot personally” to her. Out of their mentoring relationship both Viola and her principal, showed openness to new ideas and trust where they could talk and share ideas and thoughts.

As principals retire and others appear reluctant to assume the challenges of becoming a principal (Hopkins, 1998; Wax 2002; Winter & Morgenthal, 2002), it is necessary to understand the importance of the mentoring they received from the principals they worked with as assistant principals. An understanding of the activities associated with preparing assistant principals to become principals would perhaps be insightful. Doud and Keller (1998) in their study of principal shortages discussed the following:
A 42% turnover in the principalship during the last ten years is likely to continue into the next decade. While this is good news for those who aspire to the principalship, there is a need to develop a pool of well-qualified candidates to fill positions as they arise. (p. 4)

Leadership is not something that happens by chance, and an assistant principal who aspires to become a leader must seize the initiative, see the opportunity to learn in various situations, and take meaningful steps to become a leader. Their principal mentors encouraged Renee and Viola by creating meaningful circumstances that enriched their development as prospective principals.

The participants in this study handled the daily mundane assistant principal duties, with encouragement and help from their mentoring principal, and they were able to make their mentoring experiences meaningful by building some structure toward learning different skills. The mastering of those skills and the support they received from their mentor principals gave the assistant principals a sense of empowerment as they entered the principalship.

**Theme Two: Practical experiences from the mentoring experiences were important to the assistant principals when they assumed the principalship.**

Renee felt good about the mentoring she received as an assistant principal from her principal. Renee felt that the skills she learned were critical for her transition into the principalship. Renee said:

I have been very fortunate learning how to do things as an assistant principal. I had experience as an assistant principal in hiring, budget, curriculum, mapping, revamping, special education, and staff development.

As a result of this mentoring experience, Renee felt in control when she recently transitioned into the principalship. Renee recalled times as an assistant principal when she and the principal would spend “quality mentoring moments” together reviewing critical skills that were pertinent to Renee’s career progression. She talked about her mentoring experiences pertaining to budgetary matters.
The principal I worked under as an assistant principal worked very closely with me with every component of the budget. She would sit down with those big green print outs and say, this is what the budget looks like. It does not mean a lot to you but I want you to get exposure. We did basic things. Some funds are restricted. You can not do anything with the money except what the government says you can do with it. There were some accounts where we had a little more flexibility. We can do certain things and move these accounts. We looked at how to set up a school wide budget and what it needed to look like in the curriculum and professional areas I was responsible for as an assistant principal. She gave me the allotment and I planned how we were going to use that.

This budget training was good for Renee because prior to this experience, the principal she worked for had very little knowledge about budgetary matters. Renee had to find a way to fill this lapse in her training. Therefore, she had to be resourceful and find a way to learn. She recalled the experience:

One principal I worked for while I was an assistant principal did not feel very comfortable with the budget. She left it up to the bookkeeper. She would say that you have this much money to spend. I would work more with the bookkeeper than I worked with the principal on budget matters.

In this mentoring situation, Renee was able to find a resource to learn about budget matters. Weller and Weller (2002) reported that assistant principals with aspirations of becoming a principal must take the initiative to learn from various circumstances whether good or challenging. Renee was able to do this while learning about the budget under a principal lacking a mastery of the topic. Renee talked about another practical skill she learned as an assistant principal. At the present, she was applying this lesson to a situation as the principal of her own school. Documentation was a very important skill for her to learn and it proved to be very useful. She recalled:

I think right now about a situation I am dealing with in which I learned to keep very careful documentation and know every step of the process along the way. Right now I am thinking of a personnel issue. When there is a problem with it, what do you do? You cannot go in and say you are fired and you are out of here! So you have to know along the way what you need to do to document.
Renee felt skillful about not only her documentation skills in this situation but also her intervention skills as she provided an option for the individual to use the proper tools to be successful and turn the situation into a positive one.

Renee felt good about the experiences her principal provided for her. As she said:

She put me in roles to experience the good, bad, and the ugly. I wanted to be the person responsible for resolving these situations. My goal was never to have a need to go to the principal for a resolution.

Renee thought that these experiences provided her on the job rehearsal for the principalship. If she became a principal, the “buck would stop” at her desk. Despite these practical experiences that Renee labeled as the “good, bad, and ugly,” Renee did not see “any way” that these mentoring experiences could actually prepare a person for some of the realities of the principalship. Renee asserted that “the daily grind was something you always have to find a way to cope with.” Although these mentoring experiences provided Renee good exposure to the work of the principalship, she was absolute in her perspective that there are some things you do not realize until you are in the position of the principalship. Renee recalled:

One of the biggest challenges was not to let oneself get caught up and completely eloped in management. It could happen very easily. You have to make sure you structure your time so that you take care of leadership and other things. You really have to be passionate about not only education but also about leadership and the school programs because if you are not it will wear you out. In the role of a principal, you handle this many problems during a day. That is when I talked to colleagues and had no idea about handling this many problems during the day. You cannot let dealing with those problems take your focus off your agenda. There are many days you come in with a to-do list, task that need to be taken care of, and you never touch one. Then you realize what is important and takes priority over other things you intended to do. You never turn it off mentally.

Renee continues to try to find that balance between doing the job and not becoming too “eloped in management” that she cannot see the big picture. Her mentoring experiences gave
Renee “a good glimpse” of the principalship, but “some things can not prepare” a person for “all of the realities” a principal will face.

Viola Sands believed that she had tremendous opportunities and many good experiences while learning in the position of the assistant principal. She was aware about her experiences in the area of curriculum. She believed that it was important for an administrator to be the “instructional leader” of the school. In Viola’s words:

The principalship is a leadership position and you are the instructional leader. So when I became a principal, because of my experiences with curriculum as an additional duty while in the position of the assistant principal, I was able to understand that aspect of an instructional leader.

Viola’s mentoring experiences in the area of curriculum not only empowered her but also gave her practical experiences. Viola said, “When I look at something that really prepared me for the principalship as an assistant principal, the experiences in curriculum was it.” Viola learned a great deal about curriculum from her experiences while implementing a program called Pay for Performance, a state program that rewarded schools for achieving pre-determined curriculum goals. Viola initially suggested the idea of Pay for Performance to her principal and her principal “empowered” her to go forth with the program.

Another lesson Viola learned while an assistant principalship was in trust building among administrators and teachers. She talked about the trust building and ability to empower others that she learned from her principal, and how she had to build trust within her school once she became a principal. Viola explained:

On self-assessment, my approach to leadership looks more like my first principal. I had to come into this school as a new principal and build up trust level. My first principal was good at empowering people. I watched her progress at the school and the progress of the students. They were doing exciting things and the children were achieving at high levels. The second principal I worked for as an assistant principal was in her first year. Her style was very different than my first principal I worked for as an assistant principal. There
were issues of trust in that school because she was still building trust with the teachers. Therefore she was in the process of developing her leadership style.

Viola talked about how she learned from the leadership styles modeled by the two principals she served as an assistant principal and how to promote leadership among faculty. Viola learned valuable lessons about promoting and sharing leadership, and she shared:

I had to encourage the natural leaders within my school and build some skills among some people who were not natural leaders. So as trust builds, so does productivity because the trust is high. People are willing and ready because I have a high trust in people. The next year I got better at aligning the budget, staff development, and other support pieces. I aligned the personnel to help us make a better stride towards achieving our goals. So people were willing to go out and trust some new things. I could turn over responsibilities and the product I got was good. I was better than I imagined.

Viola talked about her first years as a principal as she worked with the budget.

In my first year I followed the budget of the principal who preceded me. In my second year, I was able to adjust a little more. It was one of those pieces I did not comfortably prepare for.

Daresh (2001) reported that financial management and budgeting were important responsibilities that principals needed for well-prepared principal candidate. Weller and Weller (2002) listed budget preparation as one of the importing mentoring experiences for assistant principals with future leadership aspirations. Viola’s ingenuity helped her to cope with budgetary matters once she assumed the principalship after the first year, she felt better about venturing out further with the school’s budget.

Despite her good feeling about her mentoring experiences as an assistant principal, Viola still did not realize the gravity of the principal’s position until she assumed the position. Viola said:

Despite the myriad of experiences I had as an assistant principal, I do not know that there is truly anything that prepares you for what the principalship looks like. There are some aspects of the job a principal I felt very well prepared for and there are some aspects of the position that were very different from anything I experienced before. The role of an
administrator whether assistant principal or principal changes every day. So while I was well prepared, most situations were new.

Viola thought that the spontaneity of the job and the high frequency of issues that needed her attention were more than she expected. She continued.

It depends very much on your ability to make good judgment calls, your ability to listen and synthesize and think in a farsighted way. Things that were very different were the high prevalence of personnel issues, needs for my staff, job vacancies, sometimes jobs changed, the need to readjust allotment plans to suit the number of students, and students’ needs that are certainly a departure from the assistant principal role. When things go well it is all about the school, but when things go wrong, as the principal you are responsible. Even though you may get advice from other people, the reality is that the decisions you made for your teachers, students, and community had a profound affect. The understanding that everything rises and falls on the decisions you made and the quality of the decisions that you made is the difference that I see between being an assistant principal and a principal.

The enormity and spontaneity of the job was quite overwhelming to Viola and Renee. Despite their mentoring and preparation, they did not feel anything could prepare them for this aspect of the principalship. The daily grind was challenging. Daresh concluded:

The primary rationale for making use of mentoring for the professional development of educational leaders is grounded in the assumption that the role of the leader is a lonely effort, and that having the ability to relate to peers concerning personal and professional concerns is a way to reduce the sense of isolation. (p. 16)

Both participants discussed the overwhelming stress from the volume of the workflow with their colleagues but their dedication and desire to see student achieve academically, validated their commitment to remain in the principalship.

Kerrins (2001) indicated, “Principals are leaving their jobs at younger ages, principals report that high stress, time demands of the job, broadening requirements of the job exceed salaries, and new state accountability legislation make retirement appealing” (p. 20). The participants in this study felt empowered and enjoyed their jobs; however, the day-to-day workflow was overwhelming.
Viola was able to learn how to build trust among her staff and develop leaders to help out with initiatives at her school. It was something she learned from her mentoring experience with her former principal. As a result of her mentoring experiences in the area of curriculum, she was able to assist her staff as they prepared for student academic achievement by providing them with adequate resources. Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) examined the role of the principal related to the influence over student achievement. They concluded that the principal’s influence is significant because it is the principal who implements educational programs and builds relationship with their staff. Renee had no trouble understanding the workflow and duties of the principal.

Murphy (1992) suggested that learning should be cooperative and based on real world problems of practice as opposed to untested theories. Playko (1995) made observations about the strengths and weakness of mentoring in the educational setting. He reported that university-based programs do a good job at providing a basic foundation in the preparation of administrators. However, practical insights about the day-to-day function best come from someone who is actually doing the job.

Renee and Viola had good practical mentoring experiences that prepared them to perform the duties of the principalship but both principals reported that they continue to adjust to the enormity of the volume of work and the ramifications of their decisions as principals. They were both unsure if mentoring experiences could adequately prepare a person for that adjustment, however.
Theme Three: A sense of trust emerged in the mentoring relationship.

Renee felt that her primary obligation as an assistant principal was to support the principal and the principal’s mission for the school to succeed and that teamwork and communication were vital between the assistant principal and the principal. She stated:

The last principal I worked with, I felt her and I were a WWF team. We were a wrestling tag team. Truly, if one of us was involved in something else, the other stepped in to assist. If there was something on paper that the principal should have dealt with and she was not available, I stepped right in and handled it. It also worked visa versa. If I was not there and a discipline problem came up and it was my grade level, or a parent called, or someone needed something in curriculum, she stepped right in and took care of it. You have to work as a team or there are dividing lines that can hurt the school when you are in the position of assistant principal or the principalship.

Trust had developed as an outgrowth from their work experiences. As a result, Renee was able to obtain valuable exposure handling the responsibilities for not only herself but also for her principal. Renee believed her principal had complete confidence in her judgment and ability to assess any situation that might arise. Renee stated:

My principal and I had a working relationship enough to know that I would not knee jerk and make a decision and do things that were not appropriate. She also knew that I am the type of person if I really do not know and need to talk things through and get feedback and suggestions; I am going to do just that.

The healthy discourse and trust between Renee and her principal created an opportunity for Renee to learn and to define the parameters of their mentoring relationship. In Renee’s words

What my principal and I did with a problem or with a vision of where we were going with something was defined by our relationship as principal and assistant principal. We had enough of a professional relationship where we could talk and share why we had ideas. The bottom line, I was there to support her mission. I mean the mission of the school. Sometimes that did mean according to her interpretation. What you do behind close doors is talk with her about it. I would say this is what I feel, this is why I believe it, and this is the data I have to support what I am saying. Sometimes we would laugh and say you know what we are agreeing to disagree but we are going to go out there and get it done. When that door opened, I supported her no matter what! I gained a lot of good exposure.
Similarly, Viola was pleased with the bond that grew out of the mentoring relationship she had experienced with her first principal while she was an assistant principal. While the principal empowered her, there was a sense of confidence to know that her principal supported her. Viola said, “My principal was there with a safety net.” Viola also learned from her how to build trust among people and to use trust to empower people to succeed. To Viola, trust was a key factor in empowering people. Viola described her mentoring experience about trust building in the following way:

On self-assessment my approach to leadership looks like my first principal. I had to come into this school as a new principal and build up the trust level. I had to encourage the natural leaders and build some skills among some people who were not natural leaders. So as trust builds, so does productivity because the trust is high. I can turn over responsibilities and the productivity I got was good.

Viola related stark contrasts when she talked about the situation under her second principal. Viola learned what it was like to be in a situation when people are not empowered by building trust among colleagues. Viola said, “In the second school, the principal was new and her style was rigid, so in that school I functioned more as a manager than a leader.” Viola related that she was able to learn from the two very different experiences; moreover, these lessons proved to be helpful to her when she assumed the position of principal.

Viola found that communication is important in a mentoring relationship between the principal and assistant principal and that open communication helped to build trust and to foster bonding. Renee described this relationship in the following way:

The relationship between a principal and assistant principal has to be one in which you always share things. It is not about always being right. Many times it is about solving problems. Conceding so that in the long run the best happens. For lack of a better term perhaps a win-win situation. I guess there were times when I shared doubts. There were times when I had a parent call me and I immediately felt a need to share that with my principal. We needed to be aligned and have great communications. We needed to communicate things you need to know. Not unnecessary information but we had to be clear about everything that is important to the school.
To Viola, it was important to develop open relationships between her, the principal, and faculty. Open relationships according to Viola, encourages a sense of empowerment among people as they strive toward achieving school-wide goals.

Peterson (2002) reported that mentoring for an assistant principal is vital. The trust and team approach between the participants and their former principals reflects Peterson’s findings. Renee discussed the value of teamwork between herself and her former principal and its impact on the school’s goals. Each person has to be ready to support the other. Viola emphasized the importance of communication between a principal and an assistant principal. The sharing of ideas, thoughts, and concepts are important for the school.

Bolam et al. (1995) in their study on the mentoring of new headteachers (school administrators) defined mentoring as “The process of peer support” (p. 33), and that mentoring should promote opportunities for growth and development. Bush and Coleman (1995) examined mentoring, and their findings indicated that mentoring provided the opportunities to work out ideas, further develop concepts, and reduced isolation. A non-judgmental approach between the mentor and the mentee allowed them to better assess their attributes. Viola and Renee were nurtured in a non-judgmental environment during their mentoring experiences. They had open communications with their former principals, learned how to develop trust, leadership, and received support and guidance.
Implications

Implications for School Systems

As it becomes more essential to prepare new principals to replace those who retire, school systems are perplexed as to know how they can provide the resources to assist those who aspire to the principalship (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). The data from this study displayed the need for open and trusting relationship in order for the principal and assistant principal to work as a team and this development fostered the development of the mentoring relationships.

Practical experiences about the daily tasks of a principal are very important. Brady (1996) suggested to design professional development programs that are tied to the contextual real life situations are important to nurture assistant principals. Murphy (1992) further suggested that learning should be cooperative and based on real world problems of practice as opposed to untested theories. In this study, the principals had a sense of empowerment from their mentoring relationship as they entered into the principalship. The participants felt as if they had adequate practical experiences in the daily task of a principal except for Viola in the area of budgetary matters.

The mentoring paring is a vital piece to nurture new principals. Student achievement is the cornerstone in the success of principals, and teachers are a key factor in the area of student performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Wax, 2002). In this study, the principals were well versed in curriculum from their mentoring experience. The participants had no problems assuming the role of instructional leader as a principal. It is important that principals are well versed in curriculum because of the high stakes of academic accountability.
However, the principals had quite a challenge adjusting to the daily grind of the principalship. As Renee said, “It will wear you out.” Viola said, “Despite the myriad of experience I had as an assistant principal, I do not know that there is truly anything that prepares you for what the principalship looks like.” Their practical mentoring did not quite prepare them for this intangible that produced a significant impact on their outlook.

School systems must take into consideration how vital it is for new principals to be prepared to assume the principalship in this era of academic accountability. The success or failure of schools depends on new principal’s ability to quickly acclimate themselves to the daily duties of the principalship and to design a curriculum structure that will address the academic accountability measures put in place as a result of the No Child Left Behind legislation.

In this study, the data showed that principals are never fully prepared for the job until they assume the position. However the participants in this study experienced a good relationship with their principal and took the opportunity to gain valuable practical experiences that prepared them for many aspects of the principalship. Based on the positive results with the principals in this study, school systems should look at paring principals as mentors for assistant principals.

Implications for Further Research

This study design looked at two elementary school principals who were female. Based on the data from the principals’ perspectives, perhaps the information from this research can provide the basis for further research collecting the perspectives of a greater number of newly tenured principals.

The limitation of gender in the sampling of participants should be expanded to include men in future research as perhaps the point-of-view of men and women would differ considerably. Also, new principals at the middle and high school levels should also be included.
to see if there are differences between groups. Qualitative research has to continue to vividly depict the kinds of support that principals want and need to survive in this era of student academic accountability; however, quantitative data would lend more to generalizability.

Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to examine two new principals’ perspectives about the assistance that they received from their principals while serving as assistant principals. The study examined the kinds of support the principals provided to the participants and how this assistance enhanced their transition into the principalship.

Using a theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the researcher displayed a portrait of these principals’ perspectives about the assistance and mentoring they received from their principals. The intent was to bring illumination to their stories. From these stories, an extended portrait was provided of the assistance the participants received from the mentoring they received as assistant principals. Although the stories provide detail, more research using qualitative, quantitative, and blended methods is needed to see if principals can truly make a difference in developing assistant principals who are more capable of assuming the rigors of the principalship.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I ___________________________ agree to participate in the research titled, “New Principals Perspectives About The Assistance That They Received By Their Principals As Assistant Principals”, which is being conducted by Michael Anthony Rhett from the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia, and whose phone number is (770) 333-0843, under the direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia, whose phone number is (706) 542.0408. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for the research is to answer the following questions: (a) What types of assistance did these new principals receive from their former principals? (b) Did the assistance prepare the participants for the rigors of the principalship? (c) What did the assistance look like?

I understand that there are no direct benefits associated with my participation in this study.

I understand that my part in this study will include participation in three interviews lasting approximately 120 minutes, as subject of a participant observation of a mutually agreeable length, time, and place, and/or provider of documents such as memos and/or agendas. Questions during the interview will help to understand your experiences as an assistant principal while being mentored by a building-level principal before assuming the position of principal. I understand that the interview will be audio taped.

No discomforts or stresses are foreseen. No risks are foreseen.

Any information the researcher obtains about me as a participant in this study, including my identity, will be held confidential. My identity will be coded with a pseudonym of my choosing, and all data will be kept in a secured, limited access location. My identity will not be revealed in any publication of the results of this research. The audiotapes of my interviews will be destroyed immediately following the defense of the dissertation. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent unless otherwise required by law.

The research will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (770) 333-0333.
I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator (researcher).

Signature of Researcher
Michael Anthony Rhett (770) 333-0333
Happy@hotmail.com

Participant’s Name (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; e-mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Questions:

• Tell me about your teaching experiences prior to becoming an administrator.

• Did you have any leadership positions prior to becoming a principal?
  (Tell me about them)

• How long have you been a principal at this school?

• Have you held a principalship elsewhere?

• What is your highest degree and from where?

• Tell me about your school
  How many full-time faculty members?
  How many paraprofessionals?
  How many support personnel in administration?
  How many students?

• What was it like transitioning from being an assistant principal to a principal?

• How were you recruited for the position of assistant principal?

• Tell me about your approach to leadership compared to your principal while you were an assistant principal?

• How did the experience of being an assistant principal prepare you for the principalship?

• How does your approach to leadership compare to your principal’s style of leadership?

• How did your principal prepare you for the principalship?
• Tell me about a situation where you believe the mentoring you received prepared you for the principalship.

• As an assistant principal, how were you able to communicate to your principal any doubts about your ability to be a principal?

• Elaborate on a time when you did not feel you could eventually become a principal and how did your principal help you see that you did have the "stuff of being a principal?"

• Once in position many assistant principals experience the demands of the job, which very often includes primary responsibility for student discipline, attendance, and non-career progressing chores. How did you find ways to work with these responsibilities and feel a sense of accomplishment or progression?

• Management, budget, discipline, and the logistics of schedules are inherent to a principal’s success. Describe you preparation as an assistant principal in these areas under your principal.

• What were your feelings about the opportunity for advancement to become a principal while you were an assistant principal?
APPENDIX C

THE RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVES

My interest in the mentoring experiences new principals received from their principals grew from my experiences as an elementary school teacher in an At-Risk school. These experiences took place during the No Child Left Behind legislation. During my tenure, I worked with assistant principals, who supervised me and eventually assumed the position of the principalship in an At-Risk school.

As the principals assumed the principalship at these at-risk schools each attempted to outline a plan of structure to enable the school to meet the states’ criteria of academic success. Each principal’s plan affected the teaching method within the school’s classroom. The principal’s tenure was based on the school’s academic success or failure so as a result, each principal attempted to micro-manage the classroom teacher’s ability to implement the curriculum.

Eventually tenured teachers and principals at these at-risk schools left for greener pastures or schools that were not at-risk. The principals left in an attempt to save their professional careers. If the principal’s school could not meet the academic standards in this era of accountability, the principal was subject to loose their job. The teachers were overburdened in at-risk schools because of the lost of good academic students. If an At-risk school did not meet the states academic standards for two years in a row, the students were able to leave the school and attend a school of their choice. This left the school with many students functioning at low academic standards. The at-risk schools lost funding to the vacating students’ school of choice. The overall result was a brain drain from these at-risk schools.
As a graduate and teacher in an at-risk school, I wondered about the future of the students who attended these schools and the mentoring the new principals received from their principals to cultivate and lead the students’ minds in these at-risk schools. Porter (1996) indicated that for many, the assistant principal position is usually the next step to the principalship. The future principals of these at-risk schools will come from the ranks of the assistant principal ranks; therefore; it is from this perspective that I decided to research the new principals’ perspectives about the mentoring they received from their former principals.