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The Early Promise of TBRI Implementation in Schools

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The program known as Trust Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) began as an exploration into the detrimental behaviors of foster and adopted children placed in homes with unsuspecting caregivers who assumed their living environment would result in positive results rather than fear based emotions and behaviors. The researchers at the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development (KPICD) at Texas Christian University held summer camps for adopted children and through that work developed an intervention to meet the needs of children who had experienced trauma. KPICD identifies these young people as "children from hard places" (Purvis & Cross, 2005). Copeland et al (2007) reported that an estimated 68% of children in the United States have experienced some sort of trauma. This astounding statistic holds great meaning for teachers and administrators, because these children from hard places routinely manifest aggressive and undesired behaviors due to an altering of their physiology. The literature on TBRI® at this point mostly has chronicled success with families, group homes and summer camps (McKenzie, Purvis, & Cross, 2014; Howard, Parris, Neilson, Lusk, Bush, Purvis & Cross, 2014; Purvis & Cross, 2006). TBRI® has only recently been implemented in school settings. This report provides an overview of the impacts of trauma, trauma related work in schools, and the four articles published to this point related to the use of TBRI® in schools.

The Impact of Trauma on Classrooms

Students, who have experienced trauma, often exhibit behaviors that impede their success in the classroom. For example, preschool children, who have dealt with traumatic situations, tend to have lower frustration levels, poor problem solving skills, and exhibit non-compliance (Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983). Elementary aged children with trauma in their background will often lose motivation to see problems to a successful completion. They do not believe they can be successful, so they often quit working on the problem. In addition, they also tend to simply avoid any kind of challenging task (Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001). Older children with the same type of history, struggle with abstract thinking, and are unable to access their executive functioning to help them problem solve (Beers & DeBellis, 2002).

Children who have experienced traumatic histories often exhibit behavioral issues in the classroom and tend to take time away from instruction and bring on challenges to classroom management (Proctor, 2017). A child tagged as having behavior problems often gets excluded

from academic activities and may ultimately drop out of school or end up in alternative educational settings (Call et al., 2014). As mentioned above, 68% of Americans experience some type of traumatic experience in their lives (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, Costello, 2007). This statistic means a large number of children in schools may be functioning from a fear based perspective instead of a more rational, logic approach expected by teachers. These realities reinforce the importance of the training of teachers to help them understand the impact of trauma in the students they serve.

What is Trauma?

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013), trauma is defined as "experiencing, witnessing, or confronting events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others" (p. 467). Trauma and maltreatment impact brain development and learning. In addition, after a child has experienced a traumatic event the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA axis) stress response system in the body may trigger putting the student in an "on guard" mode. In this state the child becomes more hypervigilant and often is over responsive to environmental triggers (Bath, 2008). Students in such an agitated state can react impulsively and may not respond to requests or directives. TBRI® provides approaches for teachers to use when a student needs extra support to regulate their behavior.

What is TBRI?

Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) is an evidence-based intervention model, developed at the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development at Texas Christian University. TBRI® training shows adults how to build nurturing relationships with children that will generate behavioral success through three principles: Connecting, Empowering, Correcting (Purvis et al., 2014). TBRI® strategies help provide the safe, nurturing environment needed for children who have experienced trauma. Children, who experience a safe environment that includes what the child feels is a nurturing adult who will listen, are more often able to express their needs. Perry (2009) stated that children who learn at an early age that their needs will not be met, will often use behaviors rather than words to get their needs met. These behaviors can be problematic in any setting, but represent a significant challenge in a classroom environment.

Creating Trauma-Informed Classrooms

TBRI®, first developed as a method of helping foster and adopted children overcome past trauma and develop healthy relationships with new adults in their lives, has been met with both acceptance and success in the field of childhood development (Call et al., 2014). Applying the concepts of TBRI® to the classroom has evolved as the next logical step in the development of this trauma informed initiative. For example, Call et al. (2014) described the implementation of TBRI® in schools in Oklahoma, Texas, and Missouri, with broad success in lowering the disciplinary incidence reports. (The reports on the Oklahoma and Texas locations will be reviewed in great detail in this article.) To examine how the lowering of disciplinary incidence reports was made possible, teachers were instructed to first recognize the different sources of trauma students may have experienced prior to entering the classroom, such as: prenatal trauma

during pregnancy, birth trauma, and the more common types of abuse and neglect students may have experienced. Then, teachers considered the role of fear in children's behavior and how to combat that fear. This approach involves strategies such as the prevention of over-stimulation and giving a voice to the children in the form of undivided attention, offering choices, compromises, and behavioral "re-dos." Teachers were also advised on the physical needs of the children, which encouraged them to keep water bottles and snacks available to help combat dehydration and fluctuating blood sugar. Lastly, the teachers were educated on the "Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care" (Bath, 2008). This paradigm emphasizes the safety, connection, and emotional regulation that is necessary for student success. Students need to feel safe in their environment, connected to themselves and others, and have the freedom and guidance to regulate their emotions. In hopes that more schools are able to successfully implement this initiative, Call et al. (2014) concluded by providing an appendix for educators to easily reference the different tenets of TRBI® and how to apply it to their classroom for the success of their students and schools.

Other Trauma Initiatives

Programs that have implemented a trauma informed approach do exist beyond TBRI®, and have had success in the school districts that have chosen to adopt their methodological approach. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), while originally designed for school counselors (Jaycox, 2004) has had success with training teachers how to implement it in the classroom (Jaycox et al., 2009; Nadeem, Jaycox, Katoaka, Langley, & Stein, 2011). Similarly, programs like Heart of Teaching and Learning (HTL; Day, Somers, Baroni, West, Sanders, & Peterson, 2015) have also shown that addressing trauma in students and helping them heal and grow from their experiences have shown to be beneficial. Further, researchers at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) have developed a program focused on children who experience traumatic events and suffer from conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (Saltzman, Steinberg, Layne, Aisenberg, & Pynoos, 2001) and have shown success in reducing clinical level conditions in samples of children who have experienced war in Bosnia (Layne et al., 2001; Layne et al., 2008). While these programs have shown excellent results and promise, they often rely on a trained clinician to implement and manage them (with the exception of CBITS' evolution into the classroom). TBRI® focuses on providing teachers with conceptual understanding and strategies to provide support for students with a background that includes some form of trauma. With this approach, TBRI® offers an excellent resource for school districts that cannot afford to hire a specialized clinician for implementation or would like to supplement a specialized, clinician-run program already in place.

Three Core Principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®)

In the TBRI literature, there are three main principles which guide caregivers in helping students guide and develop their socioemotional skills, as well as begin to allow them to emotionally bond and trust their caregivers (e.g., teachers, guardians); these three principles include: empowering, connecting, and correcting (Call et al., 2015). While each principle can be conceptualized in isolation, holistically implementing them has shown promise with at-risk children (Parris, Dozier, Purvis, Whitney, Grisham, & Cross, 2015; Purvis, Cross, Federici,

Johnson, & McKenzie, 2007; Purvis, McKinzie, Cross, & Razuri, 2013) and adopted children (McKenzie, Purvis, & Cross, 2014; Purvis & Cross, 2006). This holistic approach can be generalized over to the classroom as well, and acts as the foundation for student/teacher interactions (Call et al., 2015).

The first principle addressed in the TBRI® protocol is empowerment. The empowerment principle is an offensive strategy used for combating fear in children by building a predictable, reliable learning environment (Call et al., 2015). Empowering students helps to relieve unnecessary stress in the classroom by giving voice to the students, and manipulating the classroom environment so that students do not become overstimulated. This approach creates a space where fear can be overcome before it can overtake a student.

The connecting principle, which has been highlighted as the most important aspect of any trauma-informed intervention (Bath, 2008), centralizes the relationship between the student and the teacher. The ability of teachers to connect with their students helps them grow both emotionally and socially, but also academically (Call et al., 2016). Teachers have many tools at their disposal to help develop connections with their students. By utilizing those tools, teachers make an investment in not only the success of the current school year, but also, perhaps more importantly, the future school years of those children. The connecting principle represents a key element in the success of TBRI® implementation in a classroom.

The correcting principle requires knowledge of how to respond to behaviors and also an understanding of how to teach more appropriate responses. Using the correcting principles can prevent poor choices by students and help children be more successful with their expressions of need (Purvis et al., 2014). The correction principles include TBRI® proactive strategies such as role play, self-regulation techniques, and social skills practice (Parris et al., 2015). These proactive strategies routinely decrease behavior issues when working with students who have experienced trauma. However, even with these strategies in place, some students may lose control of their emotions and act inappropriately. When a child is highly dysregulated like this, she or he needs immediate intervention. TBRI®'s IDEAL Response © provides guidelines to interact with an agitated student in calming, nurturing ways in an attempt to discover and meet the need of the student. For example, a teacher working with a dysregulated child can use the IDEAL response to guide them through how to match the intensity of the behavioral reaction with appropriate responses that maintain a nurturing connection that assures the child that he is safe, his needs will be met, and strengthens the relationship with the adult.

Teachers and Trauma

O'Neill (2010) listed three things that teachers need when working with students who have experienced trauma. First, teachers need to have some knowledge about trauma and its impact on young people. Second, educators need to be able to recognize behaviors that result from trauma, and finally, these same teachers need to know how to assist students with the regulation of these behaviors. TBRI® empowers teachers with these three requirements and supplies an approach that combines structure and support. In addition, TBRI® focuses on relationship building. Cassidy (2001) noted that relationship building targets four skills that

promote secure meaningful connections including the ability to give and seek care, the ability to negotiate, and the ability to feel comfortable with their own being. The following sections explore the TBRI® interventions in schools currently reported in the literature.

TBRI in an Oklahoma School

An elementary school in Tulsa, OK implemented TBRI® on their campus and saw positive results (Purvis, 2014). This particular Oklahoma school was considered to be one of the worst schools in the state. Test scores were low, a high percentage of their students lived in poverty, and 75% of the students had a parent or caregiver in prison. The faculty and staff had worked diligently to improve the school, but previous interventions had had little impact. During the first year of TBRI® implementation, the school employed 33 teachers for 428 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5th. The student demographics were reported as 40% African American, 21% White, 20% Hispanic, 8% American Indian, and 1% Asian.

The plans for training began in June of 2010. The school staff received several rounds and types of TBRI® training. The teachers and staff school-wide received training. In addition, TBRI® trainers entered classrooms to work with individual teachers and their students. Also, some of the elementary staff attended one of the Institute's Hope Connection Camps on the TCU campus. The training on the implementation of nurture groups was extensive. TBRI® trainers visited the campus three times in the months of August, September, and February. During the first visits, the trainers modeled effective nurture groups. The visits transitioned into having the teachers facilitate the nurture group with the trainers providing feedback.

Nurture groups consist of six steps informed largely by a program authored by Rubin & Tregay (1989) called Theraplay®. Usually the students are paired up for the nurture groups. In step one, the rules are reviewed. The students are reminded to have fun, stick together, and not cause harm. In step two, the students are asked non-threatening questions to warm up. In step three, students share an emotional or physical pain they are feeling. The student's partner can then provide comfort by applying an actual Band-aid ® on the person's body in an appropriate place that represents the pain shared. Step four focuses on developing social skills through activities like role playing or puppet shows. Step five ramps up the intimacy of the pairing by offering an opportunity for each student partner to feed each other. Finally, in step six the facilitator leads the group in a celebration and a review of the three rules. The purpose of these groups is to help students to give and receive nurturing. These skills and understanding are often lacking with students who have experienced trauma.

Over a two year period using strategies that included nurture groups, the Tulsa school experienced dramatic positive changes. The faculty reported that students were more successful in forming positive relationships. Students also were more able to use their words which helped to avoid major outbursts. These observations of improvement were supported by an 18% decrease in overall behavioral incident reports. In addition, before the implementation of TBRI®, 16% of the students in their school had received three or more referrals to the principal's office. The administration reported that the year TBRI® was implemented, this 16% of students with the most referrals in previous years had a decrease in office referrals by 23%. The principal

reported that the incidents that were documented had transitioned into more minor offenses, because the teachers were using TBRI® approaches with the students that deescalated many of the more serious behavior outbursts.

The overall environment of the school became more positive and nurturing. Teachers and staff used language that was used throughout the school that promoted safety and met the students' needs. Each classroom adopted the rules from Theraplay® – "Stick Together, No Hurts, Have Fun!" (Rubin & Tregay, 1989). The school staff and administration developed a deeper understanding and sense of empathy for children who have experienced trauma, neglect, and maltreatment. Knowing how their students were affected and how their bodies respond to adverse childhood experiences gave the educators tools to know how to handle their behaviors. It also increased teachers' confidence on how to manage their classrooms.

Implementing TBRI in a Charter School at a Residential Facility for at Risk Youth

Parris et al (2014) reported on the implementation of TBRI® in a charter school in Texas based in a juvenile justice residential setting. This educational setting represented one of 45 charter schools in the "residential treatment/juvenile detention center" category in the state of Texas. The student population in these settings differs from other schools serving the same age ranges in that many of these students have been separated from their family members and homes and many have experienced some form of maltreatment. Parris et al (2014) surmised that the students in the charter school they studied likely exceeded Copeland's estimate of 68% of people in the U.S. having experienced some form of childhood trauma. Schools that serve populations like this one likely will experience the greatest success with the implementation of interventions that target a reduction of the effects of trauma (Bath, 2008). Also strategies that provide structure as well as support can be successful (Cole et al, 2005).

This study in a charter school explored the impact of TBRI® on behavioral outcomes. At the onset of the study, this school in Texas had 23 teachers and a student population of 138 in grades 7 through 12 for the 2011-2012 school year. The student demographics were as follows: 49% white, 35% African-American, 12% Hispanic, and 4% other. All 138 students were economically disadvantaged and considered to be at risk for dropping out of school according to Texas Education Agency guidelines.

The implementation of TBRI® began in the month of August of 2011 with training and support for all residential staff and administrators. During the 2011-2012 school year, no campus-wide plan for TBRI® implementation existed. However, several staff members reported utilizing "a few of the empowering and connecting practices" of TBRI® including the use of gum as a stress reliever and making snacks available. In addition, the use of TBRI® language provided a common basis for communication. The staff worked on building relationships with students and sought opportunities to provide affirmation and to respond with "yes" answers. The student encounters with TBRI® strategies during this first year occurred more in the residential facilities than in the school setting.

Before the beginning of the second school year of 2012-2013, all of the teachers and behavioral support staff for the school attended two days of TBRI® training conducted onsite.

Additional training during the school year occurred in September with the return appearance of the sensory integration specialist. The superintendent, principal, and a behavioral specialist all attended an intense five day training at the TCU Institute of Child Development (now renamed the Karyn Purvis Institute) in October.

Three months into year two, the teachers and staff reported positive changes in the school. The researchers identified 13 components of TBRI® that were being used with the students. Five of the 13 principles fell in the "empowering" category and included the availability of things such as hydration, snacks, and fidgets. In addition, efforts were made to remove conflict triggers and a sensory room was developed. Water bottles or access to a water fountain were provided as instantaneous on-demand items. The school provided healthy snacks like crackers, beef sticks, and nuts for classroom baskets which typically were available to the students twice a day. Classrooms were supplied with five or six types of fidgets which student could request and use at any point in the day.

Another empowering approach involved the removal of conflict triggers. With the implementation of TBRI®, students no longer had to earn the right for free dress or for lunch outside on Fridays. Students were given the opportunity to wear headphones at lunch, which helped some of them stay calm in the often over stimulating environment of the cafeteria. Along those same lines, the campus created a sensory room where students can go with a support staff member. The room provides a sanctuary for the students from over (or under) stimulating environments, and gives them a place to calm down and reflect. Students can ask to go the sensory room if they feel they need to regulate their emotions or just want the security of that room. Teachers can refer students to the sensory room to support students as necessary. Additionally, students can check out things like fidgets or weighted lap pads to bring back to the classroom.

Some of the connecting principles practiced in the school included relationship building through healthy touch strategies and a constant effort to supply positive affirmations for students. The expectations for teachers moved away from immediate office referrals to a focus on building relationships and working through problems. The reduction in office referrals freed up some of the support staff so that they were available to consult with the teachers about preventive approaches and assist with students in need of immediate support

Finally, the correcting principles included a move away from automatic sanctions for specific violations to a management of incidents on a case by case basis. In fact, less serious classroom infractions came to be viewed as learning opportunities for the students. These minor incidents provided the students with the opportunity to practice their skills related to regulating their emotions and behaviors. Parris et al (2014) confirmed that the most commonly used terms at the school were "compromise" and "redo" which certainly would have supported this newly established learning culture.

The results after one year had been encouraging, but after the second year the number of behavioral incidents dropped precipitously. These changes in the number of referrals were recorded from the 2010-2011 school year to the 2012-2013 school year: 68% reduction for

physical aggression, 88% reduction for verbal aggression, and a 95% reduction for disruptive behavior. The authors noted that some of this decrease occurred because of an increased emphasis on building relationships in lieu of sending students to the office. Parris et al (2014) also noted that the extreme improvements may have been due in part because these students experienced TBRI® strategies in school and at their place of residence, so traditional schools may not see such large and immediate impact.

Healing Trauma at School

In the most recent article on TBRI® in schools, Mikhail (2017) chronicled the efforts of a counselor in Temple, Texas to bring TBRI ®to her school district. This counselor recognized through her TBRI® studies "to look beyond a child's behavior and see the [child's] need." The program began with a focus on the one percent of students who most frequently had difficulty regulating their behavior and emotions. This counselor's efforts as a single individual have grown over several years to include teachers, staff, and even bus drivers in the district.

Another school district that has been involved with TBRI® implementation is the Fort Worth ISD with 86,000 students (Mikhail, 2017). The district joined forces with TCU to conduct a study on the impact of nurture groups on 4th and 5th graders. They noted that students involved in nurture groups reported a greater reduction of trauma symptoms. For the 2015-16 school year, Fort Worth ISD expanded the use of the TBRI® nurture groups to all of its elementary campuses.

Conclusion

Both the Oklahoma school and Texas residential care school studies that have been reported in detail in the literature and reviewed here indicate a positive change in behaviors with the implementation of TBRI®. These promising results have been further supported with early results from school districts in Missouri, and in Temple and Fort Worth, Texas. The use of TBRI in schools is only a few years old, but holds great promise.

The principal of the Oklahoma school noted that his faculty connected with TBRI® because it allowed them to be kind to the students. For example, a third grade teacher shared that her new approach gave children choices and allowed for effective negotiation that kept the learning experiences moving. This principal concluded by saying that when the students feel loved, safe, and successful, learning can take place.

If a teacher can provide a safe, nurturing, and predictable environment, the "cloak of fear" can be removed (Purvis, Milton, Harlow, Paris, and Cross, 2014). When a child feels like their needs will be met and their voice will be heard, they begin to believe they can succeed, and their bodies will reflect this. The fight, flight, and freeze behaviors will subside to more regulated responses as they can access reason in their prefrontal cortex where executive thinking resides. Children in a safe environment will also be able to become social with their peers, and can interact with others. All of these improvements will result in a happier child who will undoubtedly be a more productive learner.

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Principles and Principals: Leveraging K-12 Principal Training and Evaluation Standards to Support Environmental, Ecological, and Sustainability Education

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Abstract

Ecoliteracy is the pedagogical grouping of environmental science, ecology and sustainability studies. This paper is a policy analysis of how principal training and evaluation standards may support a principal's building-level efforts to establish and sustain an ecoliteracy mission and curriculum in US public K-12 schools. A comparative case study of leadership standards in Texas and Michigan was conducted to support the argument that school administrator training and evaluation standards in both states can lend formal, codified support to a sufficiently determined school leader's efforts to center the school's mission on ecoliteracy. The limitations of this support are also discussed.

Keywords: leadership preparation standards, environmental education, ecoliteracy; leadership evaluation, Texas, Michigan

In contemporary American public school settings, it is the principal that has the greatest role in setting the culture, tone and direction of the school. This is particularly true in those settings that employ a site-based management approach. The principal's imprimatur is apparent in the school's day-to-day operations, as well as its short-term initiatives and longer-terms strategic plans. While individual teachers or a cohort of teachers might adopt a particular educational plan or approach, their efforts gain or lose traction contingent upon the principal's endorsement and continued support. In the face of environmental change and attendant societal strife (Hutchinson, 1998), a principal might make environmental science and sustainability studies the school's central mission and curriculum. The advantage of doing so captures substantial teachable moments in science, cultural studies and civics. However, no template exists for such an implementation. As a result, the principal either has to improvise, or look to organizational policy and procedures for support.

Limited research has been conducted concerning school leaders and environmental education within school organizational structures. However, some literature exists concerning social justice in educational settings. For example, Murakami and Törsen (2015) conducted a comparative study of educational policies in Texas and Sweden as applied to democratic principles, i.e. teaching students to function in a democratic society. Murakami and Törsen specified the responsibilities and actions required by principals to promote democratic principles. Their comparison of Texas and Sweden outlined commonalities and differences between the two settings. Their work focused on the preparation and professional practice of principals in the context of teaching for democracy.

Why Environmental Education?

We assert that, like democratic practice, environmental education is a desirable mission and pedagogy for a principal to implement in a public school setting. We anticipate that soon in the United States, scientific study of the environment, especially in K-12 settings, will come under even greater governmental and sectarian scrutiny and attack. As environmental stewardship falls further out of favor among the public, children's inherent interest in nature (e.g., Louv, 2005), and the attendant teachable moments, may be lost. (On the other hand, increases in the frequency and severity of environmental crises may prompt a governmental/popular response more in favor of environmental education.) Whatever happens, the preservation and recapture of these learning opportunities requires from educators either passive resistance (i.e., subversion) or codification. Choosing an "environmental" school mission is one way for a school leader to pursue the option of codification. But what scaffolds that choice? We argue that it is logical to examine the overlap of environmental education with principal training and evaluation processes.

Purpose and Method of this Study

We are interested in the school leader's role in environmental education. We are particularly interested in how training and evaluation impacts the school leader's ability to implement a building-wide environmental education curriculum. Murakami and Törsen studied democratic principles through comparative analysis of Texas and Sweden. We too are situating our question in Texas, but like Murakami and Törsen, we see benefit in examining school leader preparation & evaluation in more than one state setting.

This study is not an empirical investigation of promulgated policy. No public K-12 settings in Texas or Michigan have declared an "environmental" mission. No schools in either state connect principal standards to any form of environmental or Earth science education. It is our intention here to analyze ways that such educational missions can be connected to established organizational policy. Educational policy in the U.S. over the last two decades has placed strong emphasis on school accountability. In our analysis of hypothetical policy, we explore ways to connect a school's environmental-education mission to school leader accountability. Comparing the preparation of new administrators and the evaluation of in-service administrators provides multiple perspectives on how ecoliteracy can be supported by state policies. This is not an apples-and-oranges comparison; the alignment of Texas evaluation standards with Michigan preparation standards allows us to make a thorough and meaningful parallel comparison, from training to practice. We begin our analysis with a description of the principles of "environmental" education. We then discuss the school principal certification and evaluation processes in Michigan and Texas. We continue this discussion by examining the commonalities and contrasts between these two U.S. states. Finally, we analyze the overlap between environmental education principles and principal leadership standards, and how the latter scaffolds the former.

The current training and evaluation processes in the states of Michigan and Texas provide logical examples of how a principal is *de facto* endorsed to focus his/her school on environmental education. Our analysis addresses two research questions. First, do school

administrator preparation evaluation standards support a mission of environmental education in a public school setting? Second, what are the challenges and limitations of this approach? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to understand what is meant by "environmental education."

Principles of environmental, ecological and sustainability education

Environmental and sustainability education are defined in myriad ways and in multiple contexts (e.g. Fiani & Rohrer, 2012; Miller & Spoolman, 2012; Orr, 1994; Rincones-Delgado & Bustillos-Durán, 2011). The problem with the term "environmental education" is that it is frequently used in a generic sense to encompass scientific study, educational policy and sustainability. The US Environmental Protection Agency states that

> [E]nvironmental education increases public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues or problems. In doing so, it provides the public with the necessary skills to make informed decisions and take responsible action' (US EPA, 2016).

"Ecological education" also appears frequently in discussions of environmental and sustainability education. This concept is more focused on Earth systems such as the atmosphere, biosphere and hydrosphere, and their interactions with each other and with humans (Hautecoeur, 2002). The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNWCED) addressed sustainability in the context of sustainable development, defined as economic and social systems and "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNWCED, 1987).

Developing an integrated understanding of environment, ecology and sustainability can be difficult for specialists and non-specialists alike. A convenient integration is provided by the concept of "ecoliteracy" as defined by Feig (2004):

> The basic information and social practices need to survive in a world
> where the interconnections between humans and their planetary
> environment, and the physical processes of the planet, are not mere
> constructs relegated to a science classroom, but form a reality that
> shapes, guides and constrains human activity and human survival
> (p. 13)

This definition of ecoliteracy presents a pedagogical synergy between sustainable human activity, technical scientific knowledge and human culture. The latter cannot be excluded in considerations of human-Earth interactions. Ecoliteracy can be further unpacked to reveal its four fundamental principles (Feig, 2004): 1) environmental stewardship; 2) environmental justice; 3) systems-based thinking; and 4) deep time. The first two principles address environmental sustainability education through consideration of human-environment interactions. The third principle addresses the technical and scientific understanding of Earth processes, e.g. plate tectonics or weather. (These are examples of content knowledge.) The last principle addresses mental and personal understanding of the Earth. Deep time describes the

ability—and willingness—to think in the long-term time frames (i.e., 10^9 years) in which Earth processes operate.

The pedagogy of ecoliteracy is translated into a curriculum of ecoliteracy by cultivating a school environment where a traditional, scientific understanding of "the environment" is combined with the teaching of environmental justice, environmental stewardship and other ways of knowing beyond Western, Eurocentric means (Semken, 2005). Integral to this combination is the deep-time perspective of the geologic time scale (Walker & Geissman, 2009), which is fundamental to Earth science. Of course, the pedagogy and curriculum of ecoliteracy are substantially different from current environmental education, as detailed in the U.S.'s Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States, 2013); or those of Michigan (Ziker 2014) or Texas (Porter-Magee, Wright & Horn, 2013).

Principles and Principals: Examples of Ecoliterate Schools

Some examples exist that describe the principal's primary role in advancing ecoliterate curricula and teaching missions. One example of a school adopting an environmental mission described by Williams and Taylor (1999) is that of building the public Environmental Middle School (EMS) in Portland, Oregon, in 1995. This was in response to demand by parents for alternatives to standardized public school education. EMS was established during a time of budget cutbacks in the city school district. The school's mission was to integrate ecology into education to make school more meaningful for learners (Williams & Taylor, 1999). EMS was established in an existing building housing another, existing school, and had to share resources and space. EMS was required to adhere to district hiring and staffing policies, meaning that the teachers there may or may not have been those most trained and qualified to teach an environmental curriculum. In terms of curriculum, instruction was largely field based, with students conducting investigations on the city park they adopted and helping to restore native plants while studying the local ecosystems. It is worth noting that the school met or exceeded the standards of academic accomplishment and accountability that existed at that time in Portland (Williams & Taylor, 1999).

An example of one principal's efforts towards building level ecoliteracy is the Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, California. This on-site teaching garden started as a community-building initiative that grew to be the keystone of the school curriculum, with each subject rooted in ecology. In 1996, a member of the local community approached the new principal at Martin Luther King, Jr., school to establish the garden. It was the principal's buy-in that was key to the success of the garden (Waters, 1999). For example, at a start-of-the-year teacher in-service, some faculty summarized the troubled school's problems by saying, 'our school need[s] a revolution' (Comnes, 1999). In response, the principal, Neil Waters, established the "Revolutionary Committee", with a fluid and open membership. Waters gave the committee authority to identify and address problems. This included changing from 45-minute periods to block-schedule 95-minute periods, establishing an eight-level voting process for staff decisions, and reaching out to community members for help in establishing the teaching garden. In growing, harvesting, cooking and serving the crops at their school, students gained knowledge and appreciation of Earth processes associated with agriculture (Jackson, 1999).

Arguably, the principals in these examples had substantial autonomy. What about settings in which this would not be the case? What support might principals in such settings have for implementing ecoliteracy education?

Theoretical Frameworks Applicable to Ecoliterate School Leadership

The theories of leadership and administrative theory that are highly congruent with building-level ecoliteracy efforts are 1) advocacy leadership (Anderson, 2009); 2) blended instructional and transformative leadership (e.g., Hallinger, 2003); and 3) Webster's (2004) four-stage model of sustainable school development, as further explored by Scott in 2013.

Advocacy leadership is a direct challenge to constant and catastrophic school reform efforts that drive and perpetuate social inequity and inequality. Anderson (2009) identifies the focus of school leadership as efficiency (i.e., efficient use of resources and efficient accountability of outcomes). Anderson argues that in advocacy leadership, the principal is not and cannot be apolitical, because current reform efforts benefit some entities (e.g., business interests) and damage others (e.g., students and communities). The principal, then, must be at the forefront of social and community justice. In the wake of constant reform efforts, principals must develop their own agendas. We see this as directly applicable to the principal who would address social, community, and planetary issues via a school mission of ecoliteracy.

Hallinger (2003) discusses the historical development of instructional and transformational leadership practices. We recognize that these are not theories per se; Hallinger frames them as conceptualizations, which we find useful in the discussion of building-level ecoliteracy. The transformational school leader is focused on management and teaching of the curriculum. Principals set school tone in something of a cult of personality, deeply involved in day-to-day operations with measurable goals for the institution and its personnel. Transformational leadership does not itself abandon these characteristics. Rather, it is more reactionary to the micromanagement of schools from levels above and outside of the building. This practice is less focused on the principal as the individual source of governance (versus setting a tone). School vision is articulated with participation from staff, who work together to define the goals of the school, rather than meeting goals imposed from outside. We see transformational leadership as reliant on living networks (Capra, 2001) within the educational system. Such cultural and interpersonal networks operate in parallel to networks of Earth processes, which themselves are part of the package of ecoliteracy. This parallel operation then forms part of the theoretical foundations for this study.

These two leadership practices are integrated in our framework, because the principal must approach ecoliteracy from a strategic intention of advocacy leadership. The principal sets the tone, manages the resources, facilitates activities (instructional), but does not prescribe or micromanage the curriculum or community relationships—allowing them to grow organically (transformational).

Scott (2013) describes a school's "institutional journey towards being more sustainable" (p. 186) in the context of the four stages of development originally articulated by Webster (2004). In fact, Scott lists five stages, the first being Number Zero (2013). This stage begins with

diffuse interest by students, teachers or parents in "greening" of the school. In the next, "first" stage, isolated curricular or programmatic items are created, usually in spite of the indifference of leaders. In the second and third stages, the principal buys into sustainability, makes budget and resource decisions supportive of sustainability and forges salient community relationships. The fourth stage is an idealized vision of a culturally and ecologically transformative school. We focus on Scott's (2013) and Webster's (2004) second and third stages, because when a principal seeks to implement an ecoliterate school mission, she or he has bypassed the previous stages. As the principal moves forward, this is where leadership standards and guidelines may scaffold him or her.

An additional theoretical concept relevant here is that of refocusing, as discussed by Bottery (2011) and Zachariou, Kadji-Beltran & Manoli (2013). These workers recast the fundamental purposes of education in terms of social and environmental welfare, versus the production of workers for a capitalist society. This refocus is accomplished by cross-curricular pedagogy, deep mastery, and what we label the "pedagogy of empathy" (i.e., caring for others and the environment).

School leaders must be resilient planners that foster a culture of community inside and outside of their buildings. When considering where theory meets practice in ecoliteracy, principal standards are best contextualized in the theoretical frameworks we have discussed. What follows is our analysis of how the standards support ecoliterate education .

Principal Training and Evaluation in Michigan and Texas

We focus on the states of Michigan and Texas because the two states provide an interesting study in contrasts. Texas schools are subject to more direct regulation by the state legislature than in Michigan. Texas is a right-to-work state; educational labor unions do not have a particularly strong presence there, and collective bargaining is rare. Despite the ratification of Michigan's right-to-work status in 2012, labor unions maintain a strong presence, and collective bargaining is commonplace in the state's public education settings. Michigan adopted the Common Core Science Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018), but Texas did not.

Principal Evaluation in Texas

In 2014 the Texas Education Agency (TEA) adopted Chapter 149, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Educator Standards, Subchapter BB, Administrator Standards, §149.2001, Principal Standards, in accordance with the Texas Educational Code (TEA, 2014). The TEA principal standards may be categorized into school culture, operations, human capital and leadership. This last category contains two subcategories; first is Executive Leadership, which we equate with Michigan's category of Leadership and Vision (Michigan standards are discussed below). The second subcategory is leadership in Learning and Curriculum. The TEA does not have a separate category for external or collaborative relationships, but this is addressed in the TEA standard concerning school culture. TEA standards include Performance Indicators specifically aligned with their 'Principal Knowledge and Skills' standards.

Principal Evaluation in Michigan

Chapter 380.1249, "Performance Evaluation System for Teachers and School Administrators" of the Michigan Revised School Code mandates

> *the evaluation of an administrator's job performance using multiple rating categories that take into account student growth and assessment data.* (Michigan Legislature, 2013)

In Michigan, no state-authored procedure exists for school administrator evaluation. However, the MDE does recommend the use of either the Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric (Reeves, 2016) or the Michigan Association of School Administrators Advance ™ Administrator Evaluation System for Learning, Growth and Adaptation (MASA, 2016). The Reeves Rubric's possible principal ratings are Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory. To provide an example of this rubric's 'flavor,' the criterion for "Highly Effective" in Domain 2.2, Personal Behavior & Professional Ethics: Emotional Control, reads:

> *The leader deals with sensitive subjects and personal attacks with dignity and self-control. The leader never meets anger with anger, but defuses confrontational situations with emotional intelligence, empathy, and respect.*

The MASA rubric provides three possible ratings of principal performance: Minimally Effective, Effective and Highly Effective. The general flavor of this rubric can be seen in the 'Highly Effective' criterion for Domain 5: System—Technology Integration & Competence Factors, Leadership for Technology Characteristics:

> *Works with staff to identify evidence-based technology practices that improve instruction, extend learning opportunities and foster student and parent engagement in the learning process.*

Principal Training and Certification in Michigan

While no doubt useful in some contexts, the Reeves and MASA rubrics do not compare in a straightforward manner with Texas legislation §149.2001, especially in the context of identifying support for establishing building-level ecoliteracy. However, the Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC) 2011 Standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2016) to guide principal preparation programs are organized in a manner parallel to Texas legislation. The Michigan State Board of Education (MSBE), a unit within the MDE, formally adopted these principal preparation standards in 2012 (MSBE, 2013). ELCC standards are divided into seven basic categories: Leadership and vision, school culture, school operations, personnel management, external/collaborative relationships, ethics and learning/curriculum. These standards are further articulated by subsets of Standard Elements, each of which lists required content knowledge and related (future) performance expectations. The NPBEA (2011) standards compare favorably with the Texas standards described earlier.

<center>**Principal Training and Certification in Texas**</center>

Texas Administrative Code (2016) Title 19, Part 7, Chapter 241, Rule §241.15 specifies the standards for principal certification in that state. These standards bear a strong similarity to the evaluation standards. The categories include School Culture, Leading Learning (instructional aspects of the school), Human Capital, Executive Leadership, Strategic Operations, and finally Ethics, Equity and Diversity. The Administrative Code delineates a set of knowledge and skills for each of these categories. Texas requires principals pass a certification test covering these standards. Principals must also to hold a valid teaching certificate and at least a Master's degree from an accredited institution.

<center>**Leadership Standards that Support Ecoliteracy Education**</center>

We use the term "leadership standards" as shorthand when referring to both the Texas performance indicators and the Michigan standard elements. Otherwise, we use the terms "indicators" when discussing Texas, and "elements" when discussing Michigan. Many of the Texas indicators and Michigan elements are generic in nature. For example, "implementing a rigorous curriculum" can certainly support ecoliteracy, but also many other curricula. We therefore limit our discussion to leadership standards for which more specific and compelling arguments can be made. Table 1 summarizes relevant leadership standards, and those numbered items are discussed below.

Table 1: Summary of Texas and Michigan Leadership Guidelines that support principals in establishing ecoliteracy.

Summary of Texas and Michigan Leadership Guidelines that support principals in establishing ecoliteracy.

Principal certification standards aligned w/environmental education		
Category	TX Indicators	MI Elements
Leadership & vision	3.B.i, 5.B.i, 5.B.iii, 5.B.iv	1.1.4, 1.3.2
School culture	4.B.iii	2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.3.3
Operations	-	-
Personnel management	2.B.i, 2.B.iii	1.3.3
External/collaborative relationships	4.B.iii	4.2.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3
Ethics		5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4.2, 5.5.1, 5.5.2
Learning & curriculum	1.B.ii, 1.B.iii	6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.3.1, 6.3.2

Ecoliteracy and Executive Leadership & Vision
Four Texas indicators suggest compelling alignments:
> *3.B.i. Resiliency and change management. The leader remains solutions-oriented, treats challenges as opportunities, and supports staff through changes.*

> *5.B.i. Strategic planning. The leader outlines and tracks clear goals, targets, and strategies aligned to a school vision that improves teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.*

5.B.iii. Tactical resource management. The leader aligns resources with the needs of the school and effectively monitors the impact on school goals.

5.B.iv. Policy implementation and advocacy. The leader collaborates with district staff to implement and advocate for district policies that meet the needs of students and staff.

Performance Indicator 3.B.i. seems quite generic on first inspection. However, resiliency and change management are particularly important to a curriculum implementing the four principles of ecoliteracy education. 3.B.i is less specific to other subjects, e.g. mathematics, chemistry or reading. In the context of the principles of environmental justice and stewardship, a dynamic curriculum needs to respond to teachable moments inherent in real-time, real-world developments, particularly in disempowered communities. Examples include environmental racism in the forms of pervasive lead contamination in Flint, Michigan (e.g. Hanna-Attisha, et. al, 2016); illegal waste disposal in communities of color in throughout Michigan (Bryant, 2011,); and the distribution of impoverished communities in areas highly prone to natural disasters in Texas (Adler, 2005). A principal must have sufficient leadership skills to coordinate an ecoliteracy-curriculum response to such community developments, especially local ones. Proper change management could include spreading an environmental justice incident across disciplines. For example, chemistry students could balance equations of acid-lead pipe interactions, and social studies students could analyze governmental response to contaminated water supplies.

In the context of the ecoliteracy principle of systems thinking, change management is a curricular leadership skill in the face of, for example, our evolving understandings of the mechanisms and impacts of climate change and attendant human response. For example, as our technological capability for atmospheric engineering grows (Robock, 2014), those advances, and their consequences for the climate system, can be examined within the school curriculum.

The principal's resiliency skills apply when teachers are under pressure to avoid teaching subjects such as the age of the Earth. A calm, thoughtful strategy crafted by the principal, grounded in legal precedent, is ideal; however, such tactics are usually ineffective against teleological opposition (e.g., U.S. District Court, 2005). The principal must be able to modify his/her policy accordingly, and in the face of the typical patterns (Matsumura, 1995) of multiple sectarian attacks.

Texas Performance Indicator 5.B.i, Strategic Planning, is relevant because prepackaged ecoliteracy curricular materials do not exist. However, the *parts* are available—lesson plans and multimedia materials relevant to the four principles of ecoliteracy. Feig (2004) argued that the assembly of these parts should be specific to the site and community where they are deployed. While the 'Edible Schoolyard' worked well in the northern California climate, a teaching garden would be more difficult to establish and maintain in a location with a much shorter growing season, or in an arid climate. Furthermore, the study of environmental justice should be related to the regional community and its issues—this increases the agency of teachers and students. In the face of these issues, a Texas principal is authorized by this Performance Indicator to foster an ethos of innovation at the school. This ethos empowers teachers, which in turn improves school effectiveness (e.g. Bogler & Somech, 2004). Of course, the principal is obligated to structure the

school's vision of ecoliteracy to align with student achievement mandates. A holistic, cross-disciplinary environmental curriculum has long been shown to be the same as or better than a testing-driven, single-subject approach (Bartosh, et al., 2009; Lieberman & Hoody, 1998; Monroe, Randall & Crisp, 2001; Mueller, et al., 2014). An ecoliteracy curriculum is better positioned to improve student outcomes.

A vision and curriculum of ecoliteracy are highly reliant on Performance Indicator 5.B.iii, Tactical Resource Management. Ecoliteracy resource needs go beyond materials; stakeholders inside and outside the school should be active participants in the teaching and learning process (Comnes, 1999; Feig, 2004; Williams & Taylor, 1999). Advanced professional development for teachers in content expertise is another need. 'Bubble-in' assessment techniques are by themselves insufficient to measure learning goals in such areas as an internalized sense of environmental stewardship, or personal agency in the face of environmental injustice. The principal must be able to leverage, or assist teachers to leverage, the resources necessary.

A principal must have sufficient autonomy to establish a vision and curriculum of ecoliteracy. We suspect that a principal attempting to implement ecoliteracy would encounter substantial obstacles at the site, district and community levels. District policies, visions and curricula are tailored for wide application, efficiency of promulgation and cost effectiveness. Ecoliteracy is a radical departure from the status quo, and the principal may need to be a fierce advocate for the change. Performance Indicator 5.B.iv provides codified support for a principal's efforts to push for district policies that allow nonstandard practice at the building level. However, it is incumbent on the principal to demonstrate how ecoliteracy benefits students and staff and, ultimately, the district.

The Performance Indicators in Michigan's Standards for Principal Preparation are in the form of unnumbered, bulleted lists within numbered Standard Elements. For example, the third bullet under Standard Element 1.1, "Candidates understand and can collaboratively develop, articulate, implement, and steward a shared vision of learning," reads as follows:

> Develop a comprehensive plan for communicating the school vision to appropriate school constituencies.

For our purposes, we have modified the Standard Elements numeration such that the above Performance Indicator is referred to as 1.1.3.
Two Michigan elements lend support to school ecoliteracy:
> *1.1.4. Formulate plans to steward school vision statements.*
>
> *1.3.2. Design a transformational change plan at the school-building-level.*

Consistent with 1.1.4, vision statements of ecoliteracy must be preserved and protected. Because ecoliteracy is such a radical departure from traditional practice, it will likely be prone to attack or dismantling. For strategies to steward this vision, we point to examples from place-based education, e.g. Smith (2007) and Stevenson (2007). We concede that this Performance Indicator is oriented more towards compliance than scaffolding; however, in any novel and revolutionary implementation, vision must be safeguarded.

Prior to safeguarding a vision of ecoliteracy, that vision must be articulated. Performance Indicator 1.3.2 requires the design of a 'transformational change plan' for schools, in keeping with the legacy of constant and relentless calls for school reform across the nation (Cuban, 1990; Watkins, 2015). "School change" in Michigan and Texas tends to reinforce a culture of high-stakes testing (e.g. Education Achievement Authority of Michigan, 2016). However, ecoliteracy represents a change that improves high-stakes test performance, while simultaneously subverting that system by moving away from drill-and-kill test-prep (e.g. Williams & Taylor, 1999). While ecoliteracy may not be the change that the district has in mind, a principal could refer to this Performance Indicator as an endorsement of a particularly radical transformation.

Ecoliteracy and school culture

Three Michigan elements lend support to a vision and curriculum of ecoliteracy:

2.1.2. Incorporate cultural competence, personality types in development of programs, curriculum, and instructional practices.

2.1.4. Recognize, celebrate, and incorporate diversity in programs, curriculum, and instructional practices.

2.3.3. Design the use of differentiated instructional strategies, curriculum materials, and technologies to maximize high-quality instruction

Cultural competence, a component of Performance Indicator 2.1.2, is a keystone of ecoliteracy. The stakeholders in a school's ecoliteracy efforts include municipalities, businesses and community members. This last group is the most crucial, and of the widest potential diversity. Community members include the district's residents, landowners (both private and public) and leaders, including clergy and organizers/activists. These players interact in the physical, cultural and political environment. Together with parents, students and school personnel, they are a living network (Capra, 1996) that informs and is informed by the Earth environment and the study thereof. By definition, ecoliteracy incorporates cultural components into curriculum, programs—and the school—and is well supported by this Performance Indicator. For the same reasons, the focus on diversity on 2.1.4 supports ecoliteracy. The pedagogy of ecoliteracy expands the ways of knowing about the Earth environment, and its interaction with humanity, beyond Western scientific thought. A principal facilitating the challenge of integrating diverse communities, points of view and social actors into a science program is supported by this Performance Indicator.

As we noted earlier, a prepackaged ecoliteracy curriculum and associated materials do not exist at present. Thus, it is incumbent upon the principal to design or facilitate the design of those materials. Performance Indicator 2.3.3 specifically calls for the principal to do so, and is therefore supportive of this needed activity.

One Texas indicator is relevant to ecoliteracy:

4.B.iii. Intentional family and community engagement. The leader engages families and community members in student learning.

As shown by the examples from Oregon and California, community engagement is core to ecoliteracy. Community members bring other ways of knowing. For example, migrant farm workers, whose children attend public schools, bring knowledge of soil, agriculture and weather, and the transfer of technology between farm locations. Their ways of knowing are acknowledged and valued in ecoliteracy pedagogy. An effective principal engages with these and other community members on the basis that the school and its community exist together in the local ecosystem.

Ecoliteracy and oversight of operations

The operations/oversight leadership standards in both states yield no compelling alignments in support of ecoliteracy education. Generic alignments of course exist, such as "efficiently use human, fiscal, and technological resources" (MI); and "assess current needs of their schools" (TX). We note that while explicit support is lacking, these Performance Indicators certainly do not work against ecoliteracy in a school.

Ecoliteracy and personnel management

This category of leadership standards is exceedingly generic; nevertheless, we call attention to two from Texas and one from Michigan:

TEXAS 2.B.1. Targeted selection, placement, and retention. The leader selects, places, and retains effective teachers and staff.

TEXAS 2.B.3. Staff collaboration and leadership. The leader implements collaborative structures and provides leadership opportunities for effective teachers and staff.

MICHIGAN 1.3.3. Design a comprehensive, building-level professional development program.

We discuss these leadership standards here not because they explicitly scaffold ecoliteracy, but rather because ecoliteracy is highly dependent upon them. Of course, ecoliteracy is also dependent, like any curriculum, on successful building operations. However, its dependence on successful personnel management is greater and more specific. This is because of the need to cross disciplinary (content) boundaries. For example, social studies teachers and science teachers need to be able to sufficiently overlap into the other's area, in order to jointly teach the interconnections between human affairs and Earth processes. This means the principal must retain teachers skilled enough—and willing enough—to work across disciplines.

Furthermore, because ecoliteracy is based on interconnected, living networks, collaboration, professional development and teacher placement are crucial. Environmental, geological and meteorological events (crises) develop in real time, and can involve mechanisms beyond the knowledge base or experience of school staff. The principal may then want to develop 'just-in-time' professional development opportunities where teachers can obtain needed information and resources. Examples may include informal partnerships with universities, and local National Weather Service offices and natural science museums.

Ecoliteracy and external relationships & collaborations.

Both Texas and Michigan leadership standards focus primarily on family-school relationships:

TEXAS 4.b.iii. Intentional family and community engagement: The leader engages families and community members in student learning.

MICHIGAN 4.2.1. Identify and use diverse community resources to improve school programs.

MICHIGAN 4.3.2. develop collaboration strategies for effective relationships with families and caregivers.

MICHIGAN 4.3.3. involve families and caregivers in the decision-making processes at the school.

Texas 4.B.iii applies here as well as to school culture, and Michigan's elements expand the basic idea we discussed above. The principal is expected to find and use local businesses, government agencies and other loci of expertise (4.2.1). For example, partnerships with city planners, and water and electric utilities support student learning about energy and infrastructure. These agencies assess environmental impacts on an ongoing basis. These agencies, together with the school, could take on joint stewardship of a plot of land near the school, to facilitate project-based learning guided by the utility and its experts.

The principal is also expected to extend decision-making beyond the building itself. Fortunately, the pedagogy of ecoliteracy already opens up the school by placing the building and its curricula in the local community and environment. Distributed leadership among families, caregivers and community members is required, which makes administrative micromanagement of the school infeasible.

Ecoliteracy and ethics

Interestingly, no Texas indicators in this area specifically support ecoliteracy. This is because unlike Michigan, Texas does not have a separate category of standards for ethics. However, the expectation of ethical behavior and ethical actions on the part of principals is present throughout the Texas indicators.

Five of Michigan's elements speak specifically to ecoliteracy:

5.3.1. Develop, implement, and evaluate school policies and procedures that support democratic values, equity, and diversity issues.

5.3.2. Develop appropriate communication skills to advocate for democracy, equity, and diversity.

5.4.2. Evaluate school strategies to prevent difficulties related to moral and legal issues.

5.5.1. Review and critique school policies, programs, and practices to ensure that student needs inform all aspects of schooling, including social justice, equity, confidentiality, acceptance, and respect between and among students and faculty within the school.

5.5.2. Develop the resiliency to uphold school community values and persist in the face of adversity.

Equity and democracy are fundamental parts of an effective ecoliteracy curriculum. Performance Indicator 5.3.1 and to an extent, 5.3.2, discuss school policy, rather than instruction. However, policy supports instruction; equitable and democratic policy will spread those values into instruction. We view the legal issues mentioned in 5.4.2 to be concerned with student discipline. Many disciplinary issues arise due to the perceived dullness and lack of relevance of the curriculum. Our take is that an integrated, project based curriculum focused on the local environment will keep students engaged sufficiently to reduce disciplinary issues. Furthermore, we view moral issues (whatever those may be) in the context of social (environmental) justice. Ecoliteracy should include democratic practice, self-agency and personal relevance to the students. If a school implements ecoliteracy, then the social justice requirements of 5.5.1 are met: "Respecting the Earth" begins with respecting oneself—a value schools already strive to impart to students.

We have already discussed "resiliency" as it was articulated in the Texas indicators. Even though it appears in the Michigan standards under "Ethics," the same arguments apply. Ecoliteracy will come under multiple attacks. The principal who is pressured to repeal this curriculum has leadership standards that support (and require) his or her persistence in the face of that adversity.

Ecoliteracy and learning & curriculum

One Texas indicator supports ecoliteracy:
1.B.ii. Effective instructional practices. The leader develops high-quality instructional practices among teachers that improve student learning.

Three Michigan elements support ecoliteracy:

6.1.1. Analyze how law and policy is applied consistently, fairly and ethically within the school.

6.1.2. Advocate based on an analysis of the complex causes of poverty and other disadvantages.

6.3.1. Identify and anticipate emerging trends and issues likely to affect the school.

Ecoliteracy is applied on both global and local levels, or "glocally" (Roudometof, 2015). This "glocalisation" of a curriculum integrates economic, cultural, social, political and scientific

knowledge across multiple scales. For example, when children look out their windows and see air pollution, they can be taught about the following:

> -Formation of photochemical smog
> -Landscape features that allow air pollution to accumulate
> -Travel of the pollution through and across communities
> -What communities are disproportionally affected by pollution,
>   in terms of race or income
> -The response of governmental agencies (or lack thereof)
> -The distribution of pollution as compared to the distribution of
>   resources.

These concepts are a combination of scientific and sociological means of understanding environmental justice. They underscore the notion that connections between location, socioeconomic status and environment are complex, and provide an opportunity for (self) advocacy, and the examination of equity in the community. These strategies are directly expressed by the Michigan elements listed above.

Limitations and Challenges

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2002) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) are lenses through which the principals and principles of our discussion refract. The principal that expects substantial pushback from parents and/or the board may behave, predictably, in a manner that undermines his or her efforts in, for example, fostering a non-combative school culture. While this "planned behavior" may seem incidental to the situation, it is predicated on the perception of others' (e.g., parents, the board) attitudes. TPB suggests that despite the support of staff and community, the principal may still feel no control over the choice of school mission (Veronese & Kensler, 2013). Veronese & Kensler (2013) trace this phenomenon to the fact that leading "environmentally sustainable" schools is outside the purview of principal preparation programs and extant policy. For our purposes, this translates into a fundamental shortfall for ecoliteracy in schools. In spite of that, we have made a case for the potential support that administrator leadership guidelines can lend to ecoliteracy education.

However, we identify three specific major challenges. First, neither Texas nor Michigan's leadership standards explicitly address environment, ecology or sustainability by name or directive. Furthermore, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders-2015 (formerly the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Commission Standards) (NPBEA, 2015), which provide direction for the training and certification of school leaders, are silent on the issue of environmental education. While a principal may find within leadership guidelines some degree of latitude to implement his or her school goals, this strategy is double-edged. Boards of education and district offices may respond in unfavorable and unpredictable ways. A counterargument may be made that a mission of ecoliteracy diverts resources; or works against the district's strategic plan; or would alienate community members in the district's particular political climate. Despite sound arguments for ecoliteracy, a principal may find an insurmountable resistance to change. It is not possible to make an ironclad case for the promulgation of ecoliteracy using leadership guidelines. Rather, our goal is to demonstrate that the guidelines are broad enough to provide a foundational level of regulatory support for ecoliteracy. These are things that the principal can fall back on in an environment of adversity.

The second major challenge is that state standards for student learning are generally not designed for the cross-disciplinary, holistic nature of ecoliteracy. States tend to compartmentalize and separate subjects. Math, civics, science and language arts have widely separated domains/content expectations. This situation is difficult to reconcile with the principles of ecoliteracy. Ecoliteracy resists convenient assessment via high-stakes testing; questions of environmental justice and stewardship are not easily assessed by 'bubble-in' concept inventories. The fact that holistic approaches can improve student performance on standardized assessments is not widely recognized. This further impedes implementation.

This leads into the third major challenge, which is a conceptual contradiction between the habits of mind of current accountability climates and the use of leadership standards to promote ecoliteracy. We are mindful that an ecoliteracy curriculum must still adhere to established standards of accountability—including high stakes standardized testing. Teachers and board members may see accountability as driving a one-dimensional educational environment, and the multidimensional nature of ecoliteracy may provoke an extreme dissonance for them. In both Texas and Michigan, student performance on tests is weighted heavily in teacher evaluation. Therefore, ecoliteracy may be seen as a threat to the very livelihood of teachers. In states like Michigan, the support of labor unions may mitigate this issue—but probably not in Texas. Ultimately, reckoning ecoliteracy with state-level student expectations and accountability is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Principals-Principles overlap, however, is fundamentally about educational access and justice. Environmental degradation affects every human, and disenfranchised people especially so. In a social and political climate that seeks to turn away from Earth systems as a subject of study, the overlaps between theory and policy are not merely intellectual curiosities. These overlaps are instead part of an arsenal available to school leaders in their efforts to provide children access and opportunity to learn about their planetary home.

Future Directions and Applications

The 2013 Next Generation Standards (NGSS) present some opportunities for ecoliteracy. NGSS takes more of an integrated-systems approach to the sciences, with a strong emphasis on engineering principles. Engineering is fundamentally a discipline of human-environment interactions, and thus represents a nucleus around which an ecoliteracy school mission could be established.

Most schools are required to develop improvement plans, and this is a requirement of Title 1 federal funding. Ecoliteracy can be incrementally integrated into a school's goals and objectives. Over the course of a few years, integration can start with community relations, then curriculum, then resources and personnel. This strategy is an area of future research.

In terms of other future research, we see opportunity to structure a formal paradigm of ecoliteracy education as a model that integrates diversity, social justice, physical environment and interdisciplinary teaching. In addition, the revision of the ELCC standards into the National Educational Leadership Preparation Standards (NPBEA, 2016) presents an opportunity to

introduce to ideas of ecoliteracy into leadership standards, and to drive convergence between the two. This begins with the support of policy boards (e.g. University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and state boards of education).

In the absence of national policy, we issue a call for school leaders to be empowered to make a school's local ecosystem and the school's sustainable place within it the teaching mission. Should those leaders be in a position to connect this teaching mission with applicable leadership standards, a future study would assess the impact of this connection on these principals.

The Ecoliterate School, High-Stakes Testing and Environmental Crisis

We recognize that the potential deal breaker for the ecoliterate principal is the specter of high-stakes testing. A school mission of ecoliteracy might be compelling, but perhaps difficult to view as helpful when facing the present reality that staffing and funding are strongly tied to testing "achievement." We assert that what is helpful is a matter of context. The current American high-stakes testing milieu is the result of a pedagogy of economics. Business interests have a strong hand in educational policy (e.g., The Business Roundtable, 2018); schools are sites for economic renewal (Hutchison, 1998); and children "learn to earn" (Feig, 2004, p. 2). In the pedagogy of economics, the Earth environment is not intrinsically valuable. It simply contains extractable resources to fuel economic success. Anecdotally, many school leaders and other educators express a desire to change or even eliminate the high-stakes testing culture in public schools. We suggest that this kind of paradigm shift is so vast and so fundamental that it could only be precipitated by an external catastrophe. The time is ripe for such a catastrophe—one driven by environmental crisis.

Catastrophic environmental crises driven by global change are imminent. No actual, legitimate doubt about this exists among Earth scientists. Global mean sea level rise has accelerated (Dieng, Cazanave, Meyssignac & Ablain, 2017); human population increases to 8-10 billion by 2050 (Lutz & KC, 2010) will lead to food shortages and biodiversity losses (Crist, Mora & Engleman, 2017); climate warming is increasing desertification and drought frequency and intensity (Huang, Yu, Guan, Wang & Guo, 2016). Communities and their schools in sensitive locations (e.g., on the edge of a shrinking aquifer) will be disproportionally harmed by environmental change. The pedagogical culture of high-stakes testing is not concerned with any of this. Ecoliteracy, however, is a pedagogy deliberately built to do so. The four principles of environmental justice, interconnected systems, deep time and stewardship explain day-to-day life in the building as that life is impacted by environmental crisis. The principles of ecoliteracy underscore how the high-stakes testing climate punishes schools that are environmentally vulnerable.

In many communities, schoolchildren face food shortages, pollution-related illness and lack of access to clean water. In places like Flint, Michigan, these are issues of environmental justice (Butler, Scammell & Benson, 2016). These issues can reduce a school's standardized test achievement, and the high-stakes testing culture responds by punishing those schools. Global climate change will exacerbate environmental justice problems and spread them through

interconnected systems. The more environmental injustice schools experience, the more they will be punished.

Earth processes operating far away from a school can affect its community, because natural processes are interconnected over large distances. For example, temperatures have risen globally, causing Pacific Ocean water to warm; warmer ocean water causes more rain in the U.S. to fall in the winter than in the summer; U.S. grasslands experience drought, which dries up aquifers (Volder, Briske & Tjoelker, 2013). The community on the edge of this aquifer—and its schoolchildren—is now in a water crisis. Lack of access to water impacts the health and wellbeing of schoolchildren, and their test scores drop. The high-stakes testing culture punishes the school.

Environmental changes are gradual and incremental—they are deep-time processes, taking longer than a typical generation. Environmental systems are interconnected and can only be fully understood through a holistic approach. Standardized tests can measure facts-based knowledge, but how well do they assess holistic, iterative understanding? If justice, interconnection and deep time resist testing, then they will not be tested, and they may not be taught. This is a pre-emptory punishment, because knowledge and information are withheld. If deep-time processes drive the well-being of a community, its school and its children, should they not be taught?

This leads us to the ecoliteracy principle of stewardship. Teaching students how to protect and preserve the environment, and the value of doing so, is both a proactive and reactive response to environmental crisis. Pedagogically, stewardship is the degree of care for the Earth environment. Practically, stewardship of the Earth environment is critical for the future well-being of society. How is stewardship assessed in a culture of high-stakes testing driven by the pedagogy of economics? We argue that ecoliteracy is crucial to individual and societal survival. We advocate for the pedagogy of ecoliteracy to replace the pedagogy of economics, and we call for the end of the high-stakes testing culture. We foresee a time when natural catastrophe will force this this to happen, in some form, and however painfully.

We return to the original question: How is ecoliteracy helpful to the principal now? In the example of the Edible Schoolyard, a revolution took place at the building level, driven by the principal. The deliberate focus on the physical environment improved the school. Ecoliteracy holds the same potential; not as an intervention, like at the Edible Schoolyard, but as a pedagogy that permeates every aspect of the school. This not only includes learning and curriculum, but also school culture, operations, personnel, ethics, external relationships, and leadership vision—elements in which the principal is trained and evaluated. In Michigan and Texas, the codified standards can support the principal whose vision sees ecoliteracy as a social good achieved through education.

Conclusion

As environmental crises encroach ever further into human affairs, schools will likely be both training grounds and battlegrounds for environmental awareness and action. Establishing and sustaining ecoliteracy education in public school settings rests squarely on the shoulders of

principals. They need to be equipped and supported to respond as educators and advocates. In fact, the public school principal may be a community's final bulwark against anti-intellectualism, science denial and environmental crisis in America.

Acknowledgements

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The Predictability Between Demographic and Institutional Variables of Texas High School Principals and Their Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement

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Over the past decades, the public school enterprise has been saturated with a myriad of social, political and academic ills. Problems such as reductions in state and federal funding, double digit percent student drop-outs, misidentification of students with learning disabilities, insufficient development of language skills in limited or non-English speaking students, shortage of highly qualified classroom teachers, unsafe schools, and students lacking college readiness are a few barriers to a student's success in school. Perhaps the most disturbing of these issues, however, is the high percentage of students from low income households who are not meeting academic standards on statewide assessments. According to the Southern Education Foundation (2015), approximately 51% of all students attending American public schools live in poverty. Research suggests that a large number of these students are ethnic minorities (De Fraga & Oliveira, 2010). Inasmuch, as these nuisances weigh heavily upon our educational system, it is a widely held belief that parental involvement is a reliable predictor of a student's academic success in school.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* was passed by the U. S. Congress to establish a national education system that would address high academic attainments for all, regardless of race, gender and social economic status. This law provided a set of accountability measures and expectations to enhance student achievement (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005).

Included in the *No Child Left Behind Act* was the practice of schools engaging parents in their children's education. The architects of this bill were undoubtedly clear in their belief that regardless of income or background parent involvement in education is crucial to a child's success in school.

The major focus of *No Child Left Behind* was to close the student achievement gap by providing all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. In addition, the *Act* required each individual state to develop its own assessment and accountability plan. To receive federal school funding, states would have to administer these assessments to all students at select grade levels. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) emphasizes four pillars within the bill:

- Accountability: Ensured that those students who are disadvantaged can achieve academic proficiency.
- Flexibility: Allowed school districts flexibility in how they use federal education funds to improve student achievement.
- Research-based education: Emphasized educational programs and practices that were proven effective through scientific research.
- Parent options: Increased the choices available to the parents of students attending Title I schools. (www.K12.wa.us/ESEA/NCLB.aspx)

Under *NCLB*, schools that received federal funding through Title I were required to implement a parental involvement component in their current year's school plans and goals. Although much was stated in the law regarding the school's duty towards parental involvement at the elementary level, only assumptions could be made that the same would be required in secondary schools. According to Epstein (2001) parents tend to be less involved with their children during secondary school years than they are during elementary school. Crozier & Davis (2007) explained that the reason why parents are less involved during children's secondary level schooling is "possibly because most middle schools are relatively large and located at some distance from the neighborhood they serve" (p. 121). Additionally, Landreth and & Bratton (2006) found that both student's stage of development and growing interest in peers and others outside the family may lead to the low involvement of parents at the secondary level. Moreover, the lack of a planned approach to continue parents' involvement in secondary school activities and academics may aid in lowering the participation of parents in their children's academic and social life at school. Seminal research suggests that parental involvement actually declines as students grow older, so that by the time a child reaches secondary school, fewer parents remain active in the educational process (Epstein, 1995).). Flaxman & Inger (1992) acknowledge that parent involvement at all grade levels is important. "The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades. There are strong positive effects from involving parents continuously through high school" (p.5), not only for enhancing the educational success of high school students but also because a number of social changes are occurring. The importance of parental involvement in adolescents' education has been identified repeatedly as a critical factor (Jeynes, 2007). For example, Engle (1989) concluded in his study of over 11,000 students that those who had engaged parents that were in involved in their secondary academic achievement and progress had a greater percentage of completing college.

On July 24, 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan introduced a milestone program entitled *Race to the Top*, a $4.35 billion fund, that could be used by states who can—if they want—submit applications and propose innovative programs for K-12 public schools. The goal was simple: make a difference in the future of America's education with creative and forward thinking programs which can impact all students and school communities. This in turn would provide the necessary focus of improving schools, supporting innovative teacher training, and development and increase student achievement. The program was funded by the *United States Department of Education Recovery Act* as part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. *Race to the Top* mandated that states be awarded points for satisfying certain educational policies, such as performance-based standards for teachers and principals, complying with *Common Core* standards, lifting caps on charter schools, improving the lowest performing schools, and building data systems. Many states competed to win these

grants; however, in 2010, only twelve entities were awarded the *Race to the Top* grant funding for a total of $4 billion to be spent in four years. Although the aim of the program was based on a philosophy of increasing the educational capacity of all students, it has not been widely accepted by all in the field of education, including some politicians, teachers' unions, policy analysts and school leaders. Critics say that high stakes testing is unreliable; charter schools weaken public education and that the federal government should not influence local schools (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2002). In explaining why Texas did not apply for the *Race to the Top* funding, former Governor Rick Perry did not feel that Texas should compete for the federal monies due to his belief that the Obama administration's plan was an unacceptable practice, limiting individual state control over education (Rapoport, 2010). *The Austin American Statesman* (2011) further reported that according to the National Education Association, the State of Texas ranked 44th in per student education expenditures (Selby, 2013). To further his commitment of enhanced avenues of education for all American school students, in 2014 President Obama created and expanded ladders of opportunity for boys and young men of color through *the My Brother's Keeper Initiative*. This effort was created to improve the educational and life expectancy outcomes in order to address the persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color (http:/www.whithouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper). Finally, the most recent referendum passed with the *No Child Left Behind* was replaced in 2015 with the *Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. *ESSA* returned legislative decision making back to states and challenges them with new accountability measures to rethink how they are supporting students and schools.

On June 15, 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed *House Bill (HB) 22*. Labelled *A-F Accountability Rating System*, this legislation established three domains for measuring schools and districts students' academic performance on high stakes testing. The three areas in which the exams will be constructed are Student Achievement (college career and military readiness and graduation rates); Student Progress (student growth and relative performance) and Closing the Achievement Gap (Educational Equity). Student scores from these three domains will be combined per campus to compute a score ranging from 0-100. Schools and districts will receive a letter grade of A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), or F0-59). Embedded in the examination instrument is the District Level Poverty Analysis which is a correlation between the rate of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and the district's overall A-F Rating. The new rating system is aligned with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's projection that by 2030 at least 60% of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree. This rating system will officially begin for Texas campuses during the 2018-19 school year.

As researchers, educators, and practitioners continue to explore avenues to improve students' education, the consensus is that not only do parents need to be involved in the schools, but partnerships with the community are also effective measures at furthering the home school connection. School Partnerships has been widely used to describe the interactions of parents, community members, local businesses, community leaders, government officials, and civic organizations' involvement with schools and the continued education of students (Barge & Loges, 2003). Rogers (2006) further posits that educators, administrators, parents, community members, community leaders, and social service providers are responsible for also ensuring the best possible education for students who will be the foundation of society in the future. Lately, educators are hearing more about full-service community schools, which pair schools with other

community resources in pursuit of the long-term goal of improving students' academic performance. The concept that schools should support the social, physical, and economic needs of children and families is nothing new and has been referred by progressive educators as the schools being the "center." (Dewey, 1902).

Bagin and Gallagher (2008) suggest that parents, educators, and community members can create workable partnerships by supporting each other in their respective roles, maintaining open communication, participating in shared decision- making processes, and implementing collaborative and authentic activities for the students. Educators need to explore partnership possibilities for enhancing educational successes that educators aspire to accomplish (Flaxman & Inger 1992).

Accordingly, the role of the principal is crucial to the successful development and implementation of an effective parental involvement program. Administrators must consider ways to promote parent activity in the school community (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). The leadership of the principal sets the tone for the culture and climate of the campus. Therefore, to aid in implementing more effective parental development programs, building principals must establish a welcoming climate that is built on a foundation of open communication, support and trust to all parents, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, culture or language. Theoharis (2009) identified "creating a climate of belonging" as one of the seven keys of social justice leadership, as well as promoting a welcoming climate and intentionally reaching out to marginalized families. Principals should facilitate a family-friendly school climate, address barriers to participation, take part in action teams for planning, allocate resources for partnerships, and organize staff development on family engagement (Richardson, 2009). Hence, if building principals desire parent participation in their children's education, the principal must illustrate a model of what parent involvement should look like in the school. There are many ways in which the principal can involve parents, such as, supporting family involvement as an integral and funded part of the school's service at all levels, providing teachers with training and information to help them find ways to coordinate teacher-school schedules to work schedules of today's families, and emphasizing the early prevention of learning problems (Khan, 2004).

Not only is the role of the principal important in cultivating and creating a viable, visible and sustainable parental engagement program at the secondary level, the types of perceptions that principals hold towards this phenomenon is just as crucial. Research regarding the perceptions of principals towards parental involvement is limited when compared with studies of the perceptions of teachers and parents. An even greater dilemma regarding the perceptions of principals towards parental involvement is the lack of research on the effects of demographic and institutional factors on their perceptions. Studies reveal that gender and years of experience have no influence on principals' perceptions toward parental involvement (Batista, 2009). However, the variables, age and race have had a significant effect on principals' perceptions regarding parental involvement (Richardson, 2009 and Batista, 2009).

This study was designed to explore the predictability of selected demographic and institutional characteristics associated with high school principals on their perceptions regarding parental involvement. Specifically, this study sought to understand the relationship among the demographic and institutional characteristics of gender, ethnicity, years of experience, school

location, school size, the school accountability rating, and the perceptions of high school principals regarding determined aspects of parental involvement.

Methodology

The target population of this study consisted of over 5500 high school principals who are members of the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP). These principals are the chief administrative officers of their campuses and represent four geographical regions in the state. They are the High Plains region (Texas Panhandle), Mountains and Basins region (Western edge of the state), North Central Plains region (East of the High Plains) and the Gulf Coast Plains region (Borders Mexico and Louisiana).

TASSP is an organization that focuses on assessing various practices in school administration for the purpose of enhancing student learning. Also, it provides principals with a public forum to build an active network of educators who are responsible for the quality of school leadership. Moreover, TASSP provides school principals with current training in administration to assist them in solving problems in their schools. The organization helps school principals to develop a keen awareness of critical issues facing educational leadership as well as to develop and implement strategies to improve relationships among all stakeholders of the public school enterprise.

The random sample consisted of 204 high school principals who participated in this study. Thirty-nine (39%) of the principals were at schools with over 1500 students, while fifty-five (55%) of their schools were rated as *"Academically Acceptable"*. A large percentage of the principals (69%) indicated their schools were in urban settings. Tables 1-3 indicate the principal's gender, years of experience, and ethnicity

Table 1
Principals by Gender

Male	62.7%
Female	37.3%

Table 2
Principals by Years of Experience

Five Years >	78%
Six to Ten Years	34.3%
Eleven to Nineteen Years	18.1%
Over Nineteen Years	9.3%

Table 3
Principals by Ethnicity

White	48.5%
African American	27.5%
Hispanic	17.6%
Other	6.4%

For the purposes of this study, a self-identified survey, *Parent Involvement: Perspectives of Texas Public High School Principals* was sent to the participants and consisted of two major sections. The aspects of parental involvement, which were measured, includes formal and informal communication, environmental and external factors, student learning and academic success, and school and home collaboration

Findings and Discussion

One of the most pertinent findings of the present study was the significant impact of the variables gender, ethnicity and years of experience on the perceptions of high school principals regarding the various aspects of parental involvement. High school principals' gender, ethnicity and years of experience combined were found to be related to their perceptions regarding parental involvement. Batista (2009) conducted a similar empirical investigation with Pennysvlania High School principals. These findings are not consistent with those of Batista (2009). Batista found that attitudes of high school principals toward parental involvement were not related to the principals' gender and years of experience.

On the other hand, as a group, when the demographic characteristics of the principals were controlled, the findings of Batista (2009), Richardson (2009) and Burge and Loges (2003) were consistent with those of the present study. In all the above studies, secondary principals' perceptions are favorable to parental involvement, particularly in the area of student learning and achievement and communication and collaborating.

Batista found that all the principals surveyed agreed that creating a partnership between the parents and school had a positive impact on students' grades. All the principals in Batista's study supported collaboration and communication with parents. However, an overwhelming majority of the principals did not support parental involvement in terms of the school budgetary process, hiring practices, and curriculum issues. Batista's findings were supported by Richardson (2009) and Burge and Loges (2003).

In this study, the ethnicity and school experiences of the principals parallel those of the parents with regard to parental involvement in the school and made an impact but the literature regarding this is limited. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) found that very few studies have been done on the parental involvement of African- American parents as it relates to the experiences with school leaders of the same ethnic background. There is literature that does support how teachers who have a different ethnic background than the parents relate to them and their

children. Henfield and Washington (2012) shared how African American parents are perceived by White teachers and the implications it raises within the home-school connection. Finally, Hong and Ho (2005) and Yan and Lin (2005) found that White, Asian, and Hispanic parents are more involved in school activities, specifically in the areas of student learning and communication.

The present study also found an influence of institutional factors on the perceptions of high school principals on the various aspects of parental involvement. A positive correlation was found between school location, school size, school accountability rating and formal and informal communication as well as environmental and external factors. A significant linear relationship was found between school location, school size, school accountability rating and formal and informal communication as well as environmental and external factors. However, a linear relationship was not found between the three aforementioned predictors and student learning and academic success nor school and home collaboration.

The current findings did not parallel those of Batista (2009). In Batista's study of secondary principals, he found that school location and school size were not significantly related to their perceptions regarding parental involvement. Additionally, the present findings are favorable to those of Batista (2009) and Richardson (2009) when principals as a group were surveyed. Both of the above researchers found that secondary principals had favorable perceptions toward various aspects of parental involvement. An explanation for the current findings might be that principals' institutional characteristics are significant factors in how they perceive parental involvement.

The research involving parental involvement and its impact on student success consistently suggests that when parents are involved in their child's education, students perform better in school. In this era of high stakes testing across all school levels in the United States, parent involvement can play an important role in students' academic success. The principal, as the most important person in the school, has the responsibility to pursue every possibility of fostering high educational achievement for all students. Establishing open and transparent communication as well as promoting school environments that are welcoming and non-threating are just a few initiatives that principals can take to include parents in schools. Armed with this information, it is apparent that schools and students benefit greatly when principals lead the effort to develop innovative and creative avenues of involving parents in their child's education.

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Perceptions of Beginning Teachers and Mentor Teachers: Case Study of a Campus Mentor Program

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Attrition of teachers is a concern for leaders in education; teacher turnover is higher in education compared to many other occupations and professions, especially in the first years on the job (Ingersoll 2003; Ingersoll & Perda, 2010). Nearly half a million teachers leave the education field every year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014) while the recruitment and training of teachers is costing the United States about $2 billion each year (Rizga, 2015). The high turnover places a financial burden on districts resulting in decreased resources for books, materials, and staff development of teachers; additionally, replacing teachers can disrupt the instructional process and place restraints on the education system as a whole (Portner, 2008).

Beginning teachers who leave teaching in their early years place blame on a lack of support and no guidance, two things that are needed for the growth and development of new teachers (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012). First-year teachers are expected to possess the skills needed to teach in any school but in reality, are only provided general training from educational programs. Teacher education programs strive to provide classroom experiences to simulate being in the classroom, however it is not the same as actually being in the classroom (Brock & Grady, 2007). Because schools vary in setting, culture, and expectations induction into education should be a deliberate process providing new teachers the opportunity to grow and learn (Brock & Grady, 2007).

The demands and expectations for student achievement contribute to the stress placed on new teachers. Expectations of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001) held teachers accountable and expected them to teach at a higher level placing pressure on school districts to hire and retain only highly qualified teachers. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) replaced NCLB and continued to focus on testing with test scores remaining a factor in performance evaluation, continuing the pressure to hire qualified teachers (Kumashiro, 2015).

Support for beginning teachers is a critical factor in retention and federal education agencies, state agencies, and school districts must provide resources to show a commitment to support them (Schwalbe, 2001). Most districts have developed an induction program to address

this problem and provide necessary resources to new teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Goldrick (2016) found that, as of the 2015-16 school year, 20 states had implemented a formalized induction program and identified program standards; 12 states provide guidelines or toolkits to be used for informal induction programs.

An established and well-developed mentoring program is an important addition to any induction program (Pelletier, 2006). Brock and Grady (2007, p. 77) found that "a mentor program can make the difference between a beginning teacher who leaves the profession after one year and a beginning teacher whose first year, is the first stage of a satisfying career." The state of Texas established Education Code Chapter 21, Sec. 21.258 to guide school districts in the assignment of mentors to new teachers. Expectations include: assigning a mentor to a new teacher who has less than 2 years of teaching experience, choosing mentors who teach in the same school and subject or grade level, and mentors who meet qualifications prescribed by the commissioner (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2015).

Teacher mentoring programs have become an important component to the induction program over the last several years (Hellsten, Prytulla, Ebanks, & Hollis, 2009). Induction programs and mentoring in general last about 3 years and provide continuous support for teachers so they may have time to build both their confidence and teaching abilities (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Currently, 29 states require support in the form of mentoring for beginning teachers. Eleven of those states require it only during the first year in the classroom (Goldrick, 2016). Induction and mentoring programs tend to vary across states; school districts; and schools. Lack of consistency is a concern and could lead to programs that are ineffective (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Mediocre approaches to induction and mentoring can frustrate new teachers, as well as impact the individual needs of new educators (Goldrick, 2016).

The quality of the mentor is an important factor when considering pairing mentors with new teachers. Criteria should be set for the selection of mentors, and leaders need to provide both initial and continued training to mentors (Goldrick, 2016). Some teacher mentors move beyond their level of proficiency and need additional training. Mentor teachers are faced with the responsibility to train new teachers to a high level of teaching within the first few years (Auton, Berry, Mullen, & Cochran, 2002) adding pressure for mentors as they move beyond their own classroom to mentor others. Teachers who have received training to be a mentor and are adequately prepared are better able to assist new teachers with classroom management, planning lessons, and solving problems (Evertson & Smithey, 2000).

Administrators likewise play an important role in the success of new teachers. Supportive and knowledgeable leaders who promote the professional growth of beginning teachers and help improve classroom instruction contribute to the retention of teachers (Goldrick, 2016). The principal as leader, and as such is responsible for establishing the climate, culture, and vision of the school, plays an important role in helping new teachers feel a sense of belonging. Novice teachers look to leaders for guidance and affirmation (Brock & Grady, 2007). Principals who understand the issues affecting new teachers, provide support, and are committed to the teacher's professional growth make a significant difference in the retention of new teachers (Watkins, 2016). Lack of support from school administrators is reported as one reason new teachers leave the education field (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The support by the principal is

essential to the success of a mentor and induction program and is responsible for the planning and implementation of programs on the campus (Brock & Grady, 2007).

This study was designed to explore beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions towards a campus mentoring program as well as the match of the mentor with new teachers. The TEA (2015) stated that the "purpose of a Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) program is designed to increase the retention of beginning teachers" (p. 1). Walker (2016) reported that high stress levels are affecting the health of teachers, and causing burnout, lack of engagement, job dissatisfaction, and poor performance, as well as contributing to high turnover rates. Providing new teachers with the support from induction and mentoring programs can be an effective plan to increase the retention rate of teachers (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Expectations in education became increasingly demanding on the school system to raise standards and improve students' academic performance around 1985. The focus shifted from school leadership to the connection of leadership to the success of the school (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994). Dufour (2002) suggested that principals should become learning leaders with a focus on student achievement. The expectations for student learning are established by the principal, and reinforced by what they say and do. Hallinger (2003) noted a shift in leadership in education around 1990; leaders were giving more power to teachers, sharing leadership roles, and the type of learning in the organization. Bass (1999) introduced the concept of transformational leadership and described it as the sharing of power, collaboration, and teamwork. The idea of moral and ethical standards for leaders making them accountable to their followers was also introduced (Dambe & Moorad, 2008).

Transformational leaders show confidence in staff members' ability to achieve the goals of the organization and motivate others to work towards making the goals a reality (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). They generally employ staff members who are committed to a shared vision and are more satisfied in their positions (Horwath, 2016). Burns (1978) felt that "transformational leaders align follower self-interest in development with the larger interest of the group, organization, or society" (p. 4). The mentoring relationship becomes a mutual investment for both parties, who share values, knowledge, and experiences (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Transformational leaders emphasize the amount of attention given to individual followers and their needs for career development, personal growth, and recognition. Bass (1999) observed that transformational leaders enjoy positive interpersonal relationships with both supervisors and subordinates. One motivation for transformational leaders is the need to help others.

Various leadership factors are often examined to determine the role in school effectiveness (Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Sleegers, 2012). Teacher leadership takes many forms: the potential for leadership to significantly contribute to school change and school effectiveness has long been acknowledged (Barth, 1990). Leaders in education are not limited to those in formal leadership positions. Mentors are seen as leaders of the organization and are expected to support, believe in, and help promote the vision of the school. Mentors are teacher

leaders whose support to new teachers can affect the entire school culture (Portner, 2005). According to Lieberman, Hanson & Gless (2012),

> Although mentors may not think of themselves as leaders, they need to realize that their position requires brokering resources, advocating for social justice, supporting mentees when they are being wronged by the system or the culture, negotiating a position that helps the mentees learn despite difficult environments, and learning to balance what they can and cannot influence (p. 5).

The nature of transformational leadership supports the behaviors needed for an effective mentor (Scandura & Schreisheim, 1994). Transformational leaders have the ability to engage others and build motivation (Burns, 1978). When leaders put others first they generate trust, esteem, and confidence. Individuals who observe transformational leaders are more likely to emulate similar behaviors (Godshalk & Sosik, 2000).

Leithwood et al. (1994) connected the works of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999), and brought that combination into educational leadership. Seven dimensions were applied to transformational leadership:
1. develop a school vision and establish goals
2. provide learning opportunities
3. offer support
4. model best practices and values of the organization
5. demonstrate expectations for high performance
6. create a thriving school culture, and
7. develop a school framework that includes participation in school decisions (Leithwood et al., 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000)

Summary

The number of teachers that leave teaching within their first 5 years is an established and continued concern. It causes a financial burden on states and school districts (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). The growing concern coupled with the demand for highly qualified teachers has prompted many states and school districts to create an induction program that includes the provision of a mentor for novice teachers. The NCLB Act increased the pressure for quality performance by new teachers, and in response many schools linked new-teacher assessment to their induction programs (Brock & Grady, 2007). The pressure for quality performance continued with ESSA; which still focused on the testing of students (Kumashiro, 2015). Hessinger (1998) suggested that structured induction and mentoring programs increase the retention of beginning teachers. Support programs improve attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills.

The mentor is the most critical element of an effective mentoring program. The mentor-mentee relationship could impact the new teacher's perception of the education field. Mentors must play many roles while acting as an advocate for themselves as well as the new teacher they are mentoring (Gibb & Welch, 1998). Mentors provide the structure and support new teachers

need to make the transition into the classroom and school environment. They are knowledgeable about the expectations of the school and its policies and procedures (Gibb & Welch, 1998).

Mentors have been described as instructional leaders and change agents (Gless, 2006; Hanson, 2010; Lieberman et al., 2012). They are seen as teacher leaders, and as such are expected to support, believe in, and help promote the vision of the school (Portner, 2005). Identifying and selecting quality mentors to work with new teachers should be a priority of any induction program. Another priority is to train mentors so they can be efficient and effective (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009).

Mentors need opportunities to learn and develop ways of working with adults, as well as how to provide support to new teachers (Moir & Gless, 2001; Wood & Stanulis, 2009). The new teacher is not the only person who benefits from the mentor-mentee relationship: Mentoring programs provide ongoing learning and leadership opportunities for veteran teachers as well (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

The theoretical framework for this study was transformational leadership. Transformational leaders enjoy positive relationships with supervisors and subordinates. One motivation for transformational leaders is the need to help others (Bass, 1999). Mentor teachers are expected to build a relationship with the new teacher and except guidance from the principal. Mentors are seen as leaders of the organization and are expected to support, believe and help promote the vision of the school. Mentors are teacher leaders whose support to new teachers can affect the entire school culture (Portner, 2005).

Research Questions

The researcher was guided by the following research questions in this study:

1. What elements make an effective campus mentor program from the perception of a mentor teacher and a beginning teacher?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of a mentor teacher from the perception of a mentor teacher and a beginning teacher?
3. What are the factors to consider when matching a mentor to a beginning teacher from the perception of a mentor teacher and a beginning teacher?

Method

Design and Procedures

A qualitative approach was used to explore the beginning teachers' and mentor teachers' perceptions of the campus mentor program and the match between them. A single-case study design was used to explore the perceptions of beginning and mentor teachers assigned to 7 intermediate schools within one school district located in Southeast Texas. The focus of the researcher was to gather insight from beginning and mentor teachers to improve the practice of an intermediate campus mentoring program.

Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were used to probe the perceptions of beginning and mentor teachers on an intermediate campus located in a school district in Southeast Texas. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants using an audiotape device to record the information. Interviews lasted from 45-60 minutes and were conducted in a setting that was agreeable with each participant.

Two sets of interview questions were developed by the researcher to support the research questions and garner responses from participants that provided their perspective on a mentor program and their mentor match. One version was developed for beginning teachers and one for mentor teachers. The same questions were used in each version with slightly different words based on the participant's role.

Prior to the interviews, two mock interviews were conducted by the researcher to help ensure the questions were valid, reliable, and addressed the research questions (Creswell, 2014). The participants for the mock interviews consisted of one individual who had served as a campus mentor to a beginning teacher, but was not a participant for this study, and one teacher who was in their fourth year of teaching and not a participant of this study. Information from the mock interviews was not included in the study.

Participants

The researcher selected one public school district in Southeast Texas for this case study. As of 2017, the school district housed over 50 campuses: 29 elementary schools, 3 k-6 schools, 9 intermediate schools, 7 junior high schools, 6 high schools, and 3 alternative education placement centers. The intermediate school had 1317 students, consisting of 661 fifth graders and 656 sixth graders. The demographics of the students on this campus consisted of 18.2% socially economically disadvantaged, 54.5% White, 25.5% Hispanic 10.7%, African American, 4.9% Asian, .2% American Indian, .2% Pacific Islander, and 3.9% multiple races. The school had a staff of 105 faculty members: 77 teachers, 28 support staff, 2 school counselors, 3 assistant principals, and a principal. The community surrounding the intermediate school showed growth over the previous 10 years, gaining an average of 60-80 students per year.

The researcher used purposeful sampling to select participants, which "involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 175). It also included selecting participants who had experiences that were applicable when answering the questions (Creswell, 2009).

Beginning teachers and mentor teachers who were licensed teachers in the state of Texas, employed by the same school district, and were teachers in one of the 7 intermediate schools within the school district were invited to participate in the study. The six teachers invited to participate included: three mentor teachers and three beginning teachers. Of the six participants, five were female and one was male; five participants were Caucasian, and one was Hispanic; participant's ages ranged from 24 to 57 years old; and five of the participants were married and one was single. All participants held teaching certifications in the state of Texas.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Teacher Status
Alpha	Female	Caucasian	23	Mentor
Bravo	Female	Caucasian	20	Mentor
Charlie	Female	Hispanic	30	Mentor
Delta	Female	Caucasian	2	Beginning
Echo	Female	Caucasian	1	Beginning
Foxtrot	Male	Caucasian	1	Beginning

The school district selected for this study had an established induction program that included the assigning of a mentor; however, it was left up to each campus principal to establish a mentoring program that was a fit for the school. This included the selection and matching of and training for mentors. The match between the mentor and new teacher, as well as the consideration of personalities is important for a good working relationship (Brock & Grady, 2007). Without training and support for mentors, an induction program may seem like a random effort at pairing a new teacher with a veteran teacher with the blind hope it is a good match (Black, 2001). Many times, mentors are selected based on years of service. New teachers suggest administrators look at many factors when selecting mentors. Teachers involved in their first year of a mentoring program have reported mismatches between the mentor and the mentee (Brock & Grady, 2007).

Data Gathering

The focus of data analysis was to identify themes that emerged relating to the effectiveness of a campus mentor program and the process of matching a mentor to a beginning teacher.

Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used to gain insight into the experiences of the beginning and mentor teachers. Two separate questionnaires were used to gather data from participants. One questionnaire was used with participants who were mentors, and the other was used with participants who were beginning teachers.

Mentor Interview Questionnaire
1. How many years have you served as a teacher?
2. Have you served as a mentor before? If so explain the relationship.
3. How were you selected to be a mentor for a beginning teacher on the campus?
   a. What do you feel is the best process for selecting mentors for beginning teachers?
4. Tell me about your campus' mentor program?
5. From your perspective, what should be considered when developing a mentoring program?
6. What characteristics are important for an effective mentor and why?

7. From your perspective, what are the factors that need to be considered when matching a mentor to a beginning teacher?
8. What do you perceive to be your role and responsibilities of a teacher mentor?
   a. Do you think the beginning teacher would share the same perception?
9. As the mentor, what are your expectations of a beginning year teacher in their first year of teacher?
   a. What about the second year?
10. What have been the most difficult aspects of being a mentor teacher?
11. In what ways, do you feel that being a mentor teacher has affected your growth as a teacher?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me in regards to the campus mentor program, your role as a mentor or your mentee?

Follow up Questions:
1. What do you mean by…?
2. Can you tell me more…?

Probing Questions:
1. Can you give me an example?

Beginning Teacher Interview Questionnaire
1. How many years have you served as a teacher?
2. How were you assigned a mentor?
   a. What do you feel is the best process for selecting mentors for beginning teachers?
3. Tell me what you know about the campus' mentor program?
4. From your perspective, what should be considered when developing a mentoring program?
5. What characteristics are important for an effective mentor and why?
6. From your perspective, what are the factors that need to be considered when matching a mentor to a beginning teacher?
7. What do you perceive to be the role and responsibilities of a teacher mentor?
   a. Do you think the mentor should share the same perception?
8. What are your expectations of a mentor?
9. What have been the most difficult aspects of being a new teacher?
10. In what ways, do you feel that having a mentor has affected your growth as a teacher?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to the campus mentor program or your mentor?

Follow up Questions:
1. What do you mean by…?
2. Can you tell me more…?

Probing Questions:
2. Can you give me an example?

Data from transcripts were hand coded by the researcher and analyzed line by line to identify themes and patterns of beginning and mentor teacher's perceptions of the campus mentor

program and the match of new teachers to mentors. The in vivo codes were organized by the researcher into coding categories as patterns and themes emerged from words and phrases from participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The categories were then grouped into 9 themes supporting the research questions: (a) relationships, (b) meeting /planning time, (c) similar personality styles, (d) teaching practices, (e) program structure, (f) support system, (g) roles and responsibilities, (h) types of support, (i) learning opportunities. Three main themes were identified that addressed the research questions: (a) elements that make an effective mentor program, (b) roles and responsibilities, (c) matching of mentor to beginning teacher.

Findings

Participating beginning teachers and mentor teachers shared their perceptions of a campus mentor program and the match between the mentor and a new teacher, in a school district located in Southeast Texas. Participants reported their understanding of the campus mentor program and discussed their individual experiences and relationship with their mentor or mentee depending on their role. Three research questions guided this study, and nine major themes emerged from the data analysis.

Research Question 1

"What elements make an effective campus mentor program from the perception of a mentor teacher and a beginning teacher?" The TEA (2015) established guidelines for the selection of mentors as part of the induction program. Mentors should teach in the same school as the new teacher and meet the qualifications of the state. They must have completed three full years of teaching and teach the same subject or grade level as the new teacher. A history of student improvement is considered, and mentors must complete a training program provided by the school district. Although guidelines have been developed for school districts to follow, it does not necessarily mean they are adhered to or effective. Themes that emerged from this research question included selection process of mentor, structure of a campus mentor program, and the role of a principal.

Selection process of mentor

All six participants in this study cited that mentors should be selected from a pool of individuals who volunteered as opposed to being simply assigned to a mentor by the campus principal. New teachers were unsure of how the mentor was selected but agreed volunteering was probably better than being told to do be a mentor. One new teacher said, "I think the mentor should definitely have their heart in it".

The mentor teachers used phrases like "asked if I would be willing to do it", "willing to", or "would you mind mentoring" to describe how they were asked to be a mentor. All three mentors shared they felt mentors should volunteer. One mentor suggested, "If it's not going to be a paid position and you're not willing to put in the time then the person that has you for the mentor is going to suffer."

Role of the principal

Principals play an important role by setting expectations for the success of the beginning teacher and mentor relationship (Scherer, 1999). New teachers cited support of the principal as an important component to the mentor program. Principals should provide support by assigning a mentor as soon as possible and allowing time for them to meet the new teacher they will be mentoring. One new teacher appreciated the mentor being located "right down the hall" so they were available at any time.

Mentors also mentioned time to meet as a factor and included clear guidelines and goals for mentors. Words were used such as, "specified meeting times", "set day to meet", and "guidance, structure and time is very important". Two of the mentor teachers mentioned the principal possibly offering a stipend to mentors to compensate them for their time.

Research Question 2

"What are the roles and responsibilities of a mentor teacher from the perception of a mentor teacher and a beginning teacher?" The mentor role goes beyond the support for new teachers. Mentors use their expertise to help support beginning teachers (Portner, 2005).

Relationship between mentor and beginning teacher

Interview responses to this question brought out several important themes related to the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. All participants cited the importance of having a mentor and building a positive relationship. Being an effective mentor requires interaction. The mentee-mentor relationship must be built on trust, honesty, respect for one another and a willingness to work together (Portner, 2008).

It was suggested by all participants that the mentor make the initial contact with the new teacher during the summer prior to the start of school. Two of the new teachers met one-on-one with their mentor during the summer. The other new teacher met with her mentor at a luncheon scheduled by the principal prior to the start of school. The luncheon was to give all new teachers the opportunity to meet their mentor and review school procedures. The participants who were mentors for this study initiated the contact with their mentee. They described the first meeting in terms like "get to know you", "show you around", "and help her feel at ease".

Expectations of mentor and beginning teacher

Beginning teachers for this study admitted it was difficult adjusting in their first year of teaching. Two of the beginning teachers stated they were under the impression they would be assigned a mentor for only the first year of teaching. The other beginning teacher had the impression she would have a mentor for the first two years. All three admitted it would benefit new teachers to have the support of a mentor for at least the first two years. All three perceived the first year was spent learning policies and procedures and developing their classroom management skills. Delta had completed two years of teaching and focused more on curriculum her second year. Echo, who had completed her first year of teaching plans to focus more on

strategy and perfecting curriculum. Foxtrot saw himself concentrating on developing knowledge of content the second year.

All three mentor teachers were told, by the principal, they would serve as a mentor for only one year. However, all three agreed that it could benefit a new teacher to continue for at least a second year. Alpha used the term "they're treading water" to describe the new teachers first year of teaching. Charlie used the term, "extended program" to describe support beyond the first year. She described the first year for the new teacher as "learning the logistics" and the second year they could concentrate on content.

The mentor teachers also expressed their ideas of expectations for beginning teachers. Alpha used words like, "positive attitude" and "willing to work" to describe expectations. Delta described a situation where the new teacher struggled because she thought teaching was like what she learned in college, and reality can be different. Therefore, a willingness to learn was important.

Research Question 3

"What are the factors to consider when matching a mentor to a beginning teacher from the perception of a mentor and a beginning teacher." This question focused on the matching of the mentor to a new teacher. Being an effective mentor requires interaction. The mentee-mentor relationship must be built on trust, honesty, respect for one another and a willingness to work together (Portner, 2008). Teaching the same content area was seen as the most important factor to a match between the mentor and new teacher and was brought up by five out of six participants. Delta, one of the beginning teachers, did not feel it was necessary to have a mentor who taught the same subject or grade, but someone who knew her weaknesses and could provide the support. Other characteristics identified by the new teachers were trust, patience, "loves the profession", "calming voice", and "positive attitude". Mentor teachers used words like "approachable", "not judgmental", and "understanding".

Conflicts in mentoring

When mentors met the new teacher, they discovered the difference between building relationships with students and establishing working relationships with an adult (Portner, 2005). Conflicts can occur between the mentor and beginning teacher that could interfere with the relationship. All three beginning teachers experienced little to no conflicts with their mentor. One new teacher mentioned miscommunication as a conflict but resolved the issue quickly. The mentor teachers had a positive experience overall in their role as a mentor. Alpha used the phrase "not willing to take your advice" as an example of conflict, and Bravo had a similar experience and used the phrase, "she felt she knew more than others". Charlie mentioned finding time to meet with the new teacher was the only conflict that effected the relationship.

Benefits of mentoring

All three mentor teachers attributed learning of new technology and classroom instruction and management as benefits to mentoring. The mentor teachers for this study had been teaching over 15 years, and mentoring new teachers helped in their own growth as a teacher. All

beginning teachers agreed they would have struggled without a mentor and benefited from having someone who was an experienced teacher.

Conclusion

The purpose of the researcher was to examine beginning and mentor teachers' perceptions of a campus mentor program and the match of the mentor teacher to a beginning teacher. The focus was to identify specific factors that would contribute to supporting a campus mentor program. The personal experiences and responses shared by mentors and new teachers, led to specific conclusions. The need to develop effective and well thought out mentoring programs is essential to the school campus and the school district.

The data collected and analyzed in this study support the following conclusions:

1. Mentoring is a contributing factor to the success of a first-year teacher and helps a new teacher transition into their role as a teacher.
2. A mentor should be assigned to the new teacher for at least two years.
3. Individuals should volunteer to be a mentor. It should not be mandatory or a 'hey you' by the principal.
4. Considerations for matching of mentor to beginning teachers should include: teach same content and grade, needs of the beginning teacher, personality traits of mentor and beginning teacher.
5. A campus mentoring program should include established guidelines and expectations for the mentor, a checklist for the mentor to follow, and built in times for the mentor and beginning teacher to meet prior to the start of school and throughout the school year.
6. Support from the principal for both the mentor and new teacher should include holding separate meetings with the mentor and beginning teacher periodically to discuss progress, concerns, or answer questions, and provides resources and training.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study help to provide insight into beginning and mentor teachers perceptions of a campus mentoring program and the match between the mentor and new teacher. An established well-developed mentoring program is an important addition to any induction program (Pelletier, 2006). An effective mentor program can make the difference for a beginning teacher and the choice to leave teaching after their first year or continue and have a successful career (Brock & Grady, 2007). Participating beginning teachers shared this belief, as all three felt their first year would not have been as successful without a mentor. Beginning teachers and mentor teachers shared their experiences with and attitudes surrounding the current mentor program on their campuses and provided ideas of how to make the practice more effective.

The findings of this study indicate that it is imperative that beginning teachers be assigned a mentor in their first year of teaching and receive support from the mentor for at least the first two years. According to the TEA (2015), mentors should teach in the same school, have

completed 3 full years of teaching, and teach the same subject or grade level as the new teacher. A history of student improvement needs to also be considered, and training should be provided by the school district. Beginning teachers and mentors were unclear how mentors were selected, and the criteria for selection.

The six participants for this study represented four different campuses within the same school district. The information obtained from interviews indicated an inconsistency among the campuses in regard to the selections and matching of mentors, length of mentoring, and elements of a campus mentor program. Induction and mentoring programs tend to vary across states, school districts, and schools. Lack of consistency is a concern and could lead to programs that are ineffective (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). A hit or miss approach to an induction and mentoring can be a disservice to new teachers and impact the individual needs of new educators (Goldrick, 2016). It is important for school district personnel provide standards and guidelines for campus principals on how to establish a campus mentor program that supports the beginning teacher and ensures success.

New teachers perceive the involvement of the principal to be an important factor to their success. Principals are responsible for evaluating new teachers and providing resources that support their development (Brock & Grady, 2007). It is important that the principal support the beginning teacher by assigning a mentor as early as possible, preferably before the beginning of school. Content emerged as the major consideration when matching a mentor to a new teacher. Administrators should pay attention to the teaching assignment of the new teacher and take into consideration content and grade level when assigning a mentor as well as personality and teaching styles. Clear guidelines and expectations of mentors need to be established. Developing a checklist for mentors to use as a guide would be helpful and would provide talking points and what to check for when meeting with new teachers. Another central theme that emerged from this study was the importance of time for the mentor and beginning teacher to meet. Access to the mentor was also important.

New teachers benefit from a school culture that allows teachers time to collaborate and encourages teamwork. In this type of school culture, teachers are usually more satisfied with their job, involved in the school, and support school goals (Killion, 2002). Beginning teachers can contribute to their success by working with their mentor on their own learning. Once a new teacher is assigned to a new school, they have to learn about the school, the population, and expectations. They need to understand the importance of the relationship with the mentor and the connection to the school. The new teacher can benefit by being an active learner. Areas of weakness can be improved through staff development, observing other teachers, and working with the mentor.

Recommendations for mentor teachers include understanding the importance of building a relationship with the new teacher and growing the expertise of the new teacher. Being an effective mentor requires interaction. The mentee-mentor relationship must be built on trust, honesty, respect for one another and a willingness to work together (Portner, 2008). The mentor should contact and meet with the new teacher before the start of the school year. Data from the study revealed new teachers used words like approachable, trusting, and open when speaking

about mentors. They reported the importance of open and honest communication, frequent meetings to discuss areas of concern, and the ability to recognize the talents of new teachers.

Mentors shared how they benefited from the beginning teachers' knowledge of technology. They recommended mentors take advantage of skills of new teachers to build their own capacity and use the new teacher's skills to help them feel a valuable part of the team. They also indicated that school districts could support beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and campus principals by committing to a program. The provision of appropriate support and training for mentors and new teachers was also reported as important. School districts should also consider paying a stipend to mentors and evaluating district and campus mentoring programs to make improvements as needed.

The results of this study provided insight into beginning and mentor teachers' perception of a campus mentor program; however, limitations to this study existed. The findings were the result of data collected from three beginning teachers who represented three different campuses, this gave a good indication of the inconsistency among schools within the district. However, the three mentor teachers who were participants for this study represented only one campus within the same school district. The researcher recommends expanding the study to include additional mentors from other campuses within the school district to identify inconsistencies. The researcher also suggests collecting data from interviews of campus principals to gain their perspective on a campus mentoring program and the principal's role and responsibilities.

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Examining Superintendent Turnover Intent: A Quantitative Analysis of the Relationship Between Exchange Commitment and the Turnover Intent of Public School Superintendents in Texas

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Introduction

Quality leadership in a school district is critical to school improvement (Dunlap, Li, & Kladifko, 2015; Kersten, 2009; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstom, 2004). School leaders must be capable of providing vision, focus, and support to their staff, in order to facilitate a positive working culture, and achieve sustainable academic success. Given the competitive nature and complexities of building a quality workforce, when a quality leader is hired, it is typically in the best interest of an organization to retain this talent. However, planning for employee retention requires a detailed understanding as to why an individual desires to leave their current job (Hackett, 2015). This can prove to be even more challenging in school systems where applicant pools are often limited.

There have been numerous studies related to the turnover and retention of school staff. Many of these studies, however, have focused on school principals and teachers, leaving a noticeable gap in the literature as it relates to the turnover of school superintendents (Sparks, 2012). This is significant because data suggests a national trend of high turnover among superintendents (Berryhill, 2009; Hackett, 2015). Lack of stability, whether for voluntary or involuntary reasons (Kersten, 2009), can have far-reaching effects (Fullan, 2000), resulting in mistrust, instability, and turnover of other employees working within the organization (Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In fact, Simpson (2013) found that superintendents who serve in their roles less than 5 years document less growth in student achievement than their peers who remain past this time period. Superintendent stability and school district success are positively correlated (Alsbury, 2008).

Background to the Problem

Districts across the country face the challenge of filling hundreds of existing superintendent vacancies (Kamler, 2007; Kersten, 2009). Specifically, the turnover of superintendents in Texas has been compared to a revolving door (O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018). This turnover has forced school boards to compete for talent in a limited applicant pool (Samuels, 2008). As superintendent turnover continues to evolve as topic of concern, identifying ways for school boards and state agencies to retain quality candidates will be vital. Researchers have identified an immediate need to conduct more extensive research on the tenure of a

superintendent (Hoyle, Bjork, & Glass, 2005).

The average superintendent tenure is three-to-five years (Grissom & Anderson, 2012; Johnson, Huffman, Madden, & Shope, 2011). Glass and Francehini (2007) reported that 55% of all superintendents would be unemployed within this time span. This short tenure can prove to be problematic for school districts (Williams & Hatch, 2012), due to the fact that longevity is related to stability, and allows a leader the opportunity to guide districtwide plans to completion (Hoyle et al., 2005; Palladino, Grady, Haar, & Perry, 2007). Without stability, many reform efforts are stopped midstream. Perpetual turnover of a school superintendent can have a negative effect on school performance (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, 2011; Simpson, 2013), and has been connected with uncertainty, as well as increased costs associated with departure (Williams & Hatch, 2012).

As accountability and federal mandates continue to be high priority among school administrators (Hoyle, 2002; Simpson, 2013), the importance of recruiting and retaining a quality superintendent will become more vital to the survival of a district. While it is important to understand that there is no set timeline for achieving school improvement outcomes (Elmore & City, 2007), research recommends at least five years of consistency to experience reform. The retention of a superintendent is of importance to most school districts; however, many stakeholders do not fully understand the factors that contribute to the turnover of these professionals (Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

Related Literature

Organizational commitment has garnered broad based attention from many scholars (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Balfour & Wechsler, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mete, Sokmen, & Biyik, 2016; Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this same context, the construct of turnover intent has also been of interest (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Li, Lee, Mitchell, & Hom, 2016). Studies suggest that organizational commitment is a powerful predictor of turnover intention (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Despite this, research continues to be lacking in the area of organizational commitment and turnover of school superintendents.

Organizational Commitment

Researchers have introduced organizational commitment in a variety of ways. Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982) defined organizational commitment as the level of connection an employee has with an organization. This includes an individual's: (a) belief and commitment in organizational goals and values, (b) willingness to exert significant effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) a strong desire to remain as a part of the organization. The definition suggests that an employee's relationship with an organization is not passive, but active, and provides motivation to the worker to contribute more to the vision of the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Similar to the beliefs of Mowday et al. (1982), Brown (1969), and Hall and Schneider (1972) viewed commitment to an organization as the strength of the relationship that exists between an individual and an organization. Sheldon (1971) further stated that organizational commitment includes an employee identifying with the goals and values of the

organization. It is "the strength of a person's attachment to an organization" (Grusky, 1966, p. 489).

Meyer and Allen (1991) identified three different themes of organizational commitment: (a) affective attachment an organization, (b) perceived cost with leaving an organization, and (c) obligation to remain with an organization. In developing their three-component framework, Meyer and Allen (1997) specifically identified the concepts of commitment as: (a) affective, (b) continuance, and (c) normative commitment. They argue that the three are common in the view that commitment is a psychological state that (a) describes the relationship between an employee and an organization and (b) "has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p.67).

Balfour & Wechsler (1996) also suggest that there are multiple layers to organizational commitment. The researchers identify three dimensions of organizational commitment. These dimensions consist of: identification commitment, affiliation commitment, and exchange commitment. Identification commitment addresses the pride a person feels by being associated with an organization; affiliation commitment addresses the level connectedness an employee feels toward an organization; and exchange commitment addresses an employee's desire to be recognized by his/her workplace. Each plays an integral role in understanding the various aspects of organizational commitment.

Exploring the connection an individual has to an organization continues to be of interest to scholars (Kacmar, Bozeman Carlson, & Anthony, 1999). This is due to the influence organizational commitment has on work related attitudes. Organizational commitment has been linked to both the performance and productivity of organizations (Cohen, 1996; Kontoghtorghes & Bryant, as cited by McMurray, Scott, & Pace, 2004; Naquin & Holton, 2002; Randall, Fedor, & Longenecker, 1990), as well as positively correlated to organizational identification, person-organization fit, and job satisfaction (Mete, Sokmen, & Biyik, 2016). Other positive relationships that have been identified in the literature are: (a) leadership member exchange (Kacmar, et al., 1999), (b) job involvement (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and (c) tenure on job (McMurray et al., 2004). Conversely, this construct has been negatively correlated with turnover and turnover intent (Aryee et al, 1998; DeConinck & Bachmann, 1994; Huselid & Day, 1991; Fields, 2002; Kirchmeyer, 1992; Loi et al., 2006), (a) job tension, (b) role strain, (c) voluntary turnover, and (d) organizational politics (Fields, 2002).

Turnover

Well over 1500 scholarly studies have addressed the concept of turnover (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). Despite this, there is still continued interested as to what triggers this action (Parker & Gerbasi, 2016). Understanding turnover can assist organizations in better mitigating the negative consequences that may result from someone exiting an organization (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013).

In general, there are two types of turnover: voluntary turnover and involuntary (Batt & Colvin, 2011; Ngo-Henha, 2017). According to Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta (1998), "An

instance of voluntary turnover, or a quit, reflects an employee's decision to leave an organization, whereas an instance of involuntary turnover, or a discharge, reflects an employer's decision to terminate the employment relationship (p.511). Furthermore, turnover intent is a worker's planned decision to leave an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It is known as the final sequence of withdrawal cognitions from a job (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978).

Human resource management leaders in education and the private sector have long struggled with hiring employees that remain on the job for an extended period. This has been a challenge due to the many factors that influence turnover. However, it is important to note that turnover is not always negative. Organizations often demonstrate no desire to retain employees that do not perform well (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013).

In relation to other work constructs, turnover has been known to have a negative relationship with job satisfaction (O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018; Trevor 2001) organizational performance (Park & Shaw, 2013), organizational learning (Egan, Yang, & Barlett, 2004), perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis, 1990; Fields, 2002), and turnover intent (Allen & Meyer,1990; Chang, Chi, and Miao, 2007). In contrast, a positive correlation has been identified between role ambiguity (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994), and job tension (Fields, 2002).

Conceptual Frameworks

The conceptual frameworks related to this study are Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. SET has been widely used for understanding employee attitudes, behavior, and work relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lew & Sarawak, 2011; Shore et al., 2004). This theory focuses on the reciprocity of an employee/organization relationship. In essence, if an employee receives positive acknowledgments from an organization, it is likely that the employee will reciprocate with increased commitment and lower intent to leave (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Lew, 2011). Maslow's Hierarchy of needs has also been fundamental to understanding employee behavior. This five-layer pyramid of needs depicts a variety of needs in the context of better understanding what motivates individuals; an understanding that can prove invaluable to a work environment.

Social exchange theory

Early introductions of social exchange theory focused on the balance between rewards and costs (Holman, 1964). Furthermore, Blau (1964) is noted with extending the perspective of SET by taking a more economic and practical perspective. However, in organizational literature, social exchange theory has been applied to better understand workplace relationships (Lew & Sarawak, 2011; Shore et al., 2004), namely, the exchange between employer and employee. In this exchange, satisfactory reciprocity is expected, not only in monetary terms, but also by way of positive acknowledgment and support (Lew & Sarawak, 2011). When employees believe that they have been treated fairly and duly recognized, they respond accordingly, increasing their commitment to the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades, Eisenberger, &Armeli, 2001; Wikhamn & Hall, 2012). However, the opposite is true if this reciprocity is not achieved, or an employee suspects lack of balance in the relationship (Karasek,

1979; Rousseau, 1995; Siegrist, 1996). When this occurs, job outcomes can be adversely impacted (Birch, Chi, 2016). This may include lower commitment to the organization and higher intent to turnover (Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003; Emberland & Rundmo, 2010). Organizational studies argue that exchange includes socio-emotional resources such as approval, respect, recognition and support (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhodes, 2001).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In 1954, Abraham Maslow proposed a theory of needs (Golembiewski, 2001). Maslow (1954) posited that in order for a person to be satisfied, five basic needs must be met: (a) physiological needs, (b) safety needs, (c) social needs, (d) esteem needs, and (e) self-actualization needs. The scholar explained that: (a) physiological needs include the need for relief from hunger, thirst, and fatigue, (b) safety needs include the need to be free from bodily harm, (c) social needs include the need for love affection and belonging to groups, (d) esteem needs include the need for individuals to be recognized and to achieve, and (e) self-actualization needs includes the need to reach one's full potential in a specific area. In this study, esteem needs will be of interest. "Receiving recognition and praise are fundamental motivators across all levels of employees. Recognition and praise help an individual know that people appreciate what that person has accomplished" (Sadri & Bowen, 2011, p. 47). However, understanding the various components of Maslow's Theory can assist organizations in the development of better recruitment and retention strategies, reduction of turnover, and increased productivity (Sadri & Bowen, 2011).

Methods

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between exchange commitment and turnover intent of superintendents in Texas public school districts. The predictor variable in this study was exchange commitment; whereas turnover intent was the criterion variable. Exchange commitment is a dimension of organizational commitment that is dependent on an employee being rewarded for work efforts (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996).

The following research question guided this study:

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between organizational exchange commitment and turnover intent?

Design

A quantitative research design was used to examine the relationship between exchange commitment and turnover intent of superintendents working in Texas public school districts. Specifically, for this study, a Pearson correlation analysis and linear regression were conducted.

Participants

In this study, school superintendents in Texas public school districts were the target population. Each participant in this study met the following criteria: (a) listed in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) AskTED database as a public school superintendent and (b) had a listed email address during the 2016–2017 school year. At the time of this research, there was a total population of $N = 1027$ that met this criterion. Three hundred and six superintendents responded to this survey ($n=306$). It was determined that a sample of 306 would be well above the recommended sample for a total population of 1027 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Demographic Overview of Participants

A review of demographic information related to this study offered further insight into the participants. In this study, the majority of participants reported being male (Table 1). Additionally, as it relates to age, the majority of participants (143) were identified as being between the ages of 45–54 (Table 2).

Table 1. *Number and Percent Distribution of Participants by Gender*

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	244	79.7
Female	62	20.3
Total	306	100.0

Table 2. *Age Frequencies and Percentages of Participants*

Age Classification	Frequency	Percent
25 – 34	0	0
35 – 44	51	16.7
45 – 54	143	46.7
55 – 64	88	28.8
65 – 74	24	7.8
Total	306	100.0

Participants were asked to report information related to academic degree received and district size. Most participants in this study reported having a master's degree (Table 3), and working in a small Texas district (Table 4).

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Participants by Academic Degree

Academic Degree	Number	Percent
Bachelors	0	0
Masters	214	69.9
Doctorate	92	30.1
Total	306	100.0

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Participants by District Type

District Size	Number	Percent
Small	218	71.2
Mid-Size	76	24.8
Large	12	3.9
Total	306	100.0

Instrumentation

Data were collected using survey measures related to each construct. All measures were rated based on a five-point Likert scale including the following ratings: 1—Strongly Disagree, 2—Disagree, 3—Neither Agree or Disagree, 4—Agree, and 5—Strongly Agree. Measures used in this study were a 3-item scale of Exchange Commitment (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996; Fields, 2002), which is a 3-item scale that is a part of a larger organizational commitment scale. The exchange commitment instrument considers an employee's perceptions of an organization's feelings towards their accomplishments and efforts on the job. In essence, how the organization values their contributions. Similarly, The Scale of Turnover Intent (O'Connor, 2014) was developed as a standalone scale to assess the turnover intent of executive level school administrators. This instrument seeks to probe an employee's intent to leave by inquiring about the intent to leave a given job, job envy, and the prospect of resignation. All surveys were distributed via electronic mail (email) to the participants' email of record in the TEA AsKTED system. All surveys were self-administered by participants.

Validity and Reliability

According to Cresswell and Guetterman (2019), evidence of validity can include the use and the purpose of an instrument in previous studies. For this study, a survey instrument

developed by Balfour & Wechsler, (1996) and O'Connor (2014) was used to elicit participant responses related to organizational exchange commitment and turnover intent. Previous studies have documented significant relationships when using both instruments to measure work related constructs (Kacmar et al., 1999; O'Connor, 2018; O'Connor & Vaughn, 2018). In addition, a panel of 12 superintendents with three to five years experience, reviewed each instrument. Balfour & Wechsler's organizational commitment instrument was reviewed, but accepted in its original form; however, the original iteration of O'Connor (2014) instrument of turnover was modified to accommodate feedback from the expert panel of superintendents. Upon final review, all reviewers reported that the instrument appeared to be an appropriate measure of turnover intent for this study.

Reliability

Previous studies have recorded coefficient alpha values for the Balfour & Wechsler, (1996) instrument of exchange commitment of .83 (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996; Kacmar, et. al, 1999). In this study, reliability was noted at .73. Similarly, a coefficient alpha was recorded for the Scale of Turnover Intent. The previous coefficient alpha for this instrument was .74. In this study, reliability was noted at .75 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Results

Measure	# of items	α – present study	α – previous study
Exchange Comm.	3	.73	.83
Turnover Intent	3	.75	.74

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 24 for coding and analysis. This study utilized inferential statistics including the Pearson Moment Correlation and Linear Regression as well as descriptive analysis, which included measures of central tendency, and frequency counts for demographic information. The research question formulated for this study was tested at the 0.05 levels or better.

Findings

Descriptive Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables

The mean and standard deviation results of the independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 5. A review of the overall turnover intent of a superintendent was reviewed in this study. An overall moderate intent to turnover was observed among this group. In addition, superintendents in Texas public schools appear to have a high perception of exchange commitment within their organization.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviation of Study Variables

Variables	*M*	SD
Exchange Commitment	12.67	1.95
Turnover Intent	7.18	2.54

Statistical Results

A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between exchange commitment and turnover intent of school superintendents in Texas. A significant moderate negative relationship was found to be present between exchange commitment and turnover intent (r = - 0.475) (Table 6). From this finding, it was concluded that higher levels of exchange commitment are related to lower turnover intent among school superintendents.

Table 6. *Variable Correlations*

Variables	(1)	(2)
(1) EC	1.00	-.475*
(2) TI	-.475*	1.00

Notes. (*) Denotes correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed: $p<$ .001); Table legend: (TI) = turnover intent; (EC) = exchange commitment

A linear regression analysis (see Table 4) was computed to determine the linear relationship between the predictor variable organizational exchange commitment and the criterion variable turnover intent. The predictor variable exchange commitment resulted in a linear correlation coefficient (**r**) of 0.475. This variable accounted for 22.5% of the variance in turnover intent. A statistically linear negative relationship was found between organizational commitment and turnover intent at the $p < 0.001$ level. With regard to a Texas school superintendent, exchange commitment explains more than 20% of a superintendent's intent to turnover.

Table 4. Linear Regression Results for the Relationship Between Organizational exchange commitment and Turnover Intent

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	14.98	.840			
Org Comm.-E	-.616	.066	-.475	-9.41	.000

Note. R^2= .225; *p*=.000; *p*<.001.

Discussion

Prior research has stated that SET can be used to better understand workforce behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). SET contends that reciprocity in relationships is key to increasing an employee's commitment to an organization, as well as decreasing turnover. This

study confirmed this notion in that results found that superintendents in Texas experience high exchange commitment. Furthermore, as exchange commitment increases, it is highly unlikely that a superintendent will depart, for this reason.

Furthermore, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs recognizes the importance of esteem, specifically, the need for individuals to be recognized and achieve. If individual needs are not met, discontentment can occur. This is relevant to the workplace in that discontentment with an organization can result in the exit of an employee, or at a minimum the thought of leaving. The current study validates this aspect of Maslow's theory, as it relates to work related behaviors, being that a negative relationship was found between exchange commitment and turnover intent. This reinforces the need to further explore specific factors or strategies that increase exchange commitment within an organization. More specifically, this finding solidifies the importance of a school board extending praise or commendations to a school superintendent for positive outcomes; especially if the superintendent is a quality leader. "Research has shown that lack of recognition from their direct supervisor is one of the main reasons employees leave their jobs" (Sadri & Bowen, 2011, p.47).

These findings are consistent with prior research (Fields, 2002). Despite this, few studies have examined the interaction between the aforementioned works constructs in the context of the school superintendency. This study fills a void in the research base, and offers perspective into the recruitment, retention, and the commitment a superintendent has to their organization, and highlights the inherent importance of the superintendent and board relationship.
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Recommendations for Practice: *School Boards*

Findings from this study are extremely important, and suggest that exchange commitment is significantly related to turnover intent. These are valuable and worthwhile especially given the extremely high turnover rate of superintendents in Texas. The inverse relationship that exists between exchange commitment and turnover intent prompts recommendations for practice. Knowing that there are things the school board can do in practice to help slowdown superintendent turnover could perhaps add longevity to a superintendent's tenure in a school district.

The board works collectively and carefully to create policy that governs the district. Omitted from the day-to-day management and operations of the district, it is easy to overlook the efforts of the superintendent as he or she goes about their daily duties and responsibilities. Therefore, the board must be intentional and sincere in establishing timelines for recognizing, supporting and praising their superintendent. After first being trained in understanding the value of relationship and the correlation between exchange commitment and turnover intent, the board can engage in activities that improve the tenure of superintendents. For example,

1) It is important that there is mutual respect and reciprocity in the overall relationship between the school board and superintendent. What this looks like may vary depending on the personality of board members or the superintendent; however, it can serve as a starting point, and should be collaborative.

2) Board members should consider the impact exchange commitment might have on a superintendent's intent to remain in a school district, given the relationship between exchange commitment and turnover intent among this work group.

3) School boards who have determined that they have a quality leader should be intentional in recognizing the efforts put forth by their superintendent. For example, if a superintendent performs well, it would be prudent for the school board to acknowledge this. If this occurs, this will likely decrease at least one aspect of why a superintendent may depart from the organization. This may also prove to assist in overall organizational development in terms of recruitment, retention, and performance. As proposed by Soelistya & Mashud (2016), employees with a strong commitment will be more motivated and more satisfied with their job and are commonly less interested in leaving their organization.

4) Board members and search firms alike should be compelled to learn more about the work-related factors of this group and how they interact or influence work related to decision-making. While improving the commitment of these workers does not guarantee automatic transition or continued interest in the school superintendency, the prevention of turnover is certain to mitigate further diminishing effects on the current candidate pool while presenting opportunities to experience extended tenure and maximize opportunities for school improvement.

5) Board members should consider the development and systematic implementation of reward systems that acknowledge the achievements of their superintendent. It is important to note that any reward system developed should extend beyond monetary rewards and possibly include public or private displays of praise, an

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the limited literature related to school superintendents, many opportunities are available to extend the research as it relates to this population. The following are recommendations for future research related to the population studied:

1. Replication studies to explore samples from other states
2. Studies that explore various aspects of organizational commitment based on gender, district size, and other staff members in a school district.
3. Studies that explore other specific factors that influence organizational exchange commitment.
4. Studies that explore other constructs of work related attitudes or behavior
5. Qualitative studies that extend the voice of the empirical data presented

Conclusion

Great insight can be discerned from this study, in that basic recognition and mutual respect shown by a school board may be one of the keys to improving superintendent retention.

Throughout this study it was found that high levels of exchange commitment was negatively correlated with lower intent to turnover. However, while this study may have focused on the turnover of superintendents, implications can extend to other staff/employee relationships, namely superintendent/cabinet, and so on. "Receiving recognition and praise are fundamental motivators across all levels of employees. Recognition and praise help an individual know that people appreciate what that person has accomplished" (Sadri & Bowen, 2011, p.47). As school boards seek to identify effective ways to recruit and retain school superintendents, employing elements from the construct exchange commitment can serve as a starting point for relationship building and the pursuit of superintendent longevity.

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Supporting New School Leaders Through Mentoring

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Mentoring may best be defined as "a process where one person provides individual support and challenge to another professional (Bush, 2009, p.379). The importance of mentoring new teachers and administrators has long been recognized. For example, since 2000 more than half of the states have passed laws requiring mentoring of new principals (Daresh, 2004; Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang 2007). Most of these laws have required mentoring in the first two years of practice. Grissom & Harrington (2010) found under the mentorship model, a more experienced principal mentor provides the support, guidance, advice and sounding board as the new principal becomes acclimated to the position.

Literature Review

In a study of first-year principals in Victoria, Australia, O'Mahoney (2003) found that reliance upon principal mentors was of critical importance as these new principals negotiated the challenges inherent in the position. Good mentors were seen as providing practical and useful advice about handling the multitude of tasks in leading a school. Good mentors were also seen as offering encouragement and help. In a similar study of administrator mentoring in Israel, Orland-Barak and Hasin (2010) found that establishing and sustaining good interpersonal relations between the mentor and mentee an essential component of mentoring. A good mentor was described as one who models ongoing learning, is transparent, and open.

The mentoring process of an early career principal and her female mentor was the focus involving the work of Peters (2010). The author found that the mentoring process could be described as the mentor fulfilling the role of navigator, teacher, sounding board for ideas, and a model for problem-solving. Daresh (2004) contended that good mentors are more than a role model or advisor. He discovered good mentoring involves constructive feedback to beginning principals regarding their practices. The primary goal of mentoring should be to develop the knowledge, skills, dispositions and courage to put student learning first.

Meador (2018) identified the principal as the main leader in a school. This role has been found to be difficult, demanding, and challenging (Harris, Ballenger & Leonard, 2004). Stader (2013) also identified conflict as being inherent in the professional lives of school leaders. Balancing relationships with others in the school community, utilizing discretion, and

understanding the moral imperative of school leadership has been identified as challenging, even for experienced principals (Sergiovanni & Green, 2015).

Addressing the balance of these roles and demands has been found to be particularly challenging for first- and second-year principals; therefore, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has required new school principals and assistant principals in their first administrative position to complete two years of mentoring (DESE, 2017.) The Administrator Mentor Program (AMP) was designed to provide new school principals with intensive one-on-one customized mentoring support. The program expectations identified the mentor to promote, or implement:

- a trusting relationship;

- acting as a guide, model, and coach;

- involve the mentee in reflective questioning;

- a focus on leadership competencies;

- balance challenge with support;

- and, foster problem-solving.

By providing this assistance, the program concluded the mentor would help the new principal learn how to positively impact student achievement, understand the effective use of teacher performance-based evaluation to improve teacher quality, and other ways to guide the new principal through the often difficult first two-years in their new leadership role. This implementation of the AMP program in Missouri was introduced to effectively grow and develop new principals' skills through mentoring.

Mentors for the AMP program have been selected from either internal (i.e., an experienced administrator in the district) or external sources. External mentors have been selected from a pool of experienced administrators from another district and/or from a pool of university professors with experience and certification as campus administrators. For example, a new grades 1-6 elementary principal would be teamed with a current or former elementary principal with similar experiences from their own building/district or from outside the district. DESE has viewed the AMP program to be an important and indispensable professional development opportunity for new school principals.

Mentoring has been identified as one of the more effective ways to enhance the leadership skills of new principals (Grissom and Harrington, 2010; Spiro et al., 2007); however, research into good mentoring practices and the impact of mentoring on new principals in the United States has been limited. Daresh (2004) cited a considerable need for research into school leadership development. More specifically, Daresh (2004), Grissom and Harrington (2010), and Spiro et al. (2007) mentioned the need for research into the impact of mentoring on new principal acclimation and behaviors. In addition, research into best practices and the

effectiveness of the AMP program in providing customized mentoring support in Missouri has been extremely limited.

This qualitative research study was designed to gather information of new elementary and secondary principals' perceptions of their mentoring experience. Specifically, this research was conducted to better understand effective mentoring strategies, the mentor-mentee relationship, and how the mentoring experience impacts new principals' growth in ways of thinking about their roles in improving teacher quality and student achievement.

Theoretical Framework

Adult Learning Theory

 Albert Bandura (1977) asserted behavior is learned through observation. The process of mentoring has followed this research claim. Given this premise, adults have learned social roles by observing and modeling others; therefore, it can be concluded early career principals view their role and expectations through their experiences as teacher-educators and, more importantly, through observations from the behavior of their previous supervisors. Later proponents of this learning theory have assumed that mentoring would help the mentee 'learn to think like a principal'.

Several adult learning theories or models have been identified by Merriam & Bierema (2014). The authors identified the social cognitive theory as a means to describe how adults learn in a social environment (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Principal mentoring may best be viewed through the lens of social cognitive theory. In a study of mentoring relationships with doctoral students, Curtin, Malley, & Steward (2016) argued the social cognitive career theory models the development of self-efficacy necessary to transition from candidate to faculty roles in higher education. The same lens can be applied to the transition from teacher to school leader.

Curtin et al. (2016) posited three types of mentoring in social cognitive career theory mentoring. These three types of mentoring were identified as instructional mentoring, sponsorship, and expressive or psychosocial mentoring. Using the mentoring theory as described by Curtin et al. (2016), instructional mentoring could be found as part of the principal certification program as well as during early interactions between the mentor and mentee. Sponsorship was defined as active recommendation of the mentee to others (Curtin et al., 2016). Sponsorship of new principals could be identified as mentors including the mentee in professional meetings, introducing mentees to other professionals in the field, and advocating for the mentee (Curtin et al. 2016). Sponsorship would seem more common in mentor-doctoral candidate relationships. The final type of mentoring, expressive or psychosocial mentoring, may be the best fit for early career principal-mentor role. Expressive or psychosocial mentoring has been identified as providing encouragement and support. According to Curtin et al. (2016), this type of mentoring has generated self-efficacy and support that may be particularly important for early career principals.

Mentors can help guide early career principals by modeling reflective behavior and sound mental processes. "So not only do (early career principals) process information (they) also observe others and model their behavior" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 35). In fact, "mentoring

is a process that offers adult learner models to observe" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 35). For example, a veteran principal might model how she/he thinks about an ill-structured problem to illustrate the thought process of reflection on their actions in certain situations and thus "reflection becomes part of a continuous learning process" (Sergiovanni &Green, 2015, p. 5). Thus, social cognitive theory seems applicable to the mentoring of early career principals.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of first and second year principals involved in the Missouri Administrator Mentoring Project (AMP) in order to better understand the characteristics of an effective mentor-mentee relationship, how the mentoring experience aids in guiding new principals to develop skills in goal setting and collaboration, and how the participation in the mentoring experience impacts leadership growth.

Research Questions

Based on the current research, the following questions were addressed:

1. What are some of the characteristics of an effective mentor-mentee relationship?

2. How does the mentoring experience guide new principals in the development of goal setting and collaborative skills?

3. How does participation in the mentoring experience impact leadership growth of new principals?

Research Design

As leadership preparation faculty, an interest emerged relative to how beginning elementary and secondary principals and assistant principals interpret their mentoring experience and what meanings they attribute to this experience. A qualitative research design was chosen as this study focused on understanding the mentoring experience from the point of view of early career principals. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated qualitative research is "understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 15).

The research population consisted of a purposeful sample of six second and third-year principals enrolled in a Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) mentoring program and working in the university service region. The researchers interviewed four elementary principals and two secondary principals at the end of their second year of participation in AMP, or had recently transitioned out of AMP. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and took place convenient to the participants. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcribed interview was supplemented with analytic memos designed to capture the richness of the experience, nonverbal cues, as well as various emotions expressed by the subject. Transcripts were coded and emergent themes explored. Each interview was treated as a case. Using a within and cross-case analysis, themes were identified emerging from the participants' accounts of their mentoring experience (Kim, 2014). Validity was addressed by using multiple investigators and

coders. Each investigator coded the data separately and a consensus was reached on the interpretation of the data.

The research was approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data was collected. Participants completed the approved Informed Consent prior to the interview. To maintain confidentiality participants were cautioned not to use the name of their school or district and not to identify their mentor by name. In the few cases where the school or mentor was mentioned by name, these identifiers were redacted.

Method

Interviews were designed as semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews were those that gather specific information such as participant education level and background, numbers of teachers in the building, the principal's role (i.e., principal or assistant principal), and student demographics. The largest part of the interview was guided by a list of questions about the mentoring experience to be explored. The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to respond to the situation, to the emerging views of the participant, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interview topics for all participants included the following: a) educational background and job prior to the principalship; b) proximity and availability of the mentor;

c) characteristics of a successful mentor-mentee relationship; d) description of a typical mentoring session; e) relationship developed with the mentor; f) the required length of two years in the mentoring program; g) the mentor's previous experience in a similar grade or school; h) guidance provided by your mentor with goal-setting and the modeling of collaboration; and, i) additional mentor-mentee relationship issues not addressed by prior topics.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study. A purposeful sampling of the mentoring experience of first or second year principals in a university service region is not necessarily generalizable to other regions in the state or nation. In addition, a few of the principals had access to veteran principals in their district, other than their assigned mentor, which may have influenced the principal/mentor relationship.

Findings and Emergent Themes

In examining the perspectives of first and second year principals involved in the Missouri Administrator Mentoring Project (AMP), four themes emerged relative to the impact of the mentoring project. The identified themes included: the prior experience of the mentor, the proximity and contact between the mentor and mentee, collaborative and reflective goal setting, and trust and relationship building.

Prior Experience of the Mentor

Mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that

will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. Supported by this definition, the prior experience of the mentor assigned to the mentee was reported to be important in building a relationship. When referring to prior experience, one participant stated, "I do think it's important. I feel like if you want to really explain something to somebody, you have to walk a little bit just to have that experience…so to ask a question, it was real to me because I knew they were doing it or they had done so in the past—this was very beneficial and I think it's important."

Stressing the importance of prior experience, another participant agreed. "I think that the mentor I have has prior knowledge of our school system which really was beneficial as far as setting up goals and trying to meet our objectives. He has lots of experience and he knows what I would be dealing with my first year."

Experienced mentors can also offer tools they have used in their own practice as a means of professional growth for the novice leaders. Discussing teacher evaluations in her building, one participant described a process her mentor provided to address personnel needs, "he actually did this SWOT activity with me, I had never heard of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats…he did it with me and then I did it with my teacher evaluations. I was really excited to have something from my mentor that I could just turn around and use immediately." In addition to the SWOT analysis, the mentee described the use of conversation maps introduced to her by her mentor, "I am to rate myself on my emerging levels of competencies. I have never seen this before!"

One participant, who did not have a mentor with a similar background, voiced her desire to make more of a connection during the mentorship experience. "If I was working on something and if I had an elementary principal as my mentor, I think that it would have been much easier for her to share things with me rather than just research," reported the mentee. The mentor was a central office administrator, and in order to provide more experiential learning, she provided elementary school sites in her district for her mentees to visit. Talking about these visits, the mentee stated, "when I actually toured the buildings and met with those principals, I got way more out of talking with those elementary leaders than I did with conversations with my mentor. I shared things I did (with the principal) and we both learned from each other so I definitely walked away with things I could come back and implement right away."

Proximity and Contact between the Mentor and Mentee

Proximity of the mentor was viewed as an important facet of the mentorship program. Participants reported that being able to actually visit the mentor on his/her campus and to meet face-to-face for consultation sessions helped the mentee address growth in leadership areas. As described by one participant, "I think proximity is crucial…it's easy to pick up the phone, but a lot of time--to really have those heart to heart conversations--I think you have to see someone face-to-face, rather than just a voice you hear."

Another participant, who was in the second year of the program, had been assigned a mentor who was located approximately 90 miles from her school. Although the mentee was able to travel to the mentor's district in order to participate in school-site visits, the travel time was perceived as being a negative factor of the program and the contact between the two "was harder

for me." In year two, her assigned mentor was located much closer in proximity. She added, "proximity I think is very important...you know how busy everyone is…and with what you have to do right in front of you...if you have to travel a long way, or the mentor has to travel a long way, it's difficult. I think face-to-face meetings are important. My first-year experience was not as meaningful as this year…and I think it was the proximity."

Two of the participants were each assigned a mentor that was located within their own communities. One participant was assigned a retired educator that actually lived very near her school, so proximity was addressed in a positive manner. Describing her experience, she stated "if I had a question or concern, I could just call…and he would be right over if he could. He knows what it's like to work in this district—he knows the pros and cons, so I think it's good for us." Another agreed in that he reported, "the mentor has been a huge help—and being near the community, he is familiar with the school district, so he has been fabulous...I think it's important to get a mentor that understands the make-up of what you are dealing with."

Finally, one participant felt that proximity would be beneficial due to the fact that the mentor might be able to spend more time with the mentee. As an example, he stated, "It wouldn't have to be an all-day thing—maybe a couple of hours, but maybe the mentor could come and shadow the principal (the mentee) for an hour or two and then they could have a conversation—you don't really have a routine as an administrator—things can pop up at any time." The participant felt that spending time within his own building alongside his mentor, and then having time to talk about the day's events, would be very helpful with his development of leadership skills.

Collaborative and Reflective Goal Setting

For both the mentor and the mentee involved in the Missouri Administrator Mentoring Program, the expectation was that each would attend training to address goal setting and reflective dialogue. The training assisted with the process of generating and guiding conversations to cause reflection and growth, creating common language, while also helping to build relationships. Modeled after the New Your City Leadership Academy in consultation with The Wallace Foundation and state departments of Kentucky, Delaware, and Missouri, a Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet was used to assist the mentee in the development of leadership skills and behaviors to meet the goals of leading and improving schools instructionally. The philosophy supporting this worksheet development was that new leaders, during their first years of leadership, should focus on the developing mastery of a subset of key leadership behaviors that have been found to develop the capacity to perform instructional leadership. The worksheet contained eight leadership dimensions including 1) Personal Behavior, 2) Resilience, 3) Communication, 4) Student Performance, 5) Situational Problem-Solving, 6) Learning, 7) Supervision of Staff, and 8) Management. During the training, the worksheet was reviewed in order for the mentor to assist the mentee in focusing on critical leadership areas to improve instruction in the context of their own school's vision, mission, goals and challenges. The worksheet was then used to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and to record progress. From the planning, leadership goals were developed relative to the leadership dimensions.

Building on an established goal within the district, one participant selected the leadership dimension of Communication, focusing on knowing all staff members, clear and appropriate communication, and understanding cultural patterns in order to adjust his/her communication style. This novice principal was assigned to two separate buildings, one of which she had served as a teacher; the other she was challenged to get to know the staff. "Coming in, number 1 was to get to know all of the staff…one building I wasn't familiar with, so that was something I had to really work through and get to know those teachers in order for us to have a trusting relationship…finding ways to unify our buildings." To further her goal, which also led to year two of the program, a focus was made to not only enhance her communication with the staff but to also allow the staff to communicate with each other. In order to accomplish this, the new principal implemented collaborative processes to address the evaluation of programs and data collection, provided common lunch periods for grade level teachers to be together for 20-40 minutes daily and to switch classrooms so that all grade level teachers were located together within the building. In response to how her mentor assisted in her growth and development, she stated, "I think my mentor definitely helped me…by giving me an outside view."

Being assigned as an assistant principal in a building with some challenges regarding discipline, another participant chose the leadership dimension of Management for her goal. Regarding her strength in this area, the mentee stated, "I have always considered myself as a strong disciplinarian, but I didn't know if my views from prior experience could relate to this school system." Guided by her mentor in reflective dialogue, they discussed a plan to be consistent without having to re-establish the code of conduct or discipline policies. By altering the steps within the hierarchy of the code of conduct, the assistant principal was able to see an increase in attendance and a decrease in suspensions. In her words, "the plan actually worked!"

Other participants described their work with the mentor in areas such as Student Performance and Supervision of Staff. By identifying strengths and weaknesses, the mentees were able to develop goals for growth, chart their progress and determine if their goals were met. A mentoring log was kept by both the mentor and mentee to document the number of hours working together, the type of interaction, and the topics and activities discussed relative to the selected leadership goals. These logs were submitted to the Administrator Mentoring Program to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the mentee/mentor experience.

Trust and Relationship Building

A final theme that emerged from the study involved the area of trust and relationship building. Supported by the work involving the concept of trust, Tschannem-Moran (2014) and Tschannem-Moran & Hoy (1998, 2000) provided a definition based on five facets of trust. Trust is described as the willingness to be vulnerable based on one's confidence in the other party's benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence.

Relating to these five facets and the confidence that interactions and conversations would be protected between the mentee and mentor, several participants described how they could openly and honestly discuss school issues, where an outside perspective was not only welcome, but encouraged. As one participant stated, "there are just some issues that you don't want to discuss in-house." Adding to this thought, another participant stated, "if I have a question, then I

feel like I can ask my mentor and it stays right there between me and my mentor…I really appreciate that."

As an example, one participant had some issues with the teacher evaluation process and the conversations required to address developmental supervision. "I had some issues here within our building that I just wanted somebody's outside perspective on…it's nice to have that person that is not necessarily in your building every day or even in your district to know the politics or the dynamics…just listening to the facts. So, we talked through a few things—about moving some staff members that I thought might need to happen. Going through the summative evaluations right now I am starting to have those conversations…and it was so nice to have his (mentor) input in this area…he really is committed to helping me in any way…and I feel like I have a true relationship with him, not just having a relationship with him because I have to."

Relating to the idea of competence, another participant described how she worked with a mentor that was familiar with her district. "I could go to him for anything that we were struggling with, any problem that arises…I shoot him an email and he is very timely to respond…he has been in our shoes before and that's what helps. He has been in the community and knows what is crucial for the job we are in and where we work. He understands everything we are going through. One day he visited and he was here over an hour and he just let me talk and he just sat there and listened, and then at the end, offered some things to try…it just felt good to get things off my chest and to talk."

Final Thoughts Regarding the Mentoring Program

Final thoughts reported by the mentees included the idea of having internal mentors as well as external. In larger districts, where there are numerous schools, participants also relied on the administrative teams within the districts. One participant noted, "Because we have a large elementary administrative team…if I had a question, I didn't always go to my mentor. I went to someone within my district…I had seven other people that I could call or email…I could beg, borrow and steal from them."

Feedback from the participants also addressed the length of the program. Focusing on the required two years of mentoring, one participant stated, "I like the two years, with the first year used to implement my plan. I don't think it should be a one year program because that second year is when you see the results and then you can make changes in those plans to make them better. You can also build a system across with all the people that are in the program and communicate and talk to other principals…and that table that has been built for communication is a major plus…I really enjoyed the program and it has been beneficial to me." Another participant also addressed the two years responding, "I think two years is adequate. Because the first year you are so overwhelmed that you really don't know what you are doing. By the second year you kind of have your feet under you and you feel a little more confident on what you are doing, so I think two years is adequate to build relationships within your district." A third participant felt the program could possibly be extended stating that in a third, fourth, or fifth year, members in the program might still continue to have conversations via phone calls or additional developmental meetings to address professional growth.

Finally, participants voiced their overall perceptions. Relating to the benefit, a participant stated, "I have had a very positive experience…he (my mentor) has been so helpful and wonderful...I mean when we had to do action planning, he helped me to do that and again, anytime I had problems, I could email him." Another participant noted, "The program was great…I am always big about making connections with other administrators. I think that is very important and just growing professionally…getting out there and seeing what other schools are doing…building those relationships." A third participant stated, "I think the program has been beneficial. I have enjoyed working with my mentors…anytime I had a question or couldn't make it to a meeting, they would be more than happy to make accommodations and meet me at different times or come by and help and I couldn't ask for more than that. They were very helpful with my plan and reaching our goals in our school system. They have been wonderful as another support for me with my experience as an administrator."

Discussion

All in all, the participants reported a positive experience as they were involved in the Missouri Administrator Mentoring Program. Participants indicated that a good mentor-mentee relationship is characterized by having a mentor that has similar current or past experience and in close proximity. They felt that having a similar experience and availability provided an understanding of their particular situation and facilitated face-to-face meetings. Participants believed that an outside view helped them understand their role in goal setting and collaboration skills. The outside view promoted more honest communication as they sometimes struggled with a particular problem. It was important to the participants that the mentor is available and understands the dynamics and challenges of early career principals. This concept seemed particularly important in small school districts with only one elementary, middle school, and high school. Larger districts with multiple schools provided more opportunities to interact with more experienced colleagues in similar schools. Participants may have constructed the meanings of their relationships differently, but were consistent in their positive views of the relationship they had developed with their mentor. While they valued their mentor-mentee relationship the participants were also consistent in their view that two-years is enough time for them to develop their abilities and skills to be successful in their new roles.

Implications and Recommendations

While not necessarily generalizable to other regions and other mentoring programs, this study does provide some implications and recommendations. First, mentoring of early school principals by experienced school principals was found to be profoundly important. Results indicated it may be best to have a mentor that is not employed by the district. All six participants in this study had external mentors and were consistent in their belief that having a mentor outside the district was positive in that it provided an 'outside view.' Respondents also maintained school districts should support the professional development of early career principals even after the mentoring term is complete. Results from this research led the researchers of this study to contend that Principal Preparation Programs should include instruction to prepare future leaders to work with mentors.

This study focused on the current Missouri model for mentoring new principals. A new model, currently in the early stages of implementation, will provide additional support and multiple years of contact for new principals in the State of Missouri. The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) centers on a mission to develop highly effective school principals in Missouri by creating a leadership development system to ensure excellent school leadership in service to all students (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). As a recommendation for further study, the transition into this new leadership model might be of interest to both educators in the K-12 setting as well as those in principal preparation programs to determine the effectiveness of the new mentoring model.

Conclusion

Several themes emerged from this qualitative research into early career principals mentoring experience. The participants believed that it is important that the mentor be currently employed or have experience in a similar grade level. One participant emphasized this by stating "I feel like if you want to really explain something to somebody, you have to walk a little bit just to have that experience…" Participants found it important that the mentor be relatively close in proximity to their school to improve communication and interaction. For example, one participant stated "My first-year experience was not as meaningful as this year…and I think it was the proximity." Collaborative and reflective goal setting also emerged from the data. One middle school participant had experience as an elementary teacher, but not secondary experience. She expressed concerns about student discipline. Guided by her mentor in reflective dialog she began to understand the district student conduct code and developed a plan of action. As she stated, "the plan actually worked!"

The final emergent theme was the importance of trust building in the mentor-mentee relationship. Participants were consistent in their view that trust was essential. Several participants emphasized this point by stating "if I have a question, then I feel like I can ask my mentor and it stays right there between (us)." Another participant stated, "there are just some issues that you don't want to discuss in-house." Finally, participants believed that a two-year experience is a valuable and adequate time frame for the mentoring process to be successful.

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