ABSTRACT

CARROLL, ANDREA DORIA. Novice Principals’ Perceptions Regarding the Utilization of Support Systems. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance Fusarelli).

This qualitative study used a single-case study methodology to investigate (a) how six novice elementary-school principals were supported during their participation in a one-year, unstructured, pilot principal mentoring program, and (b) the novice principals’ perceptions of the support they received during their first three years in the principal role. This study enabled the participants to articulate their experiences authentically and enabled the researcher to explore how well the program aligned with and supported the specific needs of each novice principal. The literature demonstrates that a comprehensive and systematic support program is needed for beginning principals because of the shortage of qualified principals and the difficulty of socialization into the role of principal. The findings of this study indicated that in order for novice principals to become effectively socialized into their roles, they needed support in various forms, such as peer networking, supervisor support, and professional development programming. Unexpectedly, the study found that the interrelationship of such support systems appeared to be just as beneficial to novice principals, if not more so, than mentoring programs.

The findings have practical implications for principals, school districts, universities, and state departments of education. School districts can consider implementing their own pilot mentor programs and non-traditional mentoring opportunities for novice principals; universities can develop partnerships with local school districts; and state departments of education can provide professional development for all novice principals. Future research can explore peer networking as a support system, non-traditional approaches to mentoring, the
correlation between socialization theory and principal support systems, the development of an effective mentoring/coaching program, and the mentoring/coaching of veteran principals.
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Novice Principals’ Perceptions Regarding the Utilization of Support Systems

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Educational Administration and Supervision

Raleigh, North Carolina
2015

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Beulah M. Roberson (deceased), for her love of education, her strength, and determination to make sure I received what life would not allow her to have: a quality education. Mom, thank you for all the sacrifices you made so that I could have. I love you for your unconditional love.
BIOGRAPHY

Andrea Doria Carroll was born in Windsor, North Carolina. She later resided in Washington, N.C., as a sharecropper’s daughter. She is a high school graduate of Washington High School in Washington, N.C. Andrea attended East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Masters in Educational Administration. She worked as a first and third grade teacher in the Washington City Schools System, Washington, N.C. She became an assistant principal for Washington City Schools System and later principal for Beaufort County School System in Beaufort, N.C. prior to the merging of the two systems. Thirteen years ago, Andrea migrated to Durham, North Carolina where she first became principal at a year-round elementary school and later completed her career as a principal at a traditional elementary school.

After retirement, Andrea decided to complete her final degree at North Carolina State University and explore other educational opportunities through contracted positions within Durham Public Schools. Although she has served in various educational capacities, her passion is working with novice principals. Andrea remembered how difficult her beginning years as a principal had been. Had it not been for a retired principal who came to her rescue, she probably would have thrown in the towel and become another educational statistic. She has made it her mission to give support to beginning school leaders. This passion for the cause has led her to focus her dissertation on mentoring leaders.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my husband, Earl C. Carroll, for his love, support, and encouragement during this process. He never doubted my ability to fulfill my dream. A heartfelt appreciation goes out to my children and tech geeks, Tori, Christol, and Corey. Whenever I called out for help, my kids always came to my rescue. I love them for their relentless devotion to the cause. A special thank you goes to my faithful dog, Sweetie, who stayed by my side and kept me company in the wee hours of the morning.

I am greatly indebted to my supportive administrative team, co-workers, family, and friends who held me up and encouraged me in countless ways when I wanted to give up. A special thank you and congratulations goes to Eunice Sanders, my dissertation sister and cohort partner in this great adventure and journey. The labor pains were difficult and sometimes downright hard but we finally delivered this baby. We did it!

I am also appreciative of the nurturing support that I received from my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Lance Fusarelli, and the staff of professors from North Carolina State University’s educational leadership program. I would like to thank the dissertation committee members and the participants of this study for volunteering their service and time. I will never forget everyone’s dedication in aiding me in my quest to obtain this degree.

Above all, I give praises and appreciation to God for giving me the strength to endure to the end.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The role of the principal has changed drastically over the past 15 years, from manager to instructional leader (Levine, 2005). Confrontational parents, educational public policy and accountability, state education reform, No Child Left Behind legislation, and recent revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act have greatly altered the focus, role, and responsibilities of principals. These new roles and pressures have overwhelmed principals, especially newcomers to the role of principal. As effective leadership has been linked to student achievement, and with an expected principal shortage of 40% within the next decade, school districts are being forced to look to new methods of induction and retention (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; The Education Alliance of Brown University, 2003). Therefore, the need for preparing principals for their leadership role is imperative. Leadership is considered second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning (Anderson, 1991; Leithwood et al., 2004).

According to a Carnegie Foundation study, the most effective way to prepare and support principals in their leadership careers is to provide a mentoring program. Mentor programs have been challenging to implement due to the following factors: matching mentors and protégés, scheduling and time constraints, and ensuring a productive learning experience for both the mentor and protégé (Malone, 2001).
There is a sense of urgency to find qualified applicants for principalships due to record student enrollment, combined with the estimated 40% of principals preparing to retire in the next decade. The pool of qualified applicants is quickly shrinking (Malone, 2001). Ironically, education itself does not seem to be the limiting factor in the principal shortage, since nearly half of the nation’s public school teachers have earned advanced degrees. Few of these teachers have expressed a desire to become principals due to the demands of the job. This drives school systems to call on retired, veteran school leaders to become mentors to those who will be entrusted with our schools and students (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000).

Mentoring gets its name from Homer’s *Odyssey*. Odysseus, before leaving for Troy, entrusted his son to a wise friend, Mentor. Mentor served not only as a counselor to the prince during Odysseus’ twenty-year absence, but also as guardian and guide. By no means did Mentor replace the parental role of Odysseus. The task of the mentor is to define a unique relationship with his or her protégé and fulfill a need unmet by any other relationship (Samier, 2000). The best mentors are teachers/sages who act to the best of their ability within plain sight of the protégé and who engage in a compassionate and mutual search for wisdom (Bell, 1996).

Although mentoring has existed for thousands of years, it is only in the last thirty years that mentor-protégé relationships in educational administration have received increasing academic attention and professional interest (Samier, 2000). “Principals have traditionally been thrown into their jobs without a lifejacket, and they are expected to sink or swim,” according to Mark Anderson, former principal and researcher (The Education Alliance of Brown University, 2003, p. 8). New principals (novices) arrive at their schools
“fully frontloaded with skills and knowledge needed to perform their job duties” (Bodger, 2011, p. 23). Their portfolio usually consists of the traditionally required university preparation, training, and licensing program with updated skills and knowledge through district level staff development with no systematic plan (Ryland, 2005; Villani, 2006; Wardlow, 2008). According to Leithwood, Aitken, and Jantzi (2006), today’s principals have six forms of leadership required of them: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership. The novice is expected to learn how to apply each one on his or her own without the support or guidance of mentors, coaches, or staff development.

Research provides evidence “that school leaders, throughout all stages of their careers, can benefit from a mentoring system in which seasoned leaders help the protégé place theory and practice in the context of experience” (Malone, 2001, p. 2). Malone contended that studies show that graduate training alone does not translate into excellently led schools. Studies also indicated that when professional development includes a mentor, the novice principal’s level of effectiveness is higher and tends to last throughout his or her career.

Mentoring new employees has been an age-old tradition for various professions. Private industry has widely studied the benefits of mentoring their employees for years. The mentoring of teachers has also been well established, but just recently the concept of mentoring of school leaders has begun to flourish (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). There has been a tremendous growth in the adoption of formalized mentoring programs for beginning principals since the 1980s (Brown, 2005; Daresh, 2004; Lashway, 2002, 2003b; Villani, 2006). Researchers’ findings indicated the necessity for induction programs (Lashway,
2003a; Villani, 2006) and the fact that new principals often welcomed the support that mentoring programs offer (Lashway, 2002, 2003a).

Daresh’s research (2004) described practices, limitations, problems, and benefits of mentoring programs as an induction method for new principals. Daresh (1995) identified some of the benefits of mentoring for the novice principal as being better communication, reduction in the feeling of isolation, and increased confidence and competency. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth’s (2004) study of the Principals for Excellence Program, a partnership between a Kentucky University and school district, indicated some other major benefits, such as the development of collegial relationships with peers, opportunities to problem solve, the development of close networking between school leaders, contributions to the building of leadership capacity within the school district, encouragement and recruitment of teacher leaders, and the partnership between universities and school districts. Both researchers concluded that the mentoring program benefited the employee and the organization (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 2004).

Another group of researchers sought to identify the benefits of mentoring as a socialization method for new principals. By completing a meta-analysis of mentoring programs in over 300 studies in the fields of education, business, and medicine, they found wide variations in mentoring programs in terms of structure, mentor training procedures, mentor assignments, and the location and frequency of mentor–mentee contact (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Similar to other researchers (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 2004; Lashway, 2002), Ehrich et al. (2004) found that mentees generally accepted the program and felt that it was beneficial in the areas of reflection, support, collegiality,
empathy, and encouragement. The challenges that the study identified to mentoring programs were insufficient time and the difficulty of matching mentors and mentees; however, the authors concluded that the benefits of mentoring programs outweighed the challenges. Ehrich et al. (2004) concluded that “mentoring is a highly complex, dynamic, and interpersonal relationship that requires, at the very least, time, interest, and commitment of mentors and mentees and strong support from educational or organizational leaders responsible for overseeing the programs” (p. 533).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the “lack of systematic, comprehensive support and induction programs” for new school principals (Bodger, 2011, p. 4). Barth (1990) argued that novice principals are expected to assume a very difficult, complex, and demanding job with little or no support. To sustain the success and results and meet the challenges of diverse communities, all school leaders require support and ongoing staff development throughout their careers, especially inexperienced new leaders who are in the first years of their profession (Ganter, Daresh, Dunlap, & Newsom, 1999). According to the Educational Alliance of Brown University (2003), “Educators are beginning to recognize that, given the increasing complexity and importance of the principalship, school districts can no longer afford to leave novice principals alone, isolated from helpful colleagues, when solving complex problems” (p. 8). The first year can be the most difficult time for novice principals. They tend to struggle and need help and support to be successful (Bloom, 1999; Osterman, Crow, & Rosen, 1993). Fullan (2005) indicated that deep learning is not only for students, but also for teachers and administrators working in schools, districts, and
governments. Therefore, if learning is to be sustained, deep learning is important for all levels of the system—students, teachers, and, most importantly, principals.

The problem has intensified in recent years due to a shortage of school principals. This shortage means that it is crucial for school districts to support beginning principals so they will remain on the job. In 1999, an Educational Research Service report found that half of the superintendents’ surveys reported a shortage of qualified candidates for advertised positions (Tucker & Codding, 1993). This report revealed that almost 40% of all public school principals would retire or leave the principalship by 2010. Elementary school administrators have experienced a 42% turnover rate since 1998 (Doud & Keller, 1998). In the face of the school administrator shortage, a large number of qualified applicants never apply for the advertised positions.

Despite the shortage of school principals and the large number of eligible teachers with advanced degrees in administration, few teachers are pursuing positions as principals. Those who do seek this position are often not prepared for the job. Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto (2012) released a study that revealed the annual principal turnover rates as being in the range of 15 to 30%. The study also revealed that these positions were usually replaced with ill-prepared, inexperienced school leaders. Twenty percent of novice principals tend to leave their new school assignments after one to two years, which exacerbates the downward decline of the schools’ achievement (Burkhauser et al., 2012). Research from RAND (Burkhauser et al., 2012) has shown a correlation between principal retention and both principal experience and student achievement. The common theme of the study is that “schools with high percentages of poor students, minority students, and/or low-
performing students experience more principal turnover” (Burkhauser et al., 2012, p. 3). This is why it is essential to create a systematic and comprehensive support and induction/mentor program for new principals that will provide the support needed to help the novice make the transition into the new role of school principal (Villani, 2006).

Novice principal support programs vary in content, methods, and material used (Villani, 2006). While some programs focus on instructional leadership preparation, others focus on leadership development. Some programs include a mentoring and coaching component, whether formal or informal. The program tends to determine how mentors were defined (Daresh, 2004; Ehrich et al., 2004; Mertz, 2004). Some training programs for novice principals are less systematic, leaving the coach or mentor and the novice principal to define the topics for discussion. Although the assignment of mentors to protégé is made, there is sometimes a lack of accountability and consistency in keeping the team working together on a regular basis (Aycock, 2006). Researchers have suggested that written curriculum is needed to guide the novice principal and school district in principal training programs (Willmore, 2004).

**Conceptual Framework**

Research suggests that socialization theory can be used to understand the process by which a principal transforms from a newcomer into a seasoned leader. Socialization is the process by which an individual learns and absorbs the customs, norms, and belief systems of his or her culture, and role socialization is the process by which an individual is socialized into a specific new role or identity. Hertting and Phenis-Burke (2007) states that socialization is how people learn their social roles. The process gives one a feeling of membership or a
sense of belonging to an organization (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of role socialization, which can be used to understand the development of the novice principal.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of socialization of a new role identity.
The transition process shown in Figure 1 begins with the newcomer coming into the role of the principalship not totally understanding what is expected or what the new role entail. He or she may lack understanding of the importance of being accepted into their new organization by their peers and staff members. Learning how to become an effective principal is a complex learning and reflecting process that requires socialization into the practices and assumptions of a new role identity (Wardlow, 2008). New principals are usually birthed from teacher leaders. Bodger’s qualitative research (2011) stated that teachers may be “already successful teachers, but even the most experienced of veteran teachers experience culture shock when they leave the classroom to become principal” (p. 25). They move from the familiar and comfort of teaching to the demanding role of school administrator (Crow, 2006; Lovely, 2004a). Novice principals new to the principalship often need help transitioning from “stranger to insider” (Aiken, 2002, p. 33) due to the fact that the first year is considered the most crucial for many reasons, with socialization being one of the major reasons. Cramp (2006) stated that the novice must “learn the ropes, making connections, and apply what has been learned in daily job situations” (p. 6). Lovely (2004b) also stated that a principal’s long-term success is based on the manner in which he/she becomes socialized into every school.

One study that involved the application of socialization theory to principals took place over a three-year period, with 113 new principals in the United States (Parkay, Currie, and Rhodes, 1992). This study led to the development of a series of sequential socialization stages through which principals pass as they become professionally socialized. The stages were identified as survival, control, stability, educational leadership, and professional
actualization. Before districts can provide effective support for novice principals, they must first understand the stages that new principals experience during the process of socialization to the role of principal. Villani (2006) stated that the district must identify specific socialization activities to help the novice move quickly from survival and control mode to the educational leadership and professional actualization mode. He also concluded that “the induction of new principals is best achieved when it addresses the need of principals in their different developmental stages” (Villani, 2006, p. 18).

Researchers have found mentoring to be the “key component of induction, especially for inexperienced principals” (Villani, 2006, p. 18). The use of mentoring programs in schools “provide(s) needed direction to professional development for educational managers, administrators, and leaders” (Daresh, 1995, p. 7). The support of the mentor means a reduction in isolation for the novice principal. The mentor also provides a “link from academic theory to the real-world problems for the new principal” (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006, p. 183). They help the novice principal socialize to their new role in the organization by assisting them in making sense of what is happening in their new world (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006; Reynolds, 1999; Young, Sheetz, & Knight, 2005). The mentor is also responsible for giving important performance feedback to new principals (Daresh, 2004; Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2002). “As new group members are inducted into the profession they learn the habits, norms, roles, and institutional arrangements that define their work. The mentor can serve as the one who articulates the critical conceptions and practices in shaping the careers of newcomers” (Strong et al., 2002, p. 14).
Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study focused on the perceptions of a group of elementary novice principals regarding a one-year pilot unstructured principal mentoring program. This study investigated how well the program supported and aligned with the specific needs of each novice principal. It also afforded the novice principals an opportunity to give their authentic word regarding their experiences during their participation in the program.

The research site for this study is the Triangle Public School District, to be described in greater detail later in this chapter. Within the past decade, the district started experiencing a surge in the retirement of veteran principals and the hiring of novice principals who were having problems acclimating into their new role as principal. The Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools recognized that the new principals under her leadership needed additional support. An ad hoc mentoring program was put together, but it lacked a formal program, mentoring training, a formal interview for the selection of mentors, criteria for the assignment or matching of mentors and protégés, feedback from a formal assessment of the program, and other standards that would ensure an effective mentoring program. Mentors were assigned two to three novice principals and were expected to spend one full day per week with their protégés over the course of one year, and to attend monthly mentor meetings. Not all novice principals received mentor/coaching support, even upon request.

The first year is critical to the success or failure of a novice principal (National Association for Secondary School Principals, 2000). As new principals assume the role of the principalship, they experience a myriad of changes both professionally and personally. According to National Association for Secondary School Principals (2000), principals stated
that good on-the-job training under a fine mentoring principal helped them to make the connections between theory and practice. Therefore, educational institutions embraced the practice as an invaluable program of providing support and assistance to the novice principal. When designing and developing an effective novice principal support program, it is important to understand how novice principals experienced and perceived how well the program supported and aligned with principals’ needs within their first three years on the job. Thus, this study investigated the novice principals’ experience of the program.

**Research Questions**

The study explored the following two research questions:

How were the novice principals supported during their first, second, or third year in the principalship?

How did the novice principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

**Definitions of Key Terms**

To assist readers, the following terms used in the study are defined.

1. *Mentoring* is defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person assists another in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less experienced person’s professional and personal growth (Kram, 1985).

2. A *novice principal* is a beginning principal in his or her first three years of the principalship. In this study, the term is used interchangeably with the phrase *new principal or protégé* (Woolf, 1979).
3. A *mentor* is the counselor and advisor to the novice or new principal. An experienced, productive individual who relates to a less-experienced individual, who facilitates his or her personal development for the benefit of the individual as well as the organization (Kram, 1985).

4. A *protégé* is “one who is under the care and protection of an influential person for the furthering of his career” (Woolf, 1979, p. 919).

5. *Informal mentoring* occurs among principals when mentors are assigned by the superintendent’s designee to novice principals without a structured process of matching the two or established procedures or protocols. Some of the attributes of an informal program are unspecified goals, unknown outcome, limited access to the program, self-selection of mentors and protégé, long-term mentoring, no expert training or support, and indirect organizational benefits (Wareing, 2009).

6. *Formal mentoring* occurs in an organization when a planned, structured, and coordinated intervention is stipulated in an organization’s human resource polices to ensure that the protégé and mentor have a clear sense of the goals of the program. Some of the attributes of a formal program are the strategic pairing of mentor and protégé, expert training and support, direct organizational benefits, connection to a strategic objective of the organization, established goals, measurable outcomes, open access to those who qualify, and a designated amount of time to receive services (months or years) (Wareing, 2009).

7. *Induction* is the act or process of training novice principals; the initial experiences of the new principal; a systematic organizational effort to minimize problems confronting new principals (Bodger, 2011, p. 13).
8. *E-mentoring/Virtual mentoring* is the interaction of mentors and protégés through electronic technology. This is a naturally occurring relationship or a paired relationship within a program that is established between a senior individual (mentor) and a less skilled or experienced individual (protégé), in which the mentor and protégé primarily use electronic communications with the intention of developing the skills, knowledge base, confidence, and cultural understanding of the protégé (Single & Muller, 1999). In this study, the terms *virtual mentoring* and *e-mentoring* are used interchangeably.

9. *E-mentoring technology* is any form of computer-mediated technology used to support mentoring activities (Single & Muller, 1999).

10. A *coach* is a formally trained, experienced administrator who is assigned by a school district to a new administrator. The coach’s role is to provide deliberate support to assist new principals to clarify and achieve their goal (Starcevich, 2009).

11. *Executive coaching* is defined as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organization with a formally defined coaching agreement (Kilburg, 1996).

12. *Double loop learning* is an approach to problem solving that focuses on the reasoning behind one’s behavior (including one’s values, assumptions, and way of framing the problem) rather than on the behavior itself. Whereas single-loop learning enables a learner to change behavior, double-loop learning enables the learner to discover and
change the beliefs and patterns of reasoning that shape behavior and its outcomes. The approach is effective for solving problems that are complex and ill structured and that change as problem-solving advances. Double loop learning has been widely applied in educational settings and professional organizations (Argyris, 1976).

13. The *turnaround coaching model* is an approach to coaching that began in 2005 with an initiative to turn around North Carolina high schools by re-culturing or restructuring a group of persistently low-performing high schools. In 2006, additional high schools and middle schools became a part of this effort, creating a group of sixty-six high schools and thirty-seven middle schools to be “turned around” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

14. The *North Carolina Principal Fellows Program* is a need-blind, merit-based scholarship loan program funded by the North Carolina General Assembly. The scholarship loans assist interested individuals in earning a master’s degree in school administration in preparation for a career as an assistant principal or principal in the public schools of North Carolina (Center for School Leadership Development, University of North Carolina, n.d.).

**Significance of the Study**

A strong relationship has been demonstrated between effective instructional leadership of schools and high levels of student achievement (Furtwengler & Furtwengler, 1998). Yet the work of leading schools and districts has become more complex due in part to increased pressure to perform, increased student diversity, and an unstable political environment within which schools must operate (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Reports
by two national principals’ associations clearly state that multiple demands and conflicting priorities make it difficult for principals to focus on school improvement to the degree they think they should. The federal No Child Left Behind Act brought even more scrutiny and accountability to schools and district leaders (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003).

According to the Educational Research Services (1999) there is a national shortage of highly qualified school leaders, especially in under-resourced areas (Pijanowski & Brady, 2009). Stone-Johnson (2014) stated, “At a moment of mounting concerns about the quality of American schools, the shortage of school leaders that are both qualified and interested has never been more critical” (p. 607). Fink and Brayman (2006) attributed “the shortage of principal candidates” to “the retirement of aging principals, increased principal mobility, and the standardization agenda which undermine the capacity of incoming and outgoing principals to lead their schools” (p. 83). According to Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), these studies suggested that at a time when United States public schools need new and dynamic leadership, finding those leaders will be increasingly difficult.

Districts experiencing high population growth or those worried about turnover and retirement among principals are forced to find new building leaders. With high stakes accountability in place in virtually every state, districts have been searching for building administrators who can deliver results now, not at some point in the vague and indeterminate future (Roza et al., 2003). In the past, school districts relied on experienced teachers to make the move from the classroom into the principalship to take up the slack of the leadership vacancies (Lortie, 2009). Qualified teachers are not inclined to pursue these leadership positions due to the great demands of the job and the fact that the compensation does not
match the work hours (Stone-Johnson, 2009a, 2009b; Donaldson, 2007; The Education Alliance of Brown University, 2003). Teachers who were certified administrators but not interested in the job listed their reasons for not entering the profession as being “the increased complexity and responsibility of the job, stressful work conditions, and lack of resources and support” (The Educational Alliance of Brown University, 2003, p. 7). Teachers who do become principals are often ill-prepared for the job and tend to lack longevity. Mark Anderson, researcher and former principal, stated that “when isolated and without guidance, [novice principals] often make mistakes that may have long-term consequences,” which personified the sink-or-swim mentality, meaning job success or failure (qtd. in The Education Alliance of Brown University, 2003, p. 8).

Pijanowski and Brady (2009) stated that in spite of the rising vacancies in the principalship, there are still questions whether or not there is an actual shortage of potential school leaders. One of the reasons for the conflicting findings within the literature is that the leadership shortage is experienced differently by various types of schools and grade levels (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009). The study conducted by Roza, Celio, Harvey, and Wishon (2003) questioned whether there truly was a shortage of school principals, concluding that while “there [were] plenty of certified applicants … there [seemed] to be a dearth of candidates with high-level leadership skills” (p. 7).

In the midst of this shortage, many scholars affirm that support programs for novice school leaders can be a critical element to their success (Barth, 2003; Daresh, 2004; Daresh & LaPlant, 1985; Thody, 1993). Crow and Matthews (1998) found that mentoring was paramount not only to pre-service administrative preparation programs but also was highly
valued by experienced administrators. In fact, Crow and Matthews (1998) noted that the establishment of informal mentoring relationships is a common practice among practitioners. In addition, they discovered that principals cited mentors as their primary source of assistance in becoming successful school leaders as opposed to coursework or educational leadership professors.

The major thing that made this study significant for this school system was realizing the importance of assessing the needs of the ones being supported, developing and creating a plan of action to fit the need, implementing the plan of action with fidelity, and evaluating the process and/or plan. As previously stated, many districts, states, universities and colleges, and professional organizations are now recognizing the need to support new principals and have introduced mentoring as a component of their leadership development strategies. These organizations have also recognized that simply matching mentors and protégés together and calling one a mentor does not produce a supportive relationship or increased capabilities of the protégés (Daresh, 1995).

The aim is that this research project will start a serious dialogue regarding the need for a support program not only for novice principals but for all principals. If and when a decision is made regarding the type of support to be given, hopefully it will be a research-based program with an excellent evaluative tool attached to promote continuous growth for all principals. It is the hope that this study will give research information to school districts that are providing support to principals. It is the aim of the study to help districts make cost effective and sound decisions about the kind of support that is needed for all principals. This
type of research study has already begun to open eyes to a better understanding of the concept of mentoring and coaching, their differences and similarities.

The goal of this study is to learn and share more about the future trends in coaching and mentoring such as virtual mentoring and e-mentoring as well as what can be learned from the corporate world regarding executive coaching and double loop learning. It is very significant to this study that school districts begin to utilize all of their resources such as skilled and knowledgeable, retired principals to support novice principals. They should be trained and kept abreast of the current trends in how to help our school leaders excel in the leadership role of the principalship. It should be considered a privilege and an honor to be able to still be a contributor to the well-being and future of our children.

**Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions, and Subjectivity**

This qualitative research study was subject to several delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. The researchers imposed a delimitation based on the involvement of the participants. The number of participants involved in this study was limited to six elementary school principals. The selection of this collective group of principals was based on their novice experience (one to three years as a principal) and their participation in a one-year pilot, unstructured mentoring program. Accessibility and availability to the researcher was also another reason for the selection. All participants lived within the Triangle area of North Carolina.

The identified limitations in this study were out of the researcher’s control. The limitations may have consisted of the memory of the participants and their comfort and willingness to answer the interview questions with candor and honesty. The participants’
interviews consisted of their perception of events, people, and programs that occurred as much as three years ago. Inaccurate memories may have affected their perceptions and responses to the interview questions. It was my intention to put the participants at ease when conducting the interviews, but some participants may have been more willing to share their perceptions, experiences, and suggestions than others. My relationship with the participants was as a co-worker. One participant served as my assistant principal and another was an administrative intern. Both served with me over seven to eight years ago. Both left the school district and returned to the system later after my retirement. A bond of trust and respect was developed during that time. Hopefully, this eased their anxiety about participating in the interview process.

As a qualitative study, this research is based on certain assumptions. Merriam (1988) identified some assumptions that undergird qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. In the paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses, no treatments, and no restrictions on the end product. One does not manipulate the variables or administer a treatment. What one does is observe, intuit, and sense what is occurring in a natural setting—hence the term naturalistic inquiry. (p. 17)
A bias of this study is the high value that the researcher places on the work of principals. My motive for studying the effectiveness of mentoring programs for novice principals is that I have previously served as a contracted mentor within this school district. (None of the participants who were involved in this study were assigned to me during the one-year pilot program.) I tend to favor the mentor–protégé support because of my own novice principal experience years ago and my mentor experience in an unstructured informal mentoring program, which could be seen as a bias. I retired from this school district with 31 years of service (11 years in this school district). After retirement, I was contracted and assigned to serve three novice principals three days per week.

Each novice principal had a designated day in which I spent the day with him or her. I was involved in shadowing, observing, discussing, and assisting in problem solving, and every other facet of the organization with the principal throughout the day. My expertise was based on my success as a principal, my own research on mentoring beginning principals, and the knowledge acquired throughout my educational profession. Although I was employed and assigned to serve novice principals, I had not received any formal training as a mentor. The state of North Carolina included mentoring certification to my teacher certificate after serving as a teacher mentor for several years. I have also been a principal pal/buddy for beginning principals during my principalship.

This topic has become an important and major concern for me because of my experiences as a beginning principal when I moved to a new school district. I am an advocate for novice principals receiving support, whether it’s formal or informal. The aim of this dissertation is to reveal additional knowledge regarding the perception of novice principals
on mentoring programs. The authentic words of the protégés may provide additional knowledge regarding how and what can be provided to support and strengthen the skills of new principals entering the profession. Leaving new principals alone to fend for themselves has never been the answer to ensure successful school improvement.

In qualitative research, the findings cannot be generalized to other sites and samples. This research project only created a first-hand account of six novice principals’ perceptions of the support they received in their first three years in the principalship with a particular model of a mentoring program. This may not justify mentoring in general. The data analysis for this research included the search for common themes among the participants. The findings may not be generalized to other individuals.

**Organization of the Study**

In schools today, principals are no longer just managers; they are also the schools’ instructional leaders and are expected to drive student achievement and school improvement, among many other roles. Qualified principals are in short supply, and the early years as a principal are the most crucial to success. Thus, this study investigates the perceptions and experiences of novice principals who participate in a mentoring program. This study analyzed the perception of the principals regarding how well the program supported and aligned with their needs.

Chapter 1 provided the background for this study, including its problem statement, significance, and assumptions. Chapter 2 provides context for this study by examining previous research on the mentoring of principals and other relevant themes such as the origin and types of mentoring, its benefits and problems, and the effectiveness of principal
mentoring programs. Chapter 3 will describe and justify the single-case study method. Chapter 4 presents the results, and Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions, points out the implications, and makes recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

History and Definitions of Mentorship

The concept of mentoring can be traced back to Homer’s *Odyssey*. Odysseus gave his friend Mentor the task of educating Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, during his 20-year absence at Troy (Conyers, 2004). Literature has given us various definitions for the word mentor. Daresh (1995) referenced his literary description from the *Odyssey* by saying a mentor is a “lasting image of the wise and patient counselor who serves to shape and guide the lives of younger, less experienced colleagues” (p. 8).

Although the concept of mentoring has existed for thousands of years, and although mentors have played a significant role in the development of talents and skills of novices throughout history, there has recently been a resurgence of interest in the mentor-protégé relationships in the context of academic and professional institutions. About three decades ago, corporate America and the U.S. government began to introduce formal mentoring programs because managers and officials saw the potential such programs had for helping employees learn and grow on the job (Ehrich et al., 2004).

A variety of definitions of the term have been proposed by researchers. Ragins and McFarlin (1990) referred to the mentor as one with experience, high ranking, who is influential within the organization as well as committed to promoting others’ careers. Crosby’s (1999) description of a mentor is an entrusted and experienced person who is interested in the development of novice people, and someone whose advice is sought or who offers advice and suggestions. Dodson (2006) defined the mentor as a person who starts a
“relationship for the purpose of instruction or guidance or one who is concerned with the career development of another” (p. 23; Daresh, 1995, 2004). Daresh and Playko (1991) explained mentoring as “the process of bringing together experienced, competent administrators with beginning colleagues as a way to help them with the transition to the world of school administration” (p. 27). Bush and Coleman (1995) defined a mentor as a peer who gives support intended to assist novice principals in managing the transition from teacher to principal. Ehrich et al. (2004) refer to the mentor as a father figure who was responsible for the guidance of and who acted as an advisor to a young person.

Daresh (1988) emphasized how mentors could be utilized in welcoming and introducing new colleagues to their new environment with its customs, values, and resources. Wasden (1988) stated:

The mentor is a master at providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events that contribute knowledge and experience to the life of the steward. Opportunities are not happenstance; they must be thoughtfully designed and organized into logical sequence. Sometimes hazards are attached to opportunity. The mentor takes great pains to help the steward recognize and negotiate dangerous situations. In doing all this, the mentor has an opportunity for growth through services, which is the highest form of leadership (p. 6).

Schein (1978) insisted that the mentor, who is teacher, role model, coach, and sponsor, is responsible for providing opportunities of growth for the novice. Lastly, Daresh’s (2001) definition of mentoring is an ongoing process of guidance and support to novices so that they can be effective contributors to the organization’s goals. In conclusion, the common
theme that defines mentoring includes guidance, support, and instruction of an individual in order to improve his or her effectiveness.

The research of Daresh and Playko (1989) made the assumption that mentoring was a powerful tool to use in helping novice principals survive the first year in the principalship. Years later, the research of Krajewski et al. (2004) continued to support this assumption after the researchers surveyed principals and found the majority of the principals reported that mentoring and guidance from their peers was one of the greatest benefits to them. Grogan and Crow (2004) concluded that mentoring could enhance professional development, personal growth, and learning for the mentor and mentee. Other researchers stated that mentoring was also effective in reducing isolation, increasing collegiality and socialization, and providing networking access (Howley, Chadwick, & Howley, 2002). Although mentoring may seem to be a great idea in providing support for the novice principal, it should not be seen as a cure-all for the beginning principal (Playko, 1995). Nevertheless, researchers still assert that there is a lack of systematic and comprehensive support for new principals (Aycock, 2006; Barth, 1990; Villani, 2006; Wardlow, 2008).

**Mentoring versus Coaching**

There is often confusion regarding the distinction between mentoring and coaching because the main function of a good mentor is to coach a protégé. Starcevich (2009) stated that mentors, in formal mentoring program or informal relationship focus on the person, their career and support for individual growth and maturity while the coach is job-focused and performance-oriented. Mentors are sounding boards who can give advice, but the partner has the freedom of choice. The coach may try to direct the protégé to some end results, the
protégé may choose how to get there, but the coach is strategically assessing and monitoring the progress and giving advice for effectivity and efficiency (Starcevich, 2009). The mentor is biased in the protégé’s favor, but the coach is impartial, focused on improvement in behavior. The mentor has a deep personal interest, and personally involved—one who cares about the protégé’s long-term development. The coach develops specific skills for the task, challenges and performance expectations at work. According to Starcevich (2009), mentors are power-free, with a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship. They are facilitators who allow the protégé to discover on his or her own. A coach has a set task to reinforce or change skills and behaviors. There is a goal or objective for each discussion. In formal or informal mentoring programs, the protégé has choices. Coaching has job expectations or a defined competency.

Starcevich (2009) stated that interpersonal skills determine the effectiveness of influence for the coach and mentor. The coach authority is implied by nature of his or her position. He or she can insist on compliance. The mentor’s influence is proportionate to the perceived value brought to the relationship. The relationship is power-free, based on mutual respect and value for mentor and protégé. Coaching can be a job title or description, but mentor is an earned reputation. The coach’s returns are in the form of team harmony and job performance. Mentoring relationships are reciprocal. The mentors empower the protégés to see what they can accomplish (Starcevich, 2009).

Mentoring can occur informally or formally, and it can deal with every aspect of broader life and career issues. The protégé is usually proactive in seeking the mentor and keeping the relationship productive. Coaching is task-related, no matter what the situation. It
deals with improvement of knowledge, skills or abilities to better perform a given task. The coach develops the need for discussion and is responsible for follow up and holding others accountable (Starcevich, 2009). Table 2.1 displays the differences between mentoring and coaching (Starcevich, 2009, n.p.).

Table 2.1

*Differences between Mentoring and Coaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Coach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Facilitator with no agenda</td>
<td>Specific agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Self selecting</td>
<td>Comes with the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of influence</td>
<td>Perceived value</td>
<td>Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal returns</td>
<td>Affirmation/learning</td>
<td>Teamwork/performance</td>
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<td>Arena</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Task related</td>
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Mentoring and coaching are both ways of cultivating professionalism and expertise among new employees and the veterans who support them. The similarities between mentoring and coaching are: (a) coaches can also be mentors and mentors can be coaches, or the roles can be rolled into one; (b) mentors and coaches use the same skills to help people reach significant decisions and take appropriate action; (c) both mentors and coaches depend on building an open and trustworthy relationship with their protégés; and (d) neither are there to solve problems but rather to help identify the issues and plan ways through them.
Executive coaching. Richard R. Kilburg (1996) defines executive coaching as follows:

a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organization with a formally defined coaching agreement. (p. 134)

Lary (1997) stated that it may be more useful to view executive coaching as an ongoing relationship with a client that focuses on life purpose, vision, and goals using the process of inquiry and personal discovery. It is the understanding of the client’s problem behavior in context, deciding whether the problem can be remedied, and encouraging the person to change the behavior that threatens to derail him or her (Waldroop & Bulter, 1996). The goals of executive coaching relationships have been explicit and have focused on preventing executive derailment (Waldroop & Bulter, 1996). The coaching process may concentrate on a specific behavior that is causing managerial conflict (Strickland, 1997), be designed to develop specific managerial competencies, or solve specific problems (Douglas & McCauley, 1997; Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). It also seeks to boost the performance of high-potential executives (Judge & Cowell, 1997). The goals of executive coaching are shifting and broadening as more executives inquire about coaching for various reasons.

There are two general observations made about the impact of executive coaching: (a) it can be useful in helping executives carry learned information from training to workplace to
practical application (Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997) and (b) in the context of a leadership development program, an executive coaching component plays a vital role in supporting the changes in behavior and skills that executives must make to further their leadership abilities for the organization and personal career advancement (McCauley & Hughes-James, 1994; Young & Dixon, 1996). These observations are limited to the lack of empirical research into the impact of executive coaching related to its intended outcomes. Not much is known regarding the relationship between executive coaching, individual outcomes, and organizational outcomes. The future of executive coaching as a legitimate and effective professional service depends on empirical data that support its effectiveness as a developmental tool for executive talent (Douglas & Morley, 2000).

**Turnaround coaching model.** The turnaround coach model originated from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction School Turnaround Program. The purpose of this program was to turn around North Carolina’s lowest achieving schools during 2005-2010. In 2005, North Carolina started a high school turnaround initiative to re-culture or restructure a group of persistently low-performing high schools. In 2006, other high schools and middle schools became a part of this effort, which included a group of sixty-six high schools and thirty-seven middle schools to be “turned around”. The plan consisted of high-quality professional development on research-based best practices to create school teams to re-culture schools, coupled with intensive, targeted, and sustained coaching for successful implementation of re-culturing strategies learned during professional development. The plan yielded significant change in leadership and instructional practice which, in most cases,
resulted in significant student achievement gains (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

The turnaround coaches were known as leadership facilitators. They were successful formal principals who had experienced turning around schools themselves. A typical weekly visit by the leadership facilitator (coach) involved a brief orienting conversation with the principal, several classroom observations, and participations in School Improvement Team meetings or a meeting with a small group of teachers and/or an assistant principal working on an identified problem. At the end of the day, the instructional facilitator (coach) usually met again with principals to discuss what they learned and observed during the day. They sometimes served as neutral discussion leaders during leadership team and school improvement team meetings as well as planning retreats. They also initiated special organized meetings to address problems they identified. The facilitator (coach) produced a written report to share and provide tools such as classroom observation protocols and common lesson planning formats to principals and teachers while modeling the use of the tools in joint instructional monitoring and feedback sessions. The facilitator (coach) followed up by observing and coaching principals and teachers as they used the tools demonstrated for them (Thompson, Brown, Townsend, Henry, & Fortner, 2011).

**Double loop learning.** The double loop learning theory, first proposed by Argyris (1976), is an approach to problem solving that focuses on uncovering and improving the reasoning behind one’s behavior, including one’s values, assumptions, and way of framing the problem, rather than on changing the behavior itself. The more typical approach to problem-solving, single-loop learning, only enables a learner to change behavior, whereas
double-loop learning enables the learner to discover and change the beliefs and patterns of reasoning that shape behavior and its outcomes. Double loop learning has been effectively used for solving complex, ill structured, ever-changing problems in both educational settings and professional organizations (Argyris, 1976).

Argyris (1976) explained the concept of double loop learning by describing a teacher who, believing that she has a class of stupid students, will communicate expectations such that the students behave stupidly. The teacher confirms the theory by asking them questions and eliciting stupid answers or creates situations where they behave stupidly. The theory-in-use is self-fulfilling. In order to break the congruency, the teacher would need to participate in open loop learning in which they deliberately disconfirm the theory-in-use.

The basis for the double loop theory outlined by Argyris and Schon (1974) is the theory of action perspective. This perspective examines reality from the point of view of human beings as actors. Changes in values, behavior, leadership, and helping others are all part of, and informed by, the actors’ theory of action. An important aspect of the theory is the distinction between an individual’s espoused theory and their theory-in-use (what they actually do); bringing these two into equivalence is a primary concern of double loop learning. Interaction with others is necessary to identify the conflict.

Argyris’ intervention research focus is on exploring how organizations may increase their capacity for double loop learning. He argues that double loop learning is necessary if practitioners and organizations are to make informed decisions in rapidly changing and often uncertain contexts (Argyris, 1974; 1982; 1990). According to Edmondson and Moingeon (1999), the underlying theory, supported by research, is that the reasoning processes
employed by individuals in organizations hamper the exchange of relevant information in ways that make double-loop learning difficult—and all but impossible in situations in which much is at stake. A dilemma is created because these are the very organizational situations in which double-loop learning is most needed. The theory of double loop learning is relevant to this study because it is a promising technique for solving educational leadership problems.

**Continuum of mentoring types.** There are various types of formal mentoring programs. The programs vary in their guidelines, requirements, and standards (Ehrich et al., 2004). According to Jacobi (1991), some mentor programs differ in mentor training requirements, protégé/mentor matching or assignments, meeting and location schedule details, and program evaluations.

Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe (1978) presented a continuum of mentoring types based on their intensity. The types of mentoring in the continuum are listed as the peer pal, the guide, the sponsor, the patron, and the mentor. The peer pal has the least intensity while the mentor has the most intensity. The peer pal is equal to the protégé because they share information, strategies, and support each other. The guide gives an explanation of the system’s procedures to the protégé but does not lend any support because they are not in a position to lend such support. The sponsor assists in the promotion and shaping of the protégé’s career. The patron is more influential in assisting the protégé’s career advancement. The most intense type of guidance is the mentor. The mentor, who becomes paternalistic in nature, advocates for and educates the protégé.
Benefits to the Protégé

A first-year principal who attended a new administrative program described the first year by saying, “At times, it’s like I’m maneuvering in a minefield. Things blow up and I crawl out of the hole” (Lovely, 2004b, p. 53). This description suggests that the first year of the principalship is the most challenging. The “long hours, excessive workload, and insurmountable expectations from several opposing factions can lead to unmanageable stress” (Lovely, 2004b, p. 55). Lovely (2004b) stated that these stressors afflict almost all principals but present an exceptional challenge for the inexperienced first-year principal. The support of the mentoring program can provide the novice with an invaluable opportunity to strive and not just survive.

Literature on the potential benefits of mentoring programs for the novice is abundant in the field. Daresh and Playko (1989) emphasized that mentoring programs can be a powerful instrument that could aid the novice school administrator in surviving the first year but should not just be seen as a safety net for survival only. It should be an ongoing professional development that benefits both the mentor and the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1989; Kelly & Peterson, 2000). Both researchers concurred that mentoring programs would be most beneficial for the first-year principal. This dissertation study uses the authentic voices of a collective group of elementary principals who shared their first-hand experiences regarding the support that they received to aid in their success and survival in the principalship during their first three years. It not only focused on their perceptions of how the unstructured mentor program gave them much needed support but also on the support from other sources such as their peers, supervisors, and professional development.
Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) signified that implementing a well-designed and structured mentor program could possibly be a valuable professional development instrument for both the mentor and the protégé. Their research involved a study of multiple cohorts of aspiring and practicing principals engaged in professional development. It provided perspectives on the benefits of mentoring through clinical practice by clarifying issues related to role-socialization, professional development, and leadership capacity building. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) made recommendations based on the collected data from participants in several cohorts and reviews of research on clinical practices, leadership preparation, and mentoring. Those recommendations involved the improvement of university-based preparation programs through models and programs such as teachers on special assignment (TOSAs), job sharing, and 110-day mentoring. These models and programs enabled aspiring principals to gain authentic administrative work experience guided by leadership mentoring. The authors also reflected on the critical importance of practice and administrative mentoring in the initial and continuing preparation of principals.

Krajewski, Conner, Murray, and Williams (2004) found through the results of a study that mentoring programs were of great benefit to novice administrators. This study involved a conversation with three experienced high school principals to reveal their growth and successes in their leadership models. These dedicated leaders were in different locales but all possess the same characteristics, such as dedication, desire, creativity, and patience. According to Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003), a survey revealed that “67% of principals believe that school of education leadership programs are out of touch with what it takes to run a school district; only 4% praise their graduate studies, and a majority say that mentoring
and guidance from people they work with has the greatest benefit for them” (p. 19).

Krajewski et al. (2004) concluded that principals must be visionaries who collaborate and share in creating a vision and a common goal. They must get the stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) to do what is needed to make the vision become reality. The principal must apply pressure when needed and nurture support to get the job done. They must know how to balance the pressure and support. Much of their success as school leaders was not taught in an administrative leadership class. They spent time observing, reassessing, collaborating with peers, keeping the vision firmly in sight, celebrating when possibilities become reality, and beginning this cycle over and over again (Krajewski et al., 2004).

In an effort to produce qualified school administrators, a number of school districts across the United States are creating formal mentoring programs for aspiring school administrators (Daresh, 2004). They are becoming more conscious of the benefits that mentoring programs offer to a novice principal when transitioning from teacher to school leader (Daresh & Playko, 1989). Researchers found some of the potential benefits for the protégé as being:

(a) increased confidence and competence
(b) the ability to blend theory to real-life situations
(c) better communication
(d) knowledge and use of effective strategies, and
(e) reduction in the feeling of isolation (Daresh, 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1989)

It was also denoted by Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) that mentoring programs have changed some principals’ perspectives about being a building principal and they have
changed their approach to the job due to better collegial relationships with other administrators.

Mentoring programs have afforded the protégé the opportunity to feel more goal-directed, detail-oriented, self-confident, and reflective (Bush & Coleman, 1995). It allows them to gain more knowledge and skills while diminishing the feeling of isolation (Brady, 1993). Daresh (2004) correlated the role of the master teacher to that of a master electrician. The master’s or mentor’s job is to teach the protégé practical skills. Daresh’s (2004) research revealed that there is so much more to the role of the mentor than just teaching the protégé to be a practitioner who is only responsible for master schedules, teacher evaluations, parent/teacher conferences, or other school-related activities. It is the mentor’s role to elicit or raise more questions than they answer. They should provoke thoughts and reflections from the protégé. Therefore, “mentors hold the key novices need to unlock their professional expertise” (Barnett, 1995, p. 54). Mentors are the means for developing the protégé’s capabilities in problem solving, reflective thinking, and cognitive development.

Novice administrators with their leadership deficiencies will have difficulty developing the expertise needed without the assistance of skilled and experienced administrators in the area of problem solving. A structured and well-developed mentor program can develop and strengthen the protégé’s skills with cognitive and problem-solving skills as well as improve upon their reflective thinking skills in order to make better decisions for their schools (Leithwood & Steinback, 1992).

According to Ehrich et al. (2004), the mentor and protégé could gain positive learning experiences when participating in a mentor program. They also reported from a compilation
of studies that the most important outcome for the protégé was career advancement and psychosocial support. Kram (1985) stated that support comes in the form of advice, friendship, performance feedback, and encouragement. This allowed the protégé the opportunity to have discussions as well as share ideas, problems, and information with their peers (Ehrich et al., 2004). Other mentoring benefits for the protégé included giving assistance to teachers with lesson presentations which involved teaching strategies, planning, discipline, content, and available resources.

Playko (1995) contended that the most important benefits of mentoring for the protégé are practical knowledge and skills, role socialization, career advancement, and a significant source of networking. Several other researchers conducted an analysis of successful principal mentoring programs that revealed some of the same key elements, including the importance of socialization, networking, and the opportunity for professional reflection (Barnett, 1995; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Dappen, 2001; Gehrke, 1988). Norton (2003) commended mentoring for its ability to build communication channels, for the development of personal support for the protégé, encouraging and allowing self-growth of the protégé, and providing the protégé with a role model. Daresh (1988) concluded by stating that “mentoring is an important concept that has rather obvious implications for the ways in which aspiring school administrators might enjoy more successful learning experiences” (p. 12).
Advantages of Mentoring Programs

Benefits for Mentors

It would be easy for one to conclude that the only benefactor of mentoring is the protégé. The literature dispelled that myth by pointing to the many benefits of this experience for the mentor. Job satisfaction appeared to be the greatest benefit. The joy of grooming new school administrators who have shown potential has been rewarding to the mentor, according to Ehrich et al. (2004). Clutterback (1985) said this was especially true if the mentor suffered a loss of job excitement within their career and the protégé performed with excellence. The success of the protégé increased the mentor’s peer recognition and opened the door for personal career advancement (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Ehrich et al., 2004). This experience allowed mentors to receive new ideas and insight regarding problems from their protégé. It also enabled the mentor to be able to capitalize on this new perspective which could possibly mean professional advancement and growth (Daresh, 2004; Gordon, 2004). If the mentoring experiences are carefully structured and executed, then it could serve as an effective professional development for all involved (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Ehrich et al., 2004).

There appeared to be some parallel between the benefits of mentoring for the protégé and mentor, such as less isolation from peers, which encourages and allows a collaborative environment and a sharing of professional interests, ideas, and resources (Ehrich et al., 2004). The role of the mentor can embody a feeling of job satisfaction for one’s contribution toward the preparation of the next generation of principals (Playko, 1995). Bush and Coleman (1995) concluded by saying that mentors also gain great insight into current practices,
improve problem analysis skills, receive the enjoyment of interacting with new principals, and have an opportunity to discuss professional issues with colleagues.

**Benefits for School Districts**

Mentoring programs not only produce profitable advantages for the protégé and mentor but for the school district as well. Research has noted that the school system’s gains are numerous. The district profits by gaining more capable staff, increasing employee motivation, improving employee productivity with greater self-esteem, and promoting and creating lifelong learning (Daresh, 2004). This type of program also produces a climate of collegial support (Daresh, 2004; Playko, 1995). Districts that implemented mentoring programs have seen evidence of successful novice principals as school leaders and higher student achievement (Daresh, 2004). Mentors can provide novice principals with support that will enable them to move the organization in new directions and avoid the status quo. New principals feel more confident in becoming risk-takers. Mentors increase the self-esteem and confidence of the new principal and help the principal to become more effective much sooner because of his or her participation within the program (Daresh, 2004). It motivates the principal to go above and beyond serving his or her organization due to a sense of satisfaction of leadership choices and decisions (Bush & Coleman, 1995). According to Daresh (2003), during the beginning principals’ first year, they stated that they were more productive due to the support received through their mentoring experience. Although it is difficult to determine precisely whether mentoring and higher administrative productivity increased student achievement, higher job satisfaction of teachers, lower student dropout
rates, or other possible measures of school productivity, the mentoring of novice principals appears to have received credit for these positive outcomes.

Mentor programs are not an absolute guarantee for ensuring lifelong learning as part of a district’s culture. But novice principals who receive mentor support to help them gain experience and knowledge is a part of a school district that perpetuates a climate of collegial support. This type of climate will eventually result in a culture of lifelong learning existing system-wide (Daresh, 2004). This is also true of the ways that professional motivation levels may be enhanced as a result of having programs to support the work of organizational newcomers (Wanous, Keon, & Latack, 1983). People are satisfied and motivated to serve an organization more vigorously when they feel that their organization has gone beyond the call of duty to meet their needs. School districts that provide a mentor program for new principals fits this profile of ensuring success for their novice. As a result, beginning principals have a stronger motivation to succeed and want to return the dividends to its school district (Daresh, 2004).

Effective leaders are always beneficial to any school district. Therefore, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) emphasized that mentoring programs can strengthen the leadership development processes of novice principals; this, in turn, provides the system with effective leaders. But the most important benefit to the school district may be that producing effective principals through mentoring programs highly suggest, but does not confirm, that it leads to the improvement of students’ grades, attendance, and behavior (Ehrich et al., 2004).
Mentoring Problems

Although the literature cited several benefits of mentoring programs, there are some limitations that school districts need to be aware of when considering this as a support system for new principals. Those adopting or implementing these programs must be cautious and not allow “unwanted side effects that can stifle innovation and create and perpetuate the status quo” (Grogan & Crow, 2004, p. 466). If school systems only want mentoring programs to ensure that new principals perform their duties the way they have always performed them, then the school system could have a huge problem as student achievement would not improve. School districts must be experts at responding to societal change rather than trying to maintain the status quo. According to Daresh (2004), “Mentoring takes on a much different character when it is used to promote an enhancement or expansion of traditional visions of leadership and [is] not simply a reinforcement of past practices” (p. 512).

Long (1997) listed several concerns regarding mentoring programs in his study. Those concerns included: (a) a lack of well-thought-out details for program, (b) mentor and protégé incompatibility, (c) poor program planning, (d) insufficient time to implement the mentoring, and (e) lack of mentor assignments for minorities. He also cited the lack of school district support and commitment in the form of funding termination, lack of support, and lack of alignment with other organizational activities. Many states are now jumping on the bandwagon and mandating the adoption of mentoring programs to support the new principal. School systems may be complying with the mandate but are failing to provide sufficient support to such a program. They are not providing the much-needed meeting time for mentor
and protégé, nor in most instances are they considering compensating mentors for services rendered. This results in programs having little or no substance (Playko, 1995).

The incompatibility of mentor and protégé has posed a problem for mentoring programs. Research has shown the forcing of mentoring relationships failed to give the support needed for novice principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Matching mentors and protégés by gender, age, or school type has no concrete supporting evidence that such matches have any effect on mentoring relationships. This was especially true in the matching of men with women. The literature indicated that both men and women could be effective mentors for each other. The primary issue that this research revealed about pairing mentor and protégé was that one must give thoughtful consideration of similar needs, professional goals, and leadership styles when matching the mentor and protégé (Playko, 1995). Daresh (1988) thought that great thought and care should go into pairing of mentors and protégés to ensure effectiveness. Daresh and Playko (1989) both agreed that matching mentor and protégé should be based on interpersonal style, personalities, professional goals, and the learning needs of both.

Veteran principals may view mentoring programs dimly because they themselves did it on their own. They often feel that this type of program is needless and a waste of time and resources. Their thought is that any school administrator needing this service must be weak. Principals having this point of view make it difficult for school districts to implement or have successful mentoring programs. The sentiment is that if principals themselves won’t support it, others will not feel motivated to support it (Daresh, 2004). Daresh (2004) stated, “If
mentoring is not respected as a legitimate approach to learning, it will not be successful and effective” (p. 511). The lack of support could possibly doom the program (Daresh, 2004).

If the mentoring program is going to be effective, impactful, and successful, Mertz (2004) stated that the mentoring program must have mentors who participate voluntarily. There needs to be mutual respect between mentor and protégé and mentor and protégé must both have accessibility to each other. He also cited that there must also be a common perspective of what the program entails. Daresh and Playko (1992) argued that the success of these programs definitely does not lie with state mandates. They both agreed that token compliance to implementing mentoring programs would result in ineffective mentoring which would be worse than not complying with the mandate.

School districts sometimes jump the gun and implement mentoring programs without proper planning and thought. Although mentoring programs are needed to support the needs of the new principal, it is sometimes viewed as a magic potion for what ails the new principal. A mentoring program should be inclusive of a comprehensive district plan which provides a professional development plan to support the needs of the new principal (Daresh & Playko, 1992). School districts must also not assume that long-time or retired principals make the best mentors. Although several states required an induction program in support of the first year of new principals, the selection of mentor principals was done haphazardly (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Mentoring provides a real opportunity for instructing and improving leadership skills. It should be viewed as a proactive move by experienced and trained principals. Inadequate preparation can limit the effectiveness of the program (Playko, 1995). The research supported the fact that training mentors is an essential piece of the
puzzle in the design of an effective mentoring program. It recommended that school districts give specialized training to potential mentors (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

Daresh (2004) stated that programs designed for small groups like mentors and protégés in mentoring programs fall prey to lack of resources. This is true due to the decline in the funding of public education. Funding for professional development tends to disappear rapidly because of this dilemma. In order for mentoring programs to attain their full potential, it is essential to have adequate funding as well as provide resources in the form of time and talented people (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

A final concern is that mentors, themselves, could become a detriment for protégés if they are so dominant that protégés become too dependent and are not able to make decisions on their own. The mentor could become an enabler to the point that the protégé is not able to reflect on school problems and develop his or her own answers, which would stifle professional growth (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006). The job of the mentor is to assist the protégé in decision-making, not make the decision for him or her (Bush & Coleman, 1995).

The same sentiments are substantiated by Daresh and Playko (1989) as they listed other potential problems that could develop in mentoring relationships:

1. Mentors may become too protective and controlling;
2. Mentors may have personal agendas to fulfill;
3. Beginning principals may get only a limited perspective from a single mentor;
4. Mentors may not acknowledge the limitation of their protégés;
5. Beginners may become too dependent on their mentors;
6. Beginners may idealize and idolize their mentors;
7. Beginners may try to become “carbon copies” of their mentors;

8. Formal mentoring arrangements may be too structured; and

9. Mentors may compose all beginning principals to an ideal vision or standard of performance, which may never be realized. (pp. 20-21)

There are challenges in every relationship, including those of the mentorship. Like any relationship, obtaining a successful mentoring relationship requires hard work. Even then, one cannot expect a perfect mentor and protégé fit (Keyser, LaKaoski, & Lara-Cinisomo, 2008). Sometimes a mentor enters into a mentorship in search of a clone or a carbon copy, encouraging the protégé to be dependent on the mentor rather than to cultivate his or her own thoughts and ideas (Pololi & Knight, 2005). The mentorship is sometimes faced with unrealistic expectations, especially from first-time mentors and protégés. They have trouble determining how much mentoring is enough. A mentor may tend to feel responsible for everything concerning the protégé while the protégé may desire a more distant relationship. The mentor may have specific career plans of success that is in conflict with the protégé’s idea of his/her future. Because of the conflict, the vision or standard of performance may never be realized. Another unrealistic expectation can occur if the mentor expects the protégé to follow every directive or suggestion given. This problem can be avoided if the goals and objectives of the protégé and mentor are clearly stated and discussed in detail along with frequent process checks of expectations (The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, 2003). If a mentor only accepted a mentorship for personal gain, such as career advancement, and has no concern about the process or the protégé, then the protégé is set up for failure. The mentor assignment should be changed or
declined. If a mentor does not believe in the protégé’s potential to be successful, it is incumbent on him/her to decline participation and suggest a more suitable mentor match (The Association of Profession Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, 2003).

Success in Mentorship

Effective Mentors

The lack of mentor training has plagued the effectiveness of programs as well as ruined many mentoring programs. Therefore, it is a requirement in order to have a greater chance of having effective mentors (Playko, 1995). Daresh and Playko (1989) identified three relevant but vital abilities that should be included in mentor training. They are problem-solving, conferencing skills, and observational skills. Problem-solving skills involve the gathering of information, defining problems, proposing solutions, implementing strategies, and developing a plan of action. References were made for the need of these skills because the mentor needs to be cognizant of the concerns and sensitivities of the protégé when conferring. Last but not least, mentors must learn the art of observation which includes shadowing the protégé in a non-threatening but effective manner (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

Daresh (1988) also emphasized that effective programs only receive the best possible candidates for mentoring. They are candidates who truly want the job of serving others and possess certain characteristics such as:

(a) effectiveness as an experienced school principal,

(b) intelligence,

(c) good communication skills,
(d) clear vision regarding the operation of schools,
(e) acceptance of the fact that there are a multitude of ways to accomplish a goal,
(f) awareness of the right questions to ask,
(g) desire to support protégés surpassing their current performance levels,
(h) ability to model lifelong learning, and
(i) awareness of the political status and realities of the school district.

Crow and Matthews (1998) added that the mentor should not only be well trained but be innovative and carefully selected as well as respected by colleagues. They should be able to give guidance to those who are first-time school administrators (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Some of the indicators that would lead one to think that a principal would not be a viable candidate for being an effective mentor are those who are deeply internally involved politically in the school district, new to the position or the system, have a high turnover rate at their school, and those having all the answers (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

Barnett (1995) advocated that the mentor should assist the protégé in the art of becoming a great reflective thinker and developing cognitive skills. This would assist the protégé in becoming an independent problem solver. Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995) noted that effective mentors pose reflective questions rather than give dictatorial advice. They suggested that this approach “puts mentors where they need to be, out of the action, looking on, encouraging, rather than taking over and doing the work for the learner” (p. 28).

Barnett (1995) promoted the fostering of independence rather than directive or critical mentoring practices toward the protégé. He saw the use of appropriate questioning techniques as a way to encourage the protégé’s cognitive growth and reflective thinking. By
asking clarifying questions, the protégé is pushed to recall the events in question. Purposeful and consequential questioning techniques permit the protégés to think through the causes and effects of issues and the potential action to be taken. When linking the questions, it enables the protégé to think about his or her own personal views and beliefs, values, and goals as they relate to the situation being dealt with. The well-trained mentor will know to probe and clarify the protégé’s responses (Barnett, 1995). At that point, Costa and Garmston (1994) said that the mentor should ask the protégé for classification of vague comparisons and give justifications for absolute phrases and dispute universal statements to produce clear and concise thinking and improve problem-solving approaches.

Barnett (1995) also argued that if the mentor strives to be nonjudgmental of the protégé, it would foster trust between mentor and protégé which would probably result in the mentor having access to the deeper and richer thoughts of the protégé. This can be obtained through taking a neutral position by using the method of paraphrasing and rephrasing the words of the protégé and by re-emphasizing the accomplishments and strengths of the protégé.

**Effective Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs are not about producing carbon copy leaders. Nor are they about a last ditch effort to save the novice in crisis, but rather they represent a means to refine and develop existing skills demonstrated by the novice. Grogan and Crow (2004) reminded us that we should be careful not to “stifle innovation and create and perpetuate the status quo” (p. 466). Daresh (2004) reiterated that mentoring should be used to enhance and expand the traditional vision of leadership and not just be used to reinforce the past. It has been
previously stated in the literature that creating an effective mentoring program requires support and commitment, planning, resources, training, eligible and committed participants, and time.

School districts who adopt and support mentoring programs with their commitment and funding receive multiple gains such as more competent staff and leaders, better productivity, a climate of collegial support, and higher employee motivation and self esteem (Daresh, 2004; Playko, 1995). All this should equate to higher academic achievement of students (Daresh, 2004).

For an effective program, you must have the right people on the bus and seated in the right seats. In the past, one of the drawbacks to the mentoring program was how mentors were selected. Crow, Matthews, and McCleary (1996) observed that “mentors [were] often selected without a great deal of thought and rarely trained” (p. viii). Daresh (2004) found that the only criteria used for mentor selection was based on seniority within their position. His research finding stressed the importance of the selection and preparation of mentors. Daresh (1988) strongly felt that “only the very best principals can serve as true mentors, and care must be given constantly to make certain the ‘best of the best’ become role models and mentors” (p. 26).

Training was also cited by Ehrich et al. (2004) as being a key component of a successful mentoring program. The training provided should aim at the development of cognitive growth in the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1991). The training would require the mentor to master the art of asking the right questions to stimulate reflecting thinking, problem solving, and conferencing to help the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1991). Research
pointed out that mentoring training formats vary but the following specific issues should be included regardless of the format:

1. Review of basic assumptions, concepts, and definitions associated with mentoring as a way to assist beginning administrators.
2. Discussion of basic beliefs, values, and assumptions concerning desirable administrative practices. For example, what is “leadership”?
3. Development of awareness of personal strengths and limitations that may be called upon in the performance of the mentoring role.
4. Review of feedback techniques and other forms of interpersonal communication skills.
5. Understanding of interpersonal styles so that matches with protégés may be productive. (Daresh & Playko, 1991, p. 53)

According to Daresh and Playko (1989), to ensure the effectiveness of a mentoring training program, four major conditions must be met within the school district. The conditions are trust, sufficient funding, open communication, and knowledge of the principles of adult learning. Mentoring programs will not survive if there is distrust or evidence of jealousy, fear, and disrespect among participating administrators. A program supported with sufficient resources has the potential to achieve its goals. Money speaks volumes and signifies what is important to the stakeholders. Open communication will empower participants to be more interactive, responsible, and receptive to learning and performing their roles more effectively. The last condition, the principles of adult learning, is essential because educators tend to have more knowledge about the learning needs of
children but not necessarily about those of adults. The work of Malcolm Knowles was cited by Daresh and Playko (1989). They noted some of Knowles work indicated the characteristics of an adult learner as: (a) being self-directed, (b) having a reservoir of experiences from which to draw, (c) remaining problem-centered and (d) focused on the developmental responsibilities of their appointed social role.

Ehrich et al. (2004) also noted that there should be an ongoing evaluative component to an effective mentoring program which is essential for its duration. The program should contain a follow-up assessment after the completion of the program to ensure effectiveness in supporting novice principals in the future.

The ultimate purpose of mentoring programs should be to help first-time principals “gain insights into trends, issues, and social realities that go beyond existing practices. To ignore this point would no doubt lead to another major pitfall of traditional mentoring programs, namely the temptation to use mentoring to promote cloning, not growth” (Daresh, 2004, p. 512).

**Trends in Mentoring and Coaching**

Developing future leaders who can continue the vision and goals of an organization is one of the key challenges in the 21st century. In this global society, attracting and developing our future leaders lends organizations a competitive advantage while an inability to develop future leaders weakens them. Williams (2008) stated that organizations that have the ability to develop future leaders are more likely to thrive and continue to grow. With technological advancements, organizations of the 21st century are becoming global and virtual organizations. According to Colky and Young (2006), the virtual organizational model,
where large or small organizations are physically housed one place while doing business in other places, is the trend of the future. Virtual organizations are located in various parts of the world in many cases (Davidow & Malone, 1993).

In this age of swift technological change, organizational volatility, and complex global environments, mentoring can function as a key career development tool that is crucial for developing future leaders as well as individual career advancement. Virtual mentoring is known by several names such as e-mentoring, computer-mediated mentoring, e-mail mentoring, and online mentoring. According to O’Neill, Wagner, & Gomez (1996) virtual mentoring primarily uses email or internet conferencing systems to facilitate a mentoring relationship when a face-to-face mentoring option is not economical or available. E-mentoring is defined as a “merger of mentoring with electronic communications that links mentors with protégés independent of geography or scheduling constraints” (Single & Muller, 2001, p. 107). Virtual mentoring, a computer-mediated relationship, can be informal or formal between an experienced mentor and an inexperienced protégé with the goal of developing a successful protégé for the future. Computerized communication is primarily used in virtual mentoring as a means for maintaining the mentoring relationship.

According to Bierema and Hill (2005), “virtual mentoring is different from traditional mentoring in that it can be asynchronous and proximity between the mentor and protégé is not an issue” (p. 559). Although the asynchronous nature of virtual mentoring makes it more flexible as compared to face-to-face mentoring, one of its drawbacks is that it may lack nonverbal communication and has lower social presence. Virtual mentoring has a text-based nature which produces a written record of the mentoring process that will be a useful tool in
measuring the effectiveness of virtual mentoring programs. It is easier to manage and coordinate mentor and protégé matches than the traditional mentoring model. It is also not dependent on travel or physical meetings. The qualities of virtual mentoring are cost effective and easier to implement, which makes it attractive to organizations. Virtual mentoring is gaining momentum and popularity due to the fact that it is more egalitarian than traditional mentoring. It makes it possible for organizations to make mentoring available to minorities and women who traditionally have voiced difficulty in finding a mentor (Bierema & Hill, 2005).

**Mentoring as Socialization**

Blumenreich’s study (2005) explored the socialization process of the entry-level supervisor from individual and organizational perspectives at the site level. He took site-specific patterns that had been identified and described and made sense of the systematic-level process of organizational socialization. These processes led to the generation of a theory regarding entry-level administrator socialization. Blumenreich (2005) determined that socialization for assistant principals seem to be oriented more toward professional socialization and not organizational socialization. The organizational needs did not vary widely from place to place. The professional socialization consisted of acquiring a sufficient sensitization of roles, relationships, and tasks that an assistant principal could bring to the job and still not become an insider to the organization. Blumenreich (2005) concluded first that the assistant principals lacked training at the school level and a sink or swim mentality colored the participants’ initial socialization experiences. Secondly, the interview data revealed that principals should be more mindful of the of the assistant principals’ needs. He
recommended substantive mentoring and task instruction to help alleviate some of their problems.

Alsbury and Hackman’s study (2006) reported findings from the formative assessments of one state’s administrator mentoring/coaching inductions program during a two-year pilot program. The research provided baseline data and detected problems that could be addressed in future programs. This evaluative research’s findings included three important components: the development of a supportive mentoring coach/mentee relationship with an emphasis on role socialization into the profession, reflective conversations, and role clarification.

**Summary**

This review of the research literature addressed the importance of the role of the mentor, one who gives guidance, support, and instruction to a novice. The literature on the mentoring of novice principals indicated a continuum of mentoring programs, ranging from peer pal relationships to formal mentorships. Mentoring programs also vary in structure, training, and mentor selection processes. There are benefits cited for protégés, mentors, and school systems. Some of these advantages were a reduction in the feeling of being isolated, increased job satisfaction and collegiality, improved student achievement, networking and professional advancement, and more effective professional development. In addition to these advantages, the literature pointed to increased self-confidence and improved job performance for the protégé and increased peer recognition for the mentor. The literature, however, did point out potential problems with mentoring programs. These included the stifling of innovation, the mismatching of mentors and protégés, forced relationships, lack of mentor
training, resources, and program evaluation. Another problem that has been pointed out is the potential for the mentoring relationship itself to be unhealthy for the protégé.

The literature revealed some ideas on what makes an effective mentor and an effective mentoring program. There are skills that were suggested for the mentor to learn, conditions in which mentoring programs could flourish, and steps that administrators could take to ensure a successful mentoring program. Overall, the literature seems to support the idea of mentoring programs. Ehrich et al. (2004) pointed out that the potential problems associated with formal mentoring programs could be overcome with careful planning and good leadership. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) agreed with this assessment by stating, “Carefully constructed and implemented mentoring experiences serve as effective professional development not only for aspiring and novice principals, but also for veteran principals” (p. 471).

The literature revealed that advances in technology have made virtual mentoring (also known as e-mentoring, computer mediating, and online mentoring) a more viable form of mentoring for more and more organizations. Some of the previously discussed benefits such as cost effectiveness, easy implementation, and more egalitarian approach to mentoring have made it attractive to organizations. However, its drawbacks include a lack of nonverbal communication and a lower social presence.

This literature review indicates some of the options that are available to a school district when designing and developing a research-based program for the support of novice principals. However, it can be difficult to determine what mentoring program will work best in a given situation, or whether other types of support would be equally or more effective in
helping novice principals through the process of role socialization. This study addresses the need for a greater understanding of novice principal support systems by investigating participants’ experiences of one mentoring program that was executed without extensive research. Chapter 3 details the methodology used in the study, including the research design, process of data collection and analysis, the validity and reliability of the study, and the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study focused on the perceptions of a collective group of six elementary novice principals who completed one year of a mentoring program. It investigated how well the support was aligned with the specific needs of each novice principal and the effectiveness of and application of the support to their work. The study also offered the novice principals an opportunity to express their perceptions of the support given and their opinions on potential improvements for the mentoring program.

The following research questions guided the study design as well as the data collection and analysis:

1. How were the novice principals supported during their first, second, or third year in the principalship?
2. How did the principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

In order to ensure the effectiveness of a mentoring program for novice principals, it is necessary to understand the novice principals’ perceptions of the support they receive. This could best be achieved by allowing the novice principals to express their views through the telling of their experiences and stories in their own words. Thus, this study used a qualitative case study methodology.
Nature of the Inquiry

The single-case study methodology was used to bring understanding to the phenomenon of novice principal support through the study of this case. This study used the qualitative case study approach to explore the mentoring experiences of a group of elementary principals who were involved in a one-year unstructured informal, pilot mentoring program in a North Carolina Public School System. The section will describe the research design and how the design drove this qualitative case study.

Qualitative research “begins with the assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers study “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 36). Creswell (2007) suggested that qualitative research is conducted when the researcher has “a problem or issue [that] needs to be explored . . . a complex, understanding of the issue . . . [the participants are empowered] to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power of the relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants of the study . . . qualitative research [is also conducted to help us] understand the context or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue” (p. 40). This study allowed the new principals to tell their stories and experiences in their own words. The inductive nature of the data analysis allowed the researcher to discover themes and patterns from the data to describe the experiences of the participants with the one-year unstructured mentoring program (Creswell, 2007).
The single-case study approach was used to describe and understand “a real life phenomenon in depth” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). When the researcher has “a desire to understand complex social phenomena,” the case study is the best approach to utilize in this instance (Yin, 2009, p. 4). According to Creswell (2007), “a case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 73). The single-case study methodology design was selected because it allowed the researcher to conduct an individual in-depth exploration of the complex phenomenon of a one-year unstructured mentor program that supported novice principals. The single-case study methodology was used to bring understanding to the phenomenon of the unstructured mentoring program and the novice principals’ perception of the support received through their participation in the program. Yin (2009) states there are five rationales for single-case studies. They are: (1) the critical case in testing a well-formulated theory; (2) an extreme case or a unique case; (3) the representative or typical case; (4) the revelatory case; and (5) the longitudinal case, studying the same single case at two or more different points in time.

The case in this study was the perception of novice principals regarding a one-year unstructured pilot mentoring program within a “bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). The system was bound by time (participants’ experiences within the one to three years) and activity (the support activities they participated in with their mentor). The participants were selected because they worked within the same school district, at different school sites, and were assigned different mentors. It was expected that they had different experiences of
support. The study of each novice principal made it possible to capture their experiences and to determine the differences and/or similarities of their perceptions regarding the one-year unstructured mentor program. The selected research questions form the foundation of the case study method. The questions “require an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Yin (2003) stated that “the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (p. 12).

Research Site

Triangle, North Carolina, is uniquely defined by a history of racial and cultural diversity as well as an increasing diversity in lifestyle. The historical treatment of African American residents represents a legacy that has not yet been fully overcome. The community, representing different sectors, describes the value of and need for programs to address the history and heritage of Triangle as a way to continue an on-going process of reconciliation and to celebrate Triangle’s past.

Currently, Triangle Public Schools in North Carolina is the eighth largest system in the state, with 54 schools and more than 30,000 students. The school system was formed in 1992 with the merger of Triangle’s previous two school districts. Prior to integration, it was commonly thought the most prominent people attended the Triangle City Schools: white students attended Triangle High School and black students attended Bayside High School, one of the Southeast’s highest-ranked black high schools in 1956. During 1968, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sued the Triangle County Schools in order to integrate its schools. The Triangle County School Board’s integration
plan was accepted by the federal district court in Greensboro, North Carolina. The high schools and junior high schools integrated during the fall of 1969. The elementary schools were given until 1970 to integrate by the federal district judge because of space issues.

The Triangle Public Schools (a fictitious name) in North Carolina serves 32,672 students in 59 schools. Fictitious names were used to protect the identity of the schools and school system involved in the study. The school system was identified as the Triangle Public Schools in North Carolina. There are 30 elementary schools, 14 middle schools, and 15 high schools. The selected principals who participated in the case study were part of the Triangle Public School District in North Carolina. The elementary schools were selected for the study because of the selection criteria. The selection was based on their elementary school status, the number of years of experience as a principal, the number of years of their participation in the mentoring support system, and accessibility and availability to the researcher.

The Triangle Public Schools in North Carolina strives to keep the main thing the main thing: its focus on student learning. This is achieved by supporting professional learning communities that support student learning through professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators, which in turn promotes and supports leadership. The Triangle Public Schools in North Carolina envisions its schools as being a place where every child experiences success—a place that provides a safe, orderly, and culturally diverse environment for learning that entices, nurtures, challenges, and strengthens the whole child. The school system desires a school environment that embraces collegiality and collaboration between school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community in order to meet the needs of their diverse school population (Triangle Public Schools, NC website, n.d.).
In collaboration with the school community, the mission of the Triangle Public Schools in North Carolina is to provide support and resources for the development of an effective support program for novice principals that will provide individual and collective professional development, feedback, role clarification, and socialization into the administrative profession in order to lessen the sense of isolation that novice principals typically experience (Triangle Public Schools, NC website, n.d.).

**Population and Sampling**

The case study research design was well served by purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). The research questions and the case study design guided the relevant sample and defined the participants who informed the study (Patton, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Yin, 2009). The selection of the individuals for this case study design is defined both by unit(s) of analysis and a bounded system (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Each of the participants was purposely selected based on the fact that each one was assigned mentors during their novice years (within one to three years) in the principalship. The participants were selected because of their presumptive ability to provide in-depth data about the experience of being a novice elementary principal. In the current study, the units of analysis were six elementary principals and their support and mentoring experiences. The bounded system of the current study was determined by both time and activity. The study was limited or bounded to include only the support or mentoring experiences during the first three years as an elementary principal. Each of the participants selected for this study work in the same school district but at different school sites. Due to the differences in their school culture and skill levels and needs, it was unlikely that they all would have the same experience and same level of
support. Consequently, the study of each of these principals as it related to the single case study of the support program made it possible to capture their experiences and determine their differences and similarities (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

The selection of the participants was based on the fact that all participants are elementary school principals. All participants participated in a one-year informal unstructured mentoring program provided by the school district. Participants were novice principals (serving one to three years in the principalship) during their participation in the mentoring program. The participants were accessible and available to the researcher. None of the participants involved in this study were a part of my mentor/protégé team during my contracted service as a mentor.

**Data Collection Methods**

The case study evidence sources were “documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2009, p. 101). Multiple sources of evidence were used in collecting data for this case study. The data collection sources consisted of a pre-interview survey, a semi-structured face-to-face interview, a semi-structured telephone interview (when the interviewee was not able to meet face-to-face), and participants’ written responses. The researcher conducted six interviews and other data collections over a period of seven weeks to capture the participants’ descriptive experiences with their mentor for one year. The data collection methods in this study included a pre-interview survey, a semi-structured interview, and a written response by participants.
**Pre-interview surveys.** Data on each participant were collected through demographic surveys (Appendix A) which provided the researcher with a more in-depth insight about the participants. The participants were given the surveys to complete during the first meeting with the researcher. It took each participant 10 to 15 minutes to complete the demographic survey. The surveys were used to assist in analyzing the similarities and differences in the interview responses of each of the participants.

**Interviews and written responses.** In-depth interviews were the primary source of the data utilized in this case study. The interviews were scheduled and conducted in the area of comfort for all participants, which was the principal’s school and office in each case, which allowed the researcher to observe them in their own educational environments. The interview protocol was developed and used to guide the interview process (Appendix C). The duration of each interview was between 35 to 50 minutes. Audio tapes and notes were transcribed so that all data could be analyzed and categorized. Each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview for accuracy. Everyone was satisfied with their responses and agreed to and responded to follow-up questions through written response. Interviews were audio recorded with reflective notes being made by the researcher. Interviews and surveys were conducted in August, 2014 when all principals seemed to be scrambling to complete their hiring, conducting that last bit of teacher training, and having those last crucial meetings before the doors opened for open house and the first day of school. The tension and excitement in each building, along with some signs of exhaustion in the faces of the principals, was noticeable. The newly waxed floors, new parents filling out registration forms, and the laughter and conversation of teachers as they meandered down the
hallways was clearly evident regarding the essence of the preparation of the arrival of students was soon to come.

The interview consisted of nine questions. Questions in the interview correlated to the research questions (Appendix C). Research question 1 aligned with the interview questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. These questions allowed the researcher to determine how the novice principals were supported during their first three years as a novice principal. Research question 2 was aligned with questions 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. These interview questions aligned to the second research question was designed to explore how the novice principals perceived the support they received within their first three years as a novice principal.

Survey. Yin (2009) notes that “an interview that entails more structured questions, along the lines of a formal survey, could be designed as part of an embedded case study” (p. 108). The survey followed the sampling procedures and the instrument used in regular surveys and was analyzed in a similar manner. The difference is the role of the survey in relation to other sources of data. It would not necessarily be taken as a measurement but considered only as a component of the research design (Yin, 2009). In this case study, the researcher designed a pre-interview survey to collect demographic information about each participant. The survey consisted of ten questions about the participant’s age, educational level, gender, race/ethnicity, number of years teaching, number of years as an administrator, administrative positions held, and formal training or induction experience. This information was gathered prior to the interview and sent via email. The data from this survey guided the questions and follow-up questions asked in the interview. See Appendix A for the pre-interview survey.
**Interviewing.** Yin (2009) stated that “one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview” (p. 106). This “essential source of case study information will be guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin, 2009, p. 106). The interview questioning in a case study is more likely to be fluid than rigid (Yin, 2009).

Throughout the interview process, the researcher has two major jobs. It involves following the line of inquiry as reflected by the case study protocol and asking unbiased conversational questions that serve the needs of the line of inquiry (Yin, 2009). By conducting the semi-structured interview, the researcher and participants can engage in a conversation guided by the interview questions. It affords the researcher the opportunity to modify questions based on the participant’s response (Creswell, 2007). The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were an appropriate data collection method in this case study because it allowed the researcher to ask participants about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events (Yin, 2009). The researcher can capture and communicate the actual words and experiences of the participants (Patton, 2002).

Yin’s (2009) description of a case study interview requires the researcher “to operate on two levels: satisfying the needs of your line of inquiry while simultaneously putting forth ‘friendly’ and ‘nonthreatening’ questions in your open-ended interviews” (pp. 106-107). Creswell (2007) emphasized that the interviewer must capture the spirit of the participants’ experiences with minimal influence from the interviewer. Interviews were expected to last from forty-five minutes to an hour.

**Participants’ written responses.** Participants were asked to provide written responses to questions generated by the researcher. These questions provided additional
information about the participants’ response to the one-time forty-five minutes-to-an-hour interview questions. Participants were able to respond to the questions via email.

**Interview protocol.** The researcher designed an interview protocol based on the literature on qualitative case study methods (Creswell, 2007). The interview protocol was structured in the following manner: (a) structure the interview protocol with a general question, (b) follow up with more specific questions to clarify, and (c) get more details by encouraging the participants to talk about the subject (Creswell, 2007). The goal of the researcher was to elicit the authentic words of the participants regarding their experiences as a novice principal, avoid limiting the responses to any preconceived boundaries of the researcher, and ask follow-up questions to hesitant participants (Patton, 2002). See Appendix B for the interview protocol. Participants were asked these sample questions:

1. Tell me about your experience as an educator.
2. Tell me about your first year as a Triangle Public Schools principal.
3. Describe something you are most proud of. Did any support or training you received contribute to this success? If so, how?
4. Did you attend any workshops or professional development for new principals, only? If so, name the type of professional development or workshops?
5. How were your mentor/ coach assigned?
6. How often did you meet?
7. Was the work with your mentor helpful to you? If so, how? If not, why not?
**Data Analysis and Emerging Themes**

According to Patton (2002), the researcher must assume that each case is unique, yet there are “common themes that cut across individual experiences” (p. 57). The case study analysis process involves the act of “[pulling] the data apart and [putting] it back more meaningfully” (Stake, 1995, p. 75). Stake (1995) emphasized that the analysis process in a case study is a search for patterns within and across the cases. The researcher “code[s] the data, aggregate[s] the frequencies and find[s] the patterns (Stake, 1995, p. 78). The researcher was able to locate, code, and annotate findings in primary data material, to weigh and evaluate their importance, and to visualize the complex relations among them.

In this study, the open coding method was used to examine the transcribed data using paragraph by paragraph and line by line analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). In the margins, the researcher used key words to identify recurring themes and significant categories that emerged in the transcriptions. The key passages were underscored from the interviews’ transcriptions, then transferred to a coding sheet in which each phrase or passage was highlighted with a designated font color to identify its category. The passages were then organized according to each category. The condensed interview transcripts and written responses were organized from excerpts into categories that answered the research questions. Once the categories were sorted, following Seidman (2006), “connecting threads and patterns [were sought] among the excerpts within those categories that might be called themes” (p. 125). This process was the identification of emerging themes in the data.
Protection of Human Subjects

In order to initiate this study, the researcher was required to obtain approval from North Carolina State University’s Institutional Review Board. Moreover, the researcher also explained and provided each participant with an informed consent form. The participant was given the option to opt out of the research study at any time or refuse to answer any question that may cause personal discomfort. The researcher explained the private and confidential nature of the research study and assured the participants that fictitious names would be used to protect their identity and their school’s identity. The researcher emailed and delivered each participant a copy of the consent form to study and to keep for their records as well. They were given several opportunities to ask questions about the study, the consent form, and procedures to protect confidentiality of the data collected. The only person having access to the consent forms was the researcher. The only persons having access to the digital audio files of the interviews and the verbatim transcripts of the interviews were the researcher and the transcriber.

Before sending the digital audio files to the transcriber, all identifying information was removed from the tapes and other documents, and fictitious names were assigned to each participant. The informed consent forms were stored separately from the data. The consent forms, digital audio files of the interviews, and verbatim typed transcriptions and electronic files containing the transcriptions and audio files were kept in a locked file in the researcher’s home. Access to the computer used to store the data was protected by a password known only to the researcher. See Appendix C for the informed consent form.
Credibility, Validity, and Positionality

Yin (2009) emphasized five principles that indicate high-quality analysis in qualitative research: the researcher must attend to all of the evidence, use multiple sources of evidence, consider rival explanations, maintain a case study database, and continue a chain of evidence during the data analysis phase. Attention to these principles, and to the researcher’s positionality, can help to ensure the credibility and validity of a study.

Credibility. It is evident that credibility in a qualitative study exists when the researcher gives enough information regarding the case that anyone with an opportunity to observe the same case would have noticed and recorded similar data (Stake, 1995). Patton (2002) noted that credibility derives from rich, thick description of the experiences in the participants’ own words. The use of the semi-structured interview technique for this study revealed the world as seen by the novice principal. The design of the interview protocol provided each participant with the opportunity to tell his or her story in his or her own words of how it is to be a novice principal with mentor support. This approach kept the data from being limited by the views or preconceived notions of the researcher, yielding the advantage of a qualitative study. The execution of this design was accomplished through the multiple sources of data with in-depth semi-structured interviews of a small group of participants.

Credibility was increased through the post-interview review process. Notes were recorded on the physical location of the interview, the rapport obtained with the participants, the participants’ ease or discomfort in answering the questions, and their emotional or physical responses on a contact summary form. The researcher included data kept on the participants’ responses to the interview questions in a journal. The researcher reflected on the
emerging themes in the journal. Credibility was also boosted by the analysis of negative case that deals with rival explanations. Negative cases are viewed as “exceptions that prove the rule…broaden the rule or change the rule” (Patton, 2002, p. 554).

**Validity.** According to Yin (2009), a research design represents a logical set of statements that can only be judged by certain logical tests. The four tests, common to all social science methods, include construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Qualitative researchers use various strategies to build validity in their research. This case study used member checking and clarified researchers’ bias. Member checking involves providing samples of drafts of the interview summaries to participants to determine accuracy. These drafts were intended to include emergent findings for the participants to corroborate, validate, or extend (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

**Positionality.** The researchers’ background, experiences, and belief system may have influenced the research process in this study. The researcher of this qualitative case study believes that school districts could possibly benefit from greater emphasis being placed on supporting novice principals. This belief has been fueled by the unrealistic expectations that have been placed on the shoulders of inexperienced school administrators. Standards-based education and high stakes accountability for the performance of students and teachers in our schools have made the role of the principal more complex, critical, and challenging than ever before. Therefore, there is a need for principals to be provided support systems that allow them to become skilled and more effective in leading schools to excellence. The high turnover of school administrators should be substantial evidence that a change must take place. The shortage of principals is now here and although attrition rates and retirement
levels are problems, so is the fact that fewer educators are interested in becoming administrators due mainly to lack of support.

The researcher’s interest in this problem derived from her own experience as a new principal over 30 years ago. She remembered feeling alone and forgotten. She actually thought God had forsaken her. A retired principal came to her rescue. He volunteered his services two to three times per week. His encouragement and methods of sharing his wealth of knowledge helped the novice principal through a very difficult time. Now that the principal has retired, she wants to help other new school leaders by giving support through serving on-site or conducting a research study such as this to contribute additional literature regarding the knowledge of mentoring and other sources of support. During her time as a principal, she always attached herself to a beginning principal as a buddy principal. Sometimes it was a superintendent assignment and sometimes it was a heartfelt assignment. Since retirement, the researcher has accepted contracted jobs with the Triangle Public School System in North Carolina as a mentor and interim principal and assistant principal.

This chapter has detailed the methods used to gather qualitative data on novice principles’ utilization and perception of support. The following chapter reports the findings, including the unexpected themes that emerged from the data.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The aim of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of a group of novice principals who completed a one-year, informal, unstructured pilot mentoring program. It revealed the novice principals’ perception of the support received from the program and how well the program supported and aligned with the specific needs of each novice principal. The research questions that guided this inquiry were as follows:

1. How were the novice principals supported during their first, second, or third year in the principalship?

2. How did the novice principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

Results of Principal Needs Assessment Survey

A principal needs assessment survey was designed to determine the support needs of the current principal pool at Triangle Public Schools. This survey was composed of demographic profile questions (gender, participation in mentor program, hours per week, cohort in principal prep program, degree earned, institution attended, year graduated, years between licensed and principalship, previous position prior to principalship). It also consisted of 12 items that dealt with specific school administrator’s responsibilities, about which the participants had to give their level of confidence. These items were selected to determine the principal’s area of need (see Appendix E).
Twenty-one principals participated in this needs assessment survey, which consisted of 7 males and 14 females. The recipients who participated in the survey were at various stages of their career in the principalship, district veterans and those with experience but new to the district. The collective group of novice principal participants in this study consisted of six females who participated in a pre-interview survey, interviews, and written response follow-up questions for data.

The principal assessment survey revealed the following data:

- 19% were somewhat confident with support when dealing with providing feedback to teachers about their professional practices;
- 24% were somewhat confident about their ability to use the building leadership team to accomplish school improvement goals;
- 33% were somewhat confident about their ability to provide collaborative professional development focused on school improvement goals;
- 10% were somewhat confident in their ability to adapt their leadership behavior to the needs of a current situation;
- 39% were somewhat confident with support in their ability to use conflict productivity;
- 100% were extremely confident in their ability to manage day-to-day operations;
- 19% were somewhat confident in their ability to establish an effective student behavior management system; and,
• 24% were somewhat confident in their ability to allocate resources appropriately to accomplish building goals (survey, August 23, 2014).

The data indicated that a percentage of the surveyed principals still had a need for support and did not feel 100% confident in their abilities in the principalship in all areas except for the management of day-to-day operations. As assistant principals, the participating principals in the research study were probably more comfortable with the day-to-day managerial tasks but had difficulty like the current principals with transitioning into the principalship when the responsibilities changed. Some of the same needs that perplexed the participating principals in this study did the same for the surveyed principals as well.

The surveyed principals were encouraged to share their thoughts about mentoring support programs. The following comments were made:

• My responses would have been entirely different almost three years ago. During my first two years as a principal, I had some successes and some failures. I have been able to learn from my failures and enhance what I did for my successes. I am always self-reflecting, seeking advice from current and past successful principals, and reading the most updated current educational professional books. I am evolving every day as a leader. Having a mentor in the beginning would have …helped me gain greater insight sooner (survey, August 23, 2014).

• When I became a principal, central office was supportive of new principals. They allowed us to make decisions and thus make mistakes. The expectations were to always learn. [Before the arrival of our new superintendent] the central office culture was ‘you better not make mistakes’ and [you were] given little support outside of
‘just don’t mess up.’ I felt like everyone was my mentor when I was a novice. They knew how to help shape my growth. I [believe] new principals now must be walking a tight rope because there [is] little flexibility and ultimately little true central office support in the recent past. We should be expected to make mistakes and learn from the mistakes (survey, August 23, 2014).

• The principal mentor was given to me after my second year as a principal in a different district. I truly believe that I would not have made it as a principal if I had not had a mentor (survey, August 23, 2014).

• I’m a veteran principal with over 30 years. I still feel the need for support. I feel that principals need to have other experienced principals to coach them from time to time. I feel that I’m still in the business of learning. Educational leadership is always evolving (survey, August 23, 2014).

• A mentor program for beginning principals is a valuable asset. Being an assistant principal is totally different from being a principal (survey, August 23, 2014).

All of these comments supported the findings of the study with the collective group of principals regarding the need for some type of structured, support program such as a mentoring program for new principals.

**Overview of Participants**

The next section gives a brief description of each participant selected for the study. Each participant received a pre-interview survey. The information from this survey gave a
more in-depth description of each. The participants’ demographics are illustrated in Table 4.1 after the gathering of the pre-interview survey (Appendix A).

Table 4.1
Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Romo</th>
<th>Newton</th>
<th>Vick</th>
<th>Smith</th>
<th>Manning</th>
<th>Rodgers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Degree</strong></td>
<td>EDS: School Administration</td>
<td>Masters: School Administration</td>
<td>Masters: Elementary Education/ School Administration</td>
<td>Masters: Education/ School Administration</td>
<td>MSA: Administration and Supervision</td>
<td>Masters: Elementary/ School Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong></td>
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<td>30-39</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>40-49</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Years Teaching</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as an Administrator</strong></td>
<td>9/ 3 @ Triangle</td>
<td>9/ 4 @ Triangle</td>
<td>6 @ Triangle</td>
<td>7/ 3 @ Triangle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participated in formal training/induction program</strong></td>
<td>Yes; High Five Consortium from previous employer</td>
<td>Yes; AP leadership program/ beginning program for new principals at previous job</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes; Principal/ AP Induction Program from previous employer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant 1: Ms. Romo.** Ms. Romo is the principal of Cowboy Elementary School, a traditional elementary school in the Triangle Public School district. She holds a master’s degree in educational administration and is currently completing her doctoral work in school leadership. Her age range is 30-39 and her ethnicity is African American. Ms. Romo taught for five years as an English teacher and in grades three and five as an elementary teacher prior to becoming a school administrator. She was provided a mentor for
a year during her novice principal years. She met with her mentor one day per week, sometimes twice if there was a need. Currently, Mrs. Romo has been a principal in the Triangle Public Schools for seven years and an assistant principal for two years in another school district. She participated in a formal induction program/training prior to coming to Triangle Public Schools. While at Triangle Public Schools, she attended the High Five Consortium Program, the Distinguished Leadership Academy, and received training from the Friday Center.

When asked why she became an elementary school principal, she responded by saying that she loved working with elementary school children because that is where it starts. As her eyes lit up, she said, “I like seeing the light bulb come on and learning take place” (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Participant 2: Ms. Newton.** Ms. Newton is the principal of Panther Elementary, a traditional elementary school within the Triangle Public Schools. She holds a master’s degree in educational administration. Her age range is 30-39 and her ethnicity is African American. Ms. Newton taught for seven years prior to becoming a school administrator. Currently, she has been a school administrator for nine years, four years as an assistant principal and five years as the principal. She has held various leadership roles as a classroom teacher such as school improvement, grade level chair, and trainer for the district in the area of writing.

Ms. Newton participated in a program for new prospective principals provided by Triangle Public Schools during her time as an assistant principal. She was also a part of a beginning principals’ program with her previous school system. She was a principal for two years with this system. During her third year as a novice principal but in her first year as a
principal in Triangle Public Schools, she was provided a mentor for a year. She met with her mentor one full day per week.

When asked why she wanted to be an elementary principal, Mrs. Newton stated that she initially had no desire to become a school principal. She felt that she would be perfectly happy with the role of the assistant principal until she got into that role. She later felt that she would have more of an impact as the principal. She then decided to prepare for and pursue the position (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Participant 3: Ms. Vick. Ms. Vick is the principal of Eagle Elementary, a traditional elementary school, within the Triangle Public Schools. She holds a master’s degree in educational administration. At the time of this study, she was currently in a doctoral program. Her age range is 40-49 and her ethnicity is African American. Ms. Vick taught for 11 years, five years as a second grade teacher and six years as an exceptional children resource teacher and interventionist, prior to becoming a school administrator. She was provided a mentor for a year during her years as a novice principal. She met with her mentor twice per week, Tuesday and Thursday, for the entire day.

Her background was middle school. At the time of the study, she had been a principal in the Triangle Public Schools for six years and an assistant principal for two years. Mrs. Vick’s other leadership roles were Title I facilitator, grade level chair, and a mentor for beginning teachers. She was not involved in any formal training and induction program specifically designed for beginning principals.

When Mrs. Vick was asked why she became an elementary school principal, she laughed and said:
That’s funny. I never wanted to be a principal, but I was inspired by a wonderful principal that I worked for as a classroom teacher. He inspired everyone to want to do your best and be your best. He just had a strategic way of really supporting and motivating his teachers. When I communicated with other teachers from other schools, they did not have the same wonderful experiences that I was having. I always felt like he valued his teachers. He did things like putting positive notes in our mailboxes, surprising us with lunch to celebrate our good work, listening to us, and making time for grade level teachers to meet at the staff development center to discuss data, best practices, and problem solve. This happened during 1995-96, long before it became the popular thing to do. He met with us individually regarding our class at the beginning of the school year to discuss where our students were. He was planting the seed. He encouraged us to share our ideas and provided us any support or materials needed for us to get the job done. After becoming an assistant principal, I, then, decided that I wanted to be a principal to make a difference that would bring about a change in schools in the way that would impact children (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Participant 4: Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith is the principal of Chief Elementary, a traditional elementary school within the Triangle Public Schools. She holds a master’s degree in educational administration. Her age range is 40-49 and her ethnicity is African American. She served as a teacher assistant, group leader for community education, first grade teachers, third grade teacher, kindergarten teacher, Title I coordinator, and assistant principal. Ms. Smith taught for 12 years prior to becoming a school administrator. She was provided a
mentor during her second year as a novice principal. Ms. Smith met with her mentor weekly on Wednesdays from 8:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. She was placed under the supervision of an assistant superintendent during her first year as a novice principal. The superintendent did a re-organization and placed all elementary principals under the supervision of another assistant superintendent. Ms. Smith was then assigned a mentor for support. At the time of this study, she had completed seven years as principal. Ms. Smith did not participate in any formal training or induction program specifically designed for beginning principals.

Mrs. Smith wanted to become an elementary school principal because she wanted to “make a difference with staff and students as well as mentor teachers into becoming solid or good educators” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Participant 5: Ms. Manning.** Ms. Manning is the principal of Bronco Elementary School, a traditional elementary magnet school within the Triangle Public Schools. Her age range is 40-49 and her ethnicity is African American. Ms. Manning taught for four years as a pre-school and third grade teacher prior to becoming a school administrator. The other positions she held included reading first coach, curriculum instructor (now known as an instructional facilitator), and assistant principal for two years. At the time of the study, she was in her second year as a principal. She was provided a mentor her first year as a novice principal. She met with her mentor two to three times per month for two or three hours as scheduled. There were no set times to meet. Ms. Manning did not participate in any formal training or induction program specifically designed for beginning principals.

When asked why she chose to become an elementary school principal, Mrs. Manning stated:
I think that one of the most important people in the school is the principal. They have their hands on and over everything in the school. Therefore, they can impact the decision making at the building level and impact the direction of the school as well as have a more direct impact on the lives of students, staff/faculty members, and families (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Participant 6: Ms. Rodgers.** Ms. Rodgers is the principal of Packer Elementary, a traditional elementary school within the Triangle Public Schools. Her age range is 30-39 and her ethnicity is African American. She taught four years as an elementary teacher prior to becoming a school administrator. She was provided a mentor her first year as a principal. She met with her mentor weekly on Mondays or Fridays during mornings or afternoons. This was her second year in the principalship. At the time of the study, she had eight years of administrative experience, six years of experience as an assistant principal and Title I coordinator, and two years of experience as a principal. Other leadership roles held by Mrs. Rodgers were grade level chair, chair of various committees, and grant writer for PTA. She participated in a formal Principal/ Assistant Principal Induction Program in her previous place of employment. Triangle Public Schools did not provide any such training upon her arrival. Ms. Rodgers attended other staff development opportunities outside the system based on her needs.

When asked why she chose to become an elementary school principal, Ms. Rodgers responded by saying:

My internship experience and watching how my first principal got students excited about learning and teachers excited about teaching did it for me. [It allowed me] the
leadership opportunities of engaging teachers in the discussion of best practices for students [as well as] being given the opportunity to grow teachers” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

The information gathered during the coding of the data shaped the findings by emphasizing themes that were repeated by the participants. The items that seemed to be the most important to the participants formed the categories for the coded segments. The information gathered in each segment was used to answer the research questions for this study. Each research question is presented in the following sections along with its findings, including evidence from the qualitative data.

During the novice years of the principals being studied, the novice principals received a variety of support through a one-year, unstructured mentoring program that was not research-based but developed by the assistant superintendent of elementary schools. This section will discuss and share the findings of the various types of support received and the novice principals’ perceptions of those supports. The two research questions guiding this inquiry were

1. How were the six novice principals supported during their first, second or third year in the principalship?

2. How did the six novice principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

The following sections present the findings for each participant in greater detail.
Participant 1: Mrs. Romo (Cowboy Elementary)

Mrs. Romo was a part of the North Carolina Principal Fellow Program, a scholarship loan program designed to assist individuals interested in obtaining a master’s degree in school administration in preparation for a career as an assistant principal or principal in North Carolina Public Schools. Awards are based on academic merit not financial need. She was considered to be a very viable principal candidate during her time as a university student and administrative intern. Mrs. Romo was considered to be very knowledgeable in the area of curriculum instruction. At the time of the study, she had served as a principal for three years in the Triangle School District and served as an assistant principal in another school district. She holds a master in educational administration and is completing her doctoral work in school leadership. She was given mentor support her first year as a principal.

Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals

*Mentor support.* Mrs. Romo described the principalship and her first year as a novice principal and the type of support she received:

The principalship was like navigating a ship on icy water. You must keep the destination in mind because it makes the difference. [When I arrived, it was] a very hectic time. I felt as if I was kind of thrown into the principalship my first day. I was expecting someone to meet me over at [the school] and walk me around the building. Instead it was more like here’s your school. Oh my, gosh! This definitely was not what we would do to first-year teachers. I thought what in the world? But I was happier a few months later when I was introduced to my mentor. Although it was just a hectic time, I was appreciative of the fact that I had been assigned a mentor who
came once per week. She spent the day with me and provided me with leadership tips and techniques. I appreciated that support (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

According to Mrs. Romo, she had no knowledge regarding her mentor’s background—no more than that she was a retired but successful school principal from another school district. She shared:

[The two of us were engaged in] conducting classroom walkthroughs and daily debriefing sessions behind closed doors so that I could share and discuss the challenges. I felt that I could get honest feedback. My mentor observed while I led staff development, Professional Learning Communities, meetings (PLC), and conversations with parents and staff. She always gave me feedback like a mentor would give a teacher (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Romo also indicated that she received support from her supervisor (assistant superintendent of elementary education). She had good contact with her supervisor via work phone, cell phone, email, and face-to-face visits. She described it as an “open door relationship” which afforded her the opportunity to have any questions or concerns addressed. Additional contact was made with the supervisor during scheduled principal and cohort meetings (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Networking with peers.** Networking opportunities with principal peers was provided by the supervisor during scheduled principals’ and cohort meetings. Principal friendships developed from these encounters. Mrs. Romo utilized her friendships with her fellow principals to help her make it through difficult times as well as the sharing of ideas. During
one of her most challenging times with a difficult parent, Mrs. Romo had a parent call her “several inappropriate vulgar names in front of her staff, parents, and students because of her disdain for the carpool procedures.” She stated that she called on “her principal colleagues to help her get through this situation” (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Romo also was provided opportunities by her school district to participate in the High Five Consortium and Distinguished Leadership Academy workshops and trainings to strengthen her leadership skills. This opportunity also provided her with an opportunity to network with presenters and other principals outside the school district. Triangle School District provided training on data, school budgets, and human resources (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters**

The mentor and novice principal used various forms of communication such as face-to-face visits, email, and telephone calls. They stayed in “constant communication, even after school hours.” The novice principals were made to feel free to contact their mentor any time there was a need. Some of their discussions involved instruction, data, school culture and climate, empowering teachers/staff members, budget issues, and human resource concerns. Mrs. Romo stated, “We had a wealth of conversations.” When asked what contributed to her success, she said:

I think my mentor played a great part in my success just as my relationships with other principals and networking partnerships. It helped me to be able to bounce ideas off others when I was having an issue. I liked having someone to talk things over with (personal communication, August 20, 2014).
She also credits her opportunities to attend quality staff development outside the required
district meetings as a way to network and learn from others through conversations and
discussions.

Mrs. Romo stated that her supervisor’s scheduled meetings allowed principals
opportunities to network with each other as well as build peer relationships. She could call on
her peers during difficult times with difficult situations. She stated that other principal
colleagues helped her through difficult situations and with problem solving (personal
communication, August 20, 2014).

Socialization to the Principal Role

Mrs. Romo stated that “as an assistant principal I thought I knew the job until I got
into those principalship shoes.” Like most new principals, adjusting to her new role of
principal was somewhat difficult her first year. As the assistant principal, she handled various
jobs such as the three Bs: buses, books, and bad boys, in addition to her instructional duties.
Mrs. Romo had difficulty relinquishing some of her duties and powers to others because she
felt responsible for everything. Therefore, she felt a need to have her hands on everything.
She shared that “no one really understands what we do. We have so many things to navigate
within the building and outside the building. It’s a very isolated and lonely field. Many
people depend on us” (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

Perceptions of Various Form of Support

Mentor support. When asked if her work with the mentor was helpful and contributed
to her success as a principal, Mrs. Romo stated:
Oh, definitely helpful. I don’t know that I would have done as well my first year without having a mentor. I felt like I was kind of thrown into the principalship even on my first day. I was expecting someone to meet me at the school and walk me around the building. When I arrived at the school, I was basically had the school handed over to me. Here’s your school and that was my installation or orientation. I was happier a few months later when they assigned me a mentor. I appreciated the support (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

Mrs. Romo was asked what she would have liked to have done with her mentor that she didn’t get a chance to do. She responded:

I would have liked to have gone to visit other schools of beginning principals and some effective schools with seasoned principals accompanied by my mentor. I would like to have shadowed other principals and observed some situational type things and learn how others deal with them with my mentor by my side (personal conversation, August 20, 2014).

Mrs. Romo felt that having a mentor, forming a network with other principals, new and seasoned, who she trusted and respected, being allowed to collaborate with her mentor and peers, and having a teaching background helped her tremendously with the principalship. She also felt that the missing link was that the school district should have used this as a learning tool and produced a more structured induction program similar to a beginning teacher induction program. She thought there should be a two to three-year structured, systematic program for novice principals. Mrs. Romo believed that mentors needed to be assigned to the novice principal as soon as the contract was signed. Her recommendation for mentor and
protégé assignments was that it be done during the first week of the principalship. She said the mentor should be present every day with the protégé at first, and then gradually decrease the contact as needed. Mrs. Romo said that the program should have a specific direction which spells out the role of the mentor and the novice principal, and should provide equal support for all novice principals. Mentors should be assigned for two to three years, and scheduled regular district team building meetings should occur for all mentors and novice principals. She felt that it was not only essential but also wise for school districts to invest in the well-being of their leaders as they do their teachers (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Romo wished that she could have had her supervisor’s presence and support at the school on a more regular basis. She visited a few times but Mrs. Romo said she would have liked more feedback. She would have welcomed more visits and feedback from her supervisor but understood why she could not. Due to the large number of elementary schools in the district, it was somewhat impossible. She appreciated the times that she did have (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Networking support.** Mrs. Romo knew the importance of having her peers to network with as well as being able to lean on them during difficult times. Her response to a challenging situation with a difficult parent was due to the support she received from colleagues and the district level staff in the implementation of policies and procedures that would set clear and firm guidelines in dealing with difficult and inappropriately behaving parents.
Mrs. Romo stated that she valued the times with her cohort of principals. She shared that “the group was small and intimate enough for principals to feel comfortable in sharing concerns.” She also found it valuable to network with principals and workshop presenters outside the district (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Romo attended staff development and training with the Triangle Public Schools and with her previous place of employment. When asked if her attitude or behavior changed as a result of her participation in these workshops, her response was:

Oh definitely, anyone who goes to professional development opportunities should go back and reflect on how you can do things differently. I’ve changed some practices as a result of those sessions. It also assisted me in networking with other principals inside and outside of Triangle Public Schools (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Participant 2: Mrs. Newton (Panther Elementary)**

Mrs. Newton had been a principal for five years, with three of those years at Panther Elementary. She had previously been a teacher and assistant principal at Triangle Public Schools. When Mrs. Newton decided that she really wanted to be a principal, she felt that she needed to apply for a principalship in other school districts and not rely solely on Triangle Public School for employment. A nearby school district gave her an opportunity and she took it. She spent two years in the principalship before returning back to her home district. This principalship afforded her the opportunity to show that she was capable of handling the challenges of the principalship. Her proudest moment was returning to the Triangle School
District as the principal at the same school that she had served as an assistant principal (personal communication, August 20, 2014).

**Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals**

*Mentor support.* Mrs. Newton was not aware of the process used to match her with her mentor or of any procedures in place for mentor selection. She guessed that the assistant superintendent selected them. She was not sure if her mentor had received any training or not. She only knew that she was a successful retired principal from another school district. When asked if she was aware of the areas that she needed support with prior to working with her mentor, Mrs. Newton said no. When asked if she wanted a mentor, she said yes because she was new to the position of principal in Triangle Public Schools even though this was her home school district and the school she served in as an assistant principal. She felt that her level of need for support when she arrived at Triangle Public Schools was four, with the range being 0 needing no support and 10 having a need for lots of support. Mrs. Newton describes the principalship as being “like a beast.” She said that this job “encompassed so much” that principals needed help (personal communication, August 2014).

Mrs. Newton shared the type of activities that she was engaged in with her mentor. She stated, “We looked at some instructional pieces and data together. We did walkthroughs together, things of that nature. She observed me having teacher and parent conferences and faculty and Professional Learning Communities meetings.” According to Mrs. Newton, even though the mentor spent the day with her once per week, she still had access to her at any time through telephone or emails. The mentor initiated most of the contact (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Newton described her contact with her supervisor as being good. She felt comfortable to call or email her if she had questions or concerns. She would do the same towards her. The conversation was always positive communication, according to Mrs. Newton (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Networking with peers.** Mrs. Newton stated that the system was structured in a manner that enabled principals to build relationships with other principals. The relationships became a form of networking among peers. She said, “The networking was almost like an unspoken establishment that existed that we all depended on. We were able to lean on each other for support as well as bounce ideas off each other” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Newton explained that her training focused on building principals as leaders, instructionally and overall. When asked if she attended any trainings or staff development for new principals only, Mrs. Newton said she attended a couple but because she was not new to Triangle, she was not required to attend all of them. She was not able to remember the names of the workshops/trainings offered. The training that she remembered and attended dealt more with the operational and logistical matters (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters**

Mrs. Newton had communicated with her mentor mostly through face-to-face conversation but had access to her through emails and the telephone. The mentor was available to her at all times whether it was her designated day or not. According to Mrs. Newton, their dialog usually involved the following:
We talked about school as a whole. We talked a lot about school culture. She was present a couple of times when I talked to teachers about different things. I think she may have been involved in a couple of parent conferences. Most of the time, she just sat in the back and listened. She only shared in the conversation when she thought it was necessary. That didn’t happen much. Mainly, she allowed me to handle it and then we would have a discussion about what took place. She would offer feedback (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Socialization to the Principal Role**

When Mrs. Newton referred to her first year as a Triangle Public School principal, she described it as being full of culture shock because of how the staff viewed her in the principal’s role, which was different than that of the assistant principal’s role. She stated:

> When I started as a principal in Triangle Public Schools, I still considered myself a new principal. Even though I was familiar with some things, there were a lot of changes. I was no longer the assistant principal here. I was the principal. It wasn’t overwhelming because I was aware of some things. One of the challenges was coming back to the same school I had been the assistant principal. Coming back as the principal was completely different and I had to adjust to that. I was no longer seen or treated the same way after my return to the district as the principal. My role at this school and [the faculty’s] perception of me drastically changed. The staff viewed me differently as their principal and the treatment was different than when I was their assistant principal (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Perceptions of Various Forms of Support

*Mentor support.* When asked if having a mentor was helpful, Mrs. Newton shared:

I felt that it was helpful just having somebody who had already been there and experienced some of those things that she needed to help get me through. That part was helpful. It is always helpful to just listen to someone who has more experience that yourself. I think just that component alone is always good (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Newton was asked what activities would she have loved to have done with her mentor but never got an opportunity. She stated:

We had a lot of informal conversations on a regular basis but I would have loved to have had a more structured dialogue maybe midway or at the end. It would have been beneficial for her to say this is what I have observed during our time together, this is what you have improved upon, and this is what you may want or need to continue to work on. I would have also loved to have attended some professional development sessions together provided by the district so that we could have had some rich conversations about specific topics (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Newton felt that she could have received even more of an enriching experience if:

The mentor program could have had areas of focus and been more structured. I think the mentors and the novice principals should all have had an opportunity to meet and talk before assignments were made, almost like a speed dating format, to help determine if the match would be a good fit. We meet and interview teachers before
we offer teacher positions. They then have the opportunity to say yes or no. Mentors should be skilled and trained. They should be assigned as soon as possible, at the beginning of the novice principal’s first assignment. Another crucial piece is the confidentiality between mentor and principal. Their goal should be to really help the principal to become the best school leader possible and not share damaging information about the principal when they are in learning and training mode. Crucial conversations between mentor and novice principal should be between the two. There should be trust between the two. As long as a person is coachable and willing to fix or correct a situation then there’s no reason for anyone else to know about it unless it’s something that will endanger others, illegal, or unethical. Mentors are not there to evaluate but coach (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

The participant did not confirm but implied that this may have happened. She did not seem to want to share any more information regarding her statement. Therefore, I respected her right not to share.

**Supervisor support.** According to Mrs. Newton, although the support of the supervisor was helpful, she would have liked more visitation time outside of the formal evaluation for her to listen to concerns, make suggestions, and be given a fresh perspective by someone outside of the school environment. She felt that a supervisor should visit at least three times per year by doing walkthroughs, giving face-to-face, one-on-one support and feedback to the principal for the first three years of their principalship (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
**Networking support.** Mrs. Newton loved the networking structure developed by the supervisor that formed teams of principals in cohorts. The cohorts consisted of seven or eight principals assigned together to meet monthly at each other’s schools to have agenda-driven discussions, classroom observations, problem solving time, crucial conversations, strategic planning, and the sharing of best practices. The host school planned the agenda with the supervisor. Principals had input regarding the agenda for the next meeting through an evaluation form. This also gave principals an opportunity to showcase their school and get vital input on their troubled areas (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Professional development.** When asked if she thought the trainings/workshops that she participated in were beneficial or helpful or changed her attitude about how she conducted business, Mrs. Newton stated:

I don’t think [trainings/workshops] had that much of an impact. I think that it was helpful but I don’t think that it changed my thinking about anything or how I conducted business. The most helpful thing for me was to know who was in charge of what and how I could connect with them if I needed their services. My first year back which was my third year as a principal, I was a part of the mentor program. I had a mentor who visited once a week for the day. She would come in and just do anything I needed her to do. She gave me advice and direction in some things. Even though I was not a new principal, I was still a new principal in Triangle. She was with me for one year. This was helpful (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Participant 3: Mrs. Vick (Eagle Elementary)

Mrs. Vick described herself as being a very thorough and organized person. She acknowledged that she was somewhat of a micromanager during her novice years. This was due to the fact that, during her second year as a novice principal, she was reassigned to another elementary school without a clear understanding of the reason for the change. Afterwards, Mrs. Vick developed trust issues, had difficulty delegating to others, and lacked flexibility. Mrs. Vick has been an elementary school principal for four years and an assistant principal for two years with a middle school background. Her assigned mentor was a successful elementary principal who worked closely to help Mrs. Vick with her trust and delegating issues.

Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals

*Mentor support.* Mrs. Vick described the principalship like “sinking or swimming.” According to her, “the support is there but the support is not in the water with you.” For that reason, Mrs. Vick said, “you will have to sink or swim.” She felt that even though the support was around the principal, the principal could still go down if he or she was not strong enough or did not have the necessary skills that would enable swimming (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

The school district did not provide any additional support during her first year as a novice principal. She received a mentor her third year when they moved her to her current school. As a result, she knew the areas she needed support with prior to the arrival of her mentor. Mrs. Vick knew she needed help in building capacity by releasing control and not having the lead role in everything happening in the building. After shadowing Mrs. Vick,
Mrs. Vick and the mentor agreed about the areas of concern. Her level of need when she received her mentor was ranked between 5 to 10, with 0 being no support needed and 10 being lots of support needed. The range varied depending on the skill or task (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Vick had no knowledge of how she was matched with her mentor. She did not know if her mentor had been formally trained as a mentor. She was told that the person was a successful retired principal from another district. Mrs. Vick’s only concern was to have a person with experiences, strengths, and personality that matched the needs and personality of the mentee. She did not feel it necessary for her to select or be a part of the selection of her own mentor as long as those items were taken into consideration. After the assignment was made, Mrs. Vick met with her mentor two-and-a-half days per week (all day on Tuesday and Thursday, and half day on Friday) (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** In our discussion about the support Mrs. Vick received from her supervisor, she said that her supervisor was available to answer questions if needed. She had the option to call or email. Her supervisor would respond. Visits from her supervisor were few, which included her mid-year or end-of-the-year evaluation. The main support and face-to-face meetings with the supervisor came through principal meetings and cohort meetings. She credited that to the fact that there were so many other elementary schools to visit (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Networking with peers.** Mrs. Vick valued her times networking and having discussions with her peers but found it difficult to leave her school to meet with them other than during the time allotted for the mandatory principal and cohort meetings. As a first year
principal, she felt that she needed to be present at her school at all times. She thought being present at her school was much more important than any meeting she was required to attend. Her mentor helped her realize the importance of networking with others and how workshops and training helped to build upon and strengthen her skills. She also needed the opportunity to network with others outside her school district and build leadership capacity within her building (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Vick stated that Triangle Public Schools did not offer any workshops, training, or staff development for new principals only. She attended the district staff development that was planned for all principals and only because it was mandatory. The supervisor (assistant superintendent) grouped principals into cohorts where they received additional staff development based on the needs of their schools in addition to their regular principal meetings. They were able to network, have crucial conversations with their peers, and do group walkthroughs at each other’s schools, and share their observations. Mrs. Vick did not attend any workshops or trainings outside the district on her own because she felt if she was away from her building she would miss something. She found it difficult to take her hands off things or trust her staff to take the lead role. She stated:

> I didn’t really understand that the staff development or training would help to sharpen my skills. I’ve now enrolled into a doctoral program that has sharpened my skills and has helped me to be more reflective in areas so that I can grow. I’m not so reluctant to attend trainings now (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters

Mentor support and communication. The majority of the communication was done in person on the assigned days and on the telephone. Initially, the mentor made all of the contact. Once the relationship was formed, the calls went back and forth. When Mrs. Vick had issues that needed to be addressed, she did not hesitate to contact her mentor. Mrs. Vick said, “Although she is no longer with me physically [as my assigned mentor], I think we talk even more now” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

When asked what kind of activities she and her mentor were engaged in during their time together, Mrs. Vick shared:

The mentor was a part of my PLC [Professional Learning Communities] meetings, walkthroughs, discussions about classroom instruction, observations, and conferences with teachers and parents. She also gave feedback regarding my behaviors and practices. We also talked about how to balance my personal and professional life because that is an area where I struggle with. We talked about how to balance motherhood, being a wife, and a principal. She gave me feedback that I needed to hear as well as another way of looking at and thinking about the principalship (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Socialization to the Principal Role

Mrs. Vick had difficulty letting go of the roles of assistant principal and teacher after she became the principal. She acted as if people had to be developed or cloned into her image. Her practices contributed to her having to wear many hats. Mrs. Vick shared her first year experiences as a Triangle Public Schools principal by saying:
Let’s just say my first year as a Triangle Public Schools principal was a lot of learning. A lot of learning through trial and error because I still thought as an assistant principal. There is a difference between the role of the principal and the assistant principal. You can’t even imagine the difference. You think you know until you are sitting in the seat of the principalship. I was still functioning in the role of the assistant principal. I didn’t get it until later. I even thought that teachers were supposed to teach the same way that I taught when I was in the classroom. I taught a certain way and this was my expectations for my teachers. I learned after the first year that that was not the case. My first year was just putting out a lot of fires and me really trying to navigate and figure out my role as a principal. I had a lot of learning curves that first year (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Vick was then asked to describe an event or program that presented a challenge to her during her years as a novice principal. She shared:

I would say my most challenging time during my first year was trying to determine my role as a principal, making the transition from assistant principal to principal, and expecting teachers to be cloned in my teaching image (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Perceptions of Various Form of Support

Mentor support. Mrs. Vick concurred that having a mentor was very helpful and played a vital role in her success. She stated:

It was beneficial because I had another set of experienced eyes observing what I was observing. It allowed us time to have discussions about the directions that we needed
to take. It was great having someone to bounce ideas off of. It was essential to have someone to talk to me about balancing my personal and professional life. I needed to learn how to plan time for job, family and me. I knew she had lived it and she knew what I knew about the job and its demands. It helped me to think about things in a different way. My mentor helped me to realize what my role as a principal was. I had to learn how to empower others and allow them to do the job their way as I took my hands off. I learned the importance of monitoring teaching and learning in the classroom and modeling expectations so other would follow my lead. I learned my first year that working hard does not give you good results. Thinking and planning strategically and modeling and monitoring made a difference in what was produced at the end (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

When Mrs. Vick was asked how this mentoring experience could have been enhanced and how it would best benefit others, she suggested that novice principals should have a mentor for more than one year, preferably for two or three years. She felt that it was equally as important to match the principal to the appropriate school as well as the best mentor match. Mrs. Vick also stated if you are going to hire a first time principal to lead a high needs or turnaround school, the district should have a mentor selected who would serve that principal five days a week to ensure a successful beginning of school. Mentor time can be decreased as needed. She also felt that it was important to match the strengths and skills of the mentor with the needs of the novice principal. Mrs. Vick stated:

I believe every new principal needs the help of a mentor to provide support, motivation, and to help navigate the known and unknown of the principalship. I
would recommend a rubric or standard for placing mentors with principals. In addition, monthly meetings with all mentors and mentees would have been a way to ensure all mentors and mentees were on the same page regarding the district’s expectations for the mentoring/coaching process. All principal mentors should receive weekly or bi-weekly coaching professional development to ensure quality and effective coaching. Lastly, increase the number of principal mentors/coaches in the district. Every principal, novice and experienced, deserves a mentor/coach to ensure and maximize continued growth. Mentors should be hired as soon as principals are hired. It would be nice to have the mentor present at the school board meeting when the principal is announced followed with a meeting with the new principal the following day (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Vick was asked her perception regarding the support received from her supervisor. She shared:

The first year as a novice principal, I did not find my supervisor’s school visitations to be very helpful. The second and third year her visitations were more beneficial. I attributed that to the cohort principal format she designed. Having more frequent group meetings my first year for all new principals would have been beneficial with the focus being on our needs. New principals don’t want to ask questions and appear to be incompetent in the general principal meetings. The meeting would have been more intimate and everyone would be on the same level with less embarrassment. As a first-year principal, you don’t know what you don’t know. Therefore, you don’t know what to ask. This would have been a wonderful opportunity for the supervisor
to gel with her new principals and provide a safe environment for us new kids on the block (personal communication, August 15, 2001).

**Networking support.** Mrs. Vick enjoyed her time with her colleagues but was fearful of leaving her school, which caused her to lose out on some experiences with her peers that she believed would have been positive. She later learned that networking was crucial in the building of her leadership skills. Her positive experiences in her required district meetings gave her many opportunities to discuss and observe best practices. She learned how to take advantage of her opportunities to visit other sites and attend other meetings in and out of the district to expand her knowledge base. Mrs. Vick said, “Networking did lessen the feeling of isolation and increased my resources” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Professional development.** Although Mrs. Vick never wanted to leave her school to attend workshops, training, and staff development from the district or on her own, she does credit some of her success to the training the district provided during her principal meetings and principal cohort meetings. She said that the principal cohort Professional Learning Communities enabled her to visit other schools, have good discussions regarding student learning, and get valuable feedback from her peers after they walked the building. According to Mrs. Vick, “It’s a very isolating feeling being a principal.” Having a cohort reduced the isolation and loneliness. She gave a lot of credit to this format in helping to strengthen her skills as a school administrator. These activities were for all principals, not just new principals. She admitted that these meetings and trainings changed her attitude and behavior on how business was conducted in her building. It motivated her to try other things when she observed the success in other buildings (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
Participant 4: Mrs. Smith (Chief Elementary)

The soft-spoken Mrs. Smith was the non-confrontational leader who carefully analyzed situations before speaking. But, when she spoke, her message was very profound and thought-provoking. Mrs. Smith served as a Title I coordinator for the school to which she was appointed. When she became the principal, she received a shock. As the Title I coordinator, she only was exposed to what the principal wanted her to see and know. She only focused on the principal’s and district’s areas of concern. She did not know all of the challenges of the school. The view of the school was quite different when viewed from the role of the teacher and the Title I coordinator. Mrs. Smith served as a principal for seven years, with three of those years served with Triangle School District.

Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals

Mentor support. Mrs. Smith was asked if the school district provided any additional support during her first year as a principal such as a coach or mentor. She shared:

Yes, I had a Race-to-the-Top mentor/coach assigned to me. I guess I shouldn’t say this because I wasn’t a Race-to-the-Top school but I needed the help. [The participant was concerned about stating what actually took place. I assured her that this information was confidential and that her identity would be protected. She then proceeded.] Even though I was not a Race-to-the-Top school I did receive some Race-to-the-Top support. For instance, I had an instructional coach who came over and supported my teachers and supported my professional development within the building. I also had access to a principal coach. But, it was not as beneficial as I hoped for. Actually, I had two different coaches that year because one left in January
and the other one was my former interim assistant principal (retired principal) who took over the role. My second year, when the superintendent made a change in his organizational chart, I was assigned a new elementary supervisor who assigned me a mentor that November. As soon as she was assigned to me by the new area superintendent (my supervisor), she came over every Wednesday for the day, religiously. She would arrive 8:45 a.m. and would stay until 6 p.m. most of the time. If her other mentee was absent, she would come over to spend the time with me. And she would do the same for the other mentees. She was also available to me at all times through telephone and email if I needed her. We had extensive conversations as she traveled back home even after leaving at 6 p.m. if I needed to continue the conversation (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith was not aware of how she was matched to her mentor or what her qualifications were as a mentor. She received a telephone call giving her the mentor assignment. In that conversation, Mrs. Smith was told by her supervisor that the mentor was a successful retired principal from another school district (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith acknowledged that she was aware of her deficiency as a leader prior to her mentor assignment. She stated that she needed support in making sure that quality instruction was happening in every classroom. After being shadowed by her mentor, Mrs. Smith shared that her mentor was concerned that she was placing too much emphasis on matters that could be handled by others. She was being extended too thinly because Mrs. Smith wanted her hands on everything, which limited the amount of time placed on
monitoring instruction. She needed to trust the leadership and ability of others to handle those situations. According to Mrs. Smith, she considered her level of need for support as being seven when she received her mentor, with 0 being no support needed and 10 being a need for lots of support. Mrs. Smith described some of the daily activities that took place with her mentor involving walkthroughs, observations, daily feedback and discussions, being observed during meetings and conferences with teachers and parents, having data discussions, and attending faculty and PLC meetings. Mrs. Smith stated:

I always had a list of things that I wanted to ask her [the mentor]. She would always go over my list of questions and concerns to support my administrative needs. My mentor attended my PLC [Professional Learning Communities] meeting with teachers. She always ended with feedback and suggestions regarding the instructional topics and discussions that took place between me and the teachers. The mentor also used the same format when she attended my staff meetings (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Supervisor support. Mrs. Smith stated that she had contact with her supervisor during her first three years as a novice principal. When asked what kind of contact she had, she responded by saying:

I had two different supervisors over my first two years. I could call, request visits, and email. Both were supportive. My first area superintendent (supervisor) visited more often than the second area superintendent. If they were not available, they always had coordinators in various areas that would and could address my needs (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Networking with peers. During general principal and cohort meetings, Mrs. Smith enjoyed sharing and discussing strategies for improving student achievement but frowned on wasting time on “administrative gossip.” She deemed it a “waste of valuable time” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). If principals wanted to engage in conversations to talk about people and/or deal in unconstructive conversations that did not resolve or give insight regarding a situation, Mrs. Smith would shy away according to her. She did not want to be labeled as a gossiper and run the risk of not being taken seriously. She also did not know where the conversation would end up with her name attached.

Professional development. When asked if the school district offered any workshops or staff development for new principals only, she responded, “Yes, we met monthly with a different focus each time, anything from building operations to budgets, human resource to evaluations” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters

The mentor was available at all times for Mrs. Smith, even when she was not able to meet face-to-face. Mrs. Smith valued the time spent discussing the various aspects of her job as principal as well as being able to “pick her mentor’s brain regarding crucial questions.” Mrs. Smith shared that she always had a list of items to discuss with her mentor. Her mentor always had time for discussion and feedback (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith also shared that she discussed with her mentor how she utilized staff/faculty members, the assistant principal and teachers, in the building. They had conversations regarding their strengths and assignments and what possible changes needed to
happen to enhance the programs within the school (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Socialization to the Role of Principal**

Mrs. Smith found transitioning from central office to the principalship was quite different from what she expected. She felt that she would have an inside track of things since she had just left the position of the Title I coordinator. She stated, “One might think that I would have received some special privileges but that was not the case at all.” When she stepped into the role of the principalship, she stepped into a different world that made her question herself and whether she wanted or was ready to do this job. Viewing her school from the position of Title I coordinator was quite different than from the angle of the principalship (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith talked about the many roles of her job. She stated that there was never “enough time in the day to take care of all of the tasks and “wear all of the many hats.” She also admitted that her mentor was right about her “placing too much emphasis on matters that could be handled by others.” Mrs. Smith learned very quickly that she needed to trust the abilities of her staff when she was without the help of an assistant principal on many occasions. She worked with her mentor to determine the strengths and abilities of her staff which led to empowering her staff in leadership roles (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Perceptions of Various Form of Support

Mentor support. According to Mrs. Smith, having a mentor was most helpful in shaping her leadership skills as a principal. Mrs. Smith stated:

Having an assigned mentor my second year validated some of things that I was doing but it also revealed some of the mistakes that I was making as well as show me a different way of doing business to improve. I wished that I had been introduced to my mentor my first year as a principal. It would have been great if my mentor had started at the same time that I was hired for the job. The Race-to-the-Top coaches did not provide the same type of support that I received from this mentor nor did they put the time and energy into supporting me. My first year, I did not have stable mentor support and I probably developed some bad habits. Another year with my mentor would have been even more beneficial. I think that it would be beneficial for the mentors to have experience in schools similar to that of the mentee. It was great to have someone to bounce my thoughts off of. She gave me room to grow and never tried to clone me in her image. She never became my crutch. She encouraged me to let my light shine by sharing the great things going on at my school. That was difficult for me because I tend to shy away from the light. I’ve always been a behind the scene person. But it’s not about me but about the great things that are going on at the school that promote student learning and growth (personal communication, August 14, 2014).
Mrs. Smith continued to have contact with her mentor to just “bounce things off of her.” She continued to value the lessons learned from her mentor (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Smith thought that her contact with both of her supervisors was beneficial. She felt that they were always supportive. Both gave positive and negative feedback and suggestions for improvement during their visits. It was the second supervisor (area assistant superintendent) who assigned the mentor, which helped Mrs. Smith tremendously. Mrs. Smith gave credit to her first supervisor for visiting the school site more. Although she would have appreciated seeing her second assigned supervisor more, she understood that during the organizational change she had inherited all of the 30 elementary schools in the district (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith felt that she could have had more support in the area of securing an assistant principal or finding a stable interim until the position was filled. Not having an assistant principal at times with over 600 students in a high needs schools with a high number of new teachers added to her stress, frustration, and feeling of being overwhelmed at times (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Networking support.** Mrs. Smith gained strength from constructive conversations through networking with her peers during her district principal meetings and cohort meetings. She was appreciative of those times. She stated, “It gave me a sense of calm knowing that others were in the same boat with me but seemed to be surviving.” She felt that she had a second resource of help with her peers. She was able to have discussions and share during her meetings. Mrs. Smith also utilized the knowledge gained from her central office
experience as a Title I School Improvement specialist. She was able to utilize her network connections from that position (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Professional development.** When asked if whether any support or training received helped her to deal with the challenge appropriately, Mrs. Smith stated:

The training and coaching from Max Thompson (Learning Focus) and the district enable me to get faculty on board with the adoption of learning focus. Their views and input were valued. The instructional facilitator played a major role in helping to prepare teachers for the change (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Mrs. Smith felt that the training designed for new principals only, was beneficial but sometimes overwhelming because too much information was given at each setting. The training involved budgeting, human resources, evaluations, and building operations. She stated:

There were key pieces of each workshop or training that I took away. It was a lot of information and I had to pick and choose what to absorb. Some of it was overwhelming. These workshops did not change my attitude or behavior as a result of my participation partly because I had some experience as an assistant principal and at the central office level. But I will say that there was a difference when it was me doing the task versus me helping or coaching someone on how to complete the task when I was working at the central office level. Those trainings that I received regarding instruction did impact my attitude and behavior as an instructional leader. The learning focus trainings were research-based and structured. I do wish that the cohort and principal trainings had been tailored to my needs. I thought when we filled
out the surveys at the end of each training session that the purpose was for designing the trainings to meet our needs. But that was not the case (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Participant 5: Mrs. Manning (Bronco Elementary)

Mrs. Manning served two years as an assistant principal and is now working on her second year as a principal. She was very knowledgeable about curriculum and had many networking connections. She was originally from Triangle, North Carolina and utilized her community connections very well. She served on many local boards within the community. She had always worked with high need populations and appeared to have a great understanding of the needs of the whole child.

Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals

Mentor support. When Mrs. Manning was asked to describe her first year as a novice principal in Triangle Public Schools, she stated:

It was interesting and a little tougher than I thought it would be. It was one of those things where you have people who say that we are here to help but sometimes being the new kid, you don’t always know what to ask for or when you need help. I was assigned a mentor but not one who was really present (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Manning was given a mentor at the end of October. She had not been notified that she was going to receive a mentor. She said, “The mentor showed up and said I have been assigned to you.” At first, like most new principals, she thought that she didn’t need a
mentor because of her confidence in her abilities. She had been a successful and highly regarded assistant principal. Therefore, she felt that she had been so up close and personal with the role of the principal that she could handle it without assistance. Mrs. Manning admitted that when she actually got into the job, she realized that there were things that a mentor or coach would be great help with, such as talking through some situations and offering sound advice. She was not aware of the areas she needed help with prior to being assigned a mentor. When asked how she ranked her needs as a new principal, she ranked a level four or five, with 0 needing no support and 10 needing a lot of help. Mrs. Manning stated that after her mentor shadowed her, the following suggestions and comments were made:

Prioritize the needs and do not try to build Rome in one day. Remember, this was my first year. As the leader, I didn’t know exactly what that meant, so I felt constantly under pressure to do whatever someone from central office said or suggested based on their comments when they visited the building. So I overwhelmed my teachers with all the demands being outlined by the district. They became frustrated and burnt out. It wasn’t until mid-way through my second year, that I had to say stop and realize that the timeline outlined by the district was not realistic. I learned how to become an advocate for my teachers and my building. We had to learn as a team how to plan the implementation and timeline of what the district required of us. My teachers thanked me and became less frustrated, which produced more work (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
She had no knowledge of the selection of the mentor and matching of the mentor to the novice principal. All she knew was that the person was a successful retired principal from the district. Mrs. Manning would have loved to have had input in the selection of her mentor. She stated, “It’s important to be able to have a trustworthy relationship with your mentor. The trust will allow the novice principal to be honest enough to share their flaws without feeling the threat of being revealed to [their] boss.” According to Mrs. Manning, the activities that they were engaged in consisted of “walking the building together, discussing the data, and maybe make some suggestions only if I had a specific problem” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Manning and her mentor did not have a set meeting time. She did not see her mentor every week. When asked how often, she stated that she had contact with her mentor about twice per month. On the day when her mentor arrived, it was for a certain period of time, no more than two to three hours at a time. According to Mrs. Manning, the meeting time was the same throughout the duration of the assignment until closer to the end of the year, when it began to decrease. The principal stated that she did have access to her mentor through email but she rarely used it. Contact was initiated by both mentor and novice principal. She stated that the telephone calls that she received from her mentor were not about mentoring but to alert her that the mentor was not going to be able to meet. Their main topic of discussion consisted of how to get teachers to respond to what they needed to do and how to use the data inside the classroom (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** When asked if she had contact with her supervisor during her time as a novice principal, she stated:
I had contact with her through the monthly meetings, general principal meetings and the cohort meetings. I think she visited the building only once my first year. Of course if anything went wrong, I had email contact. Every now and then I would get a phone call. I remember her coming for a visit one time to do a walkthrough. We were going through an evaluation of a new instructional approach. The walkthrough was to see how we were rolling the new program out. Staff from her department would come in and out of the building and give feedback to my supervisor. They would report what they thought was happening through their occasional visits. I never got a follow-up call or feedback from their visits from my supervisor or them (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Networking with peers.** Mrs. Manning’s participation in her general principal and cohort meeting provided her with the opportunity to network with her peers as well as build relationships. She used these relationships to lean on her peers in her time of need. She tended to rely more on her peers and networking relationships for support than her mentor. Mrs. Manning shared that when her “mentor was not present she had to seek advice from other experienced school administrators” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Professional development.** Professional development for new principals only was offered to Mrs. Manning. She stated that she only remembered training on the budget and managerial pieces of the principalship. She did get some training from the state because her school was a Race-to-the-Top school. She remembered some of the topics dealt with school culture, how to make changes in your building as a leader, and how to be a transformational leader. Mrs. Manning stated that Triangle Public Schools did not offer any additional training
for new principals. For that reason, Mrs. Manning started seeking professional development outside the system to help build upon her leadership skills. The district mainly offered more instructional support. She described the training in other areas such as leadership, managerial, and operations as being sporadic (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters**

Mrs. Manning had limited dialog with her mentor because of the inconsistency in their meeting times and the cancelations by her mentor. She was given the option of contacting her mentor through telephone or via email but rarely took advantage of it. She stated that she was “assigned a mentor my first year but it was no one who really was present.” She shared that as a new leader one does not always know what to ask or what you really need help with. She was expecting lots of conversations and discussions. The most meaningful conversations held between Mrs. Manning and her mentor took place when she was shadowed by her mentor. This enabled her to be reflective about what actually took place and get much-needed feedback. Mrs. Manning shared that she did not always know the meaning of some statements made by her mentor. Some conversations were not clearly explained (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Socialization to the Role of Principal**

Mrs. Manning felt that her first year was a little tough but interesting, but felt confident about doing the job because of her previous role as an assistant principal and her experience with high needs children. She later admitted that she did need a mentor because she could not even imagine all the roles of a principal. Her view of this job from the assistant
principal’s desk was only a glance. Mrs. Manning felt like the new kid who did not always know what was expected of her. At times Mrs. Manning said that she felt overwhelmed because of all of the directives that were coming at her from the central office regarding her role as the principal and instructional leader. She then passed her frustration and overwhelming feelings on to her faculty. Her mentor stated that “Rome was not built in one day,” but she said she didn’t have a clue what that really meant until now. At that time all she knew is that everyone was expecting her to get the job done (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Perceptions Of Various Form Of Support

*Mentor support.* Mrs. Manning did not see her mentor experience as being a successful experience, but she still believed in the value of having a mentor. She stated:

I don’t think that I got what I needed from my mentor. As a new principal, you don’t necessary know what you need. Looking back, I think my mentor should have had more insight on problems and things that I needed and just didn’t know to ask. Maybe if the mentor had been more visible and present in my building, he could have seen some things that I didn’t necessarily see. Here I am, looking at someone that was more experienced than me and I felt that the mentor was supposed to be a successful principal who was supposed to have more insight than myself and offer me something more substantial. I don’t think I got what I needed from this mentoring experience. I feel that my success came from what I learned from my methodology class from graduate school along with working beside a principal who became more like a
mentor during my times as an assistant principal at Bronco Elementary (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

When asked what activities would she have liked to have done with her mentor, Mrs. Manning responded:

I don’t exactly know how to answer that. I would have liked for my mentor to be present with me at teacher conferences, faculty meetings, and some conferences with parents. When the mentor did sit in on meetings, I did not get any feedback, suggestions, or confirmation that I handled it correctly. I would have liked to have had them be present more in the building as well as more discussions and conversations. When I was not getting what I needed from this relationship, I started seeking help from others. Most of the time, by the time my mentor arrived to help me address an issue or situation, I had it resolved (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Manning was asked what would have made her mentor experience better and could be made more beneficial for other novice principals. She shared:

The program should be assessed afterwards, and the mentors should be evaluated by the novice principals. There should be a discussion about what went well and what needed to be improved upon. The information should be shared and built into the mentor program for the next year. Mentors should come into this job more knowledgeable than what I experienced. Both, the mentor and mentee, should take a personality inventory, leadership style inventory, and questionnaire to be used in making assignments. After the match is made, mentors should be assigned at least
one month after the principal has been hired. Regardless of my experience, I still believe in the importance of providing novice principals mentoring or coaching support (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** When asked how helpful other support systems such as supervisor support were, Mrs. Manning responded:

As a novice principal, sometimes, you need a little bit more interaction with your supervisor. Not that I need a lot of contact time but more than one visit per year rather than accepting information that is only being relayed by others. There’s nothing like your own observation and getting a true picture of what’s happening. Perceptions can be different. I felt that my supervisor had a lot to offer. I valued her suggestions and comments. I just needed more of it, especially as a novice principal (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Networking support.** Mrs. Manning relied more on her networking with her colleagues, outside workshop presenters, and principals than she did her mentor. She had more access to other resource people and so she utilized them. She really valued her time spent with her colleagues during the district principal meetings and principal cohort meetings. She was able to engage in meaningful discussions regarding student learning, strategic planning, and newly introduced programs. She stated that she always left the meetings with valuable material. She credited some of her survival the first year to her networking with others and being adopted by some seasoned principals who really became her adopted mentors. Having these relationships and connections helped her with the feeling of isolation (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
**Professional development.** Mrs. Manning shared that the school district did offer training or professional development for new principals. She stated:

I did get a chance to ask questions about budgets from the finance officer. The training dealt more with managerial pieces. They didn’t offer anything about leadership, transformational change, and school culture. The state offered training to me because my school was a Race-to-the-Top school. They provided training regarding school culture, transformational leadership, and how to bring about changes in your building. They were very helpful and did assist in my administrative decision making. I started networking with the presenter of these workshops so that I could connect them when I needed sound advice. I connected so much to these workshops that it drove me to seek out others. I went to NCPAPA workshops or organizations that offered training in my areas of need. I can’t say that Triangle Public Schools hosted any workshops dealing with these topics (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Manning said that the training that she received from Race-to-the-Top changed her attitude and behavior about how she conducted school business. She stated:

It geared me to start viewing things globally when trying to move a whole unit. It helped me with my tunnel vision. I started thinking in a more holistic manner. I had started looking at how one decision could affect the many facets of the organization or how my reactions to a situation would affect the masses (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
Participant 6: Mrs. Rodgers (Packer Elementary)

Mrs. Rodgers served six years as an assistant principal and two years as a principal. She stated that her first year was difficult because she started without an assistant principal in August just before school was scheduled to open. Mrs. Rodgers was excited about the opportunity but felt behind at the beginning. Therefore, she went into the position like, as she called it, a tornado. She stated, “I was going to do this, this, and this but then came the calm after the storm.” Her faculty described her as the boom boom boom principal because she hit everything with a boom and with swiftness. Mrs. Rodgers shared that she felt that she was expected to get the job done in the time allotted by the central office (person communication, August 15, 2014).

Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals

Mentor support. Mrs. Rodgers was assigned a mentor for support her first year as a novice principal. She was not sure how her mentor was selected. She knew that he was a successful retired principal but was not sure whether he was trained as a mentor. She was notified by email by her supervisor that she would be receiving a mentor. When asked what activities she engaged in with her mentor, she shared:

We went over budgets, allotments, and instructional practices. We conducted walkthroughs, attended Professional Learning Communities meetings, observations, and conferences together. We had weekly reflections and sometimes daily. I had the option of calling him on the telephone or emailing whenever I needed to connect. We developed the type of relationship that I felt safe to share any information. We met once per week and sometimes twice per week. My mentor and I had a relationship
prior to him becoming my mentor. He was my assistant principal at my first teaching assignment (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Rodgers credited some of her survival of this job to the support and care given to her by her supervisor. She stated:

My supervisor (area superintendent) helped me a lot as well. I could always call her and ask her questions. She also came over to check on me weekly to give me encouragement. And give me different advice about what to do (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Rodgers shared that she had contact with her supervisor (area assistant superintendent for elementary schools) often. She described it as follows:

My supervisor was probably like that of a nurturing mother. She was very open and I could call her anytime. She was very hands-on my first year, just what I needed my first year. She would come over anytime I called. She was very encouraging. It was a very unique relationship that I cherished. If I had not had that open communication with my supervisor, I don’t know if I would have survived my first year (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

It should be noted that Mrs. Rodgers’ previous position was as a Title I coordinator under the direction of this same supervisor. The mentor assigned to her also worked as her interim assistant principal and assisted in helping with problem students. He was also the assistant principal of the school at her first teaching assignment. The mentor and the supervisor had built a working relationship with this novice principal prior to her principalship appointment (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
**Networking with peers.** Mrs. Rodgers attended the required general principal and cohort meetings for all principals. She was given opportunity to network and mingle with her peers during these times. Mrs. Rodgers shared that these meetings created an atmosphere of close relationships among peer groups. The meeting and trainings that she attended with her peers allowed her an opportunity to “just really, really have candid conversations about student learning and strategies,” according to Mrs. Rodgers. She also took advantage of networking with other principals in other districts when she participated in workshops and trainings outside the school district (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Rodgers confirmed that she attended training for new principals that covered operational and managerial topics. All principals attended the general principal meetings and their assigned cohorts where all their Triangle Public Schools training was provided. Mrs. Rodgers did share that she gained a lot from the training provided by the Distinguished Leadership and Practices (DLP) and the Race-to-the-Top. One had to be selected to be a part of the Distinguished Leadership and Practices. Mrs. Rodgers stated that only a few new principals were selected and she just happened to be one of them (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Meaningful Dialogue Between Novice Principal and Supporters**

Mrs. Rodgers shared that she had already developed a relationship with her mentor prior to him becoming her mentor. He was her assistant principal during her first teaching position. Therefore, the dialog between the two of them was one of trust and mutual respect. She thought that it was very helpful to have a seasoned person helping her through some difficulties by talking her through those situations. She felt open to have any conversation
with her mentor and was given permission to call or email with issues she needed him at any
time. She stated, “We developed a professional relationship that I felt like I could share
information and receive competent advice.” Mrs. Rodgers stated that they discussed budgets,
allotments, instructional practices, data, and class observations. She also said that she
received the same type of support from her peers and supervisor. Mrs. Rodgers shared that
she had “plenty of people she could lean on in the time of crisis and when she needed to have
those crucial conversations” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Socialization to the Role of Principal

Mrs. Rodgers had some difficulty in trying to be both the principal and the assistant
principal since the school she was assigned to, was not allotted an assistant principal at the
time. She had only been affiliated with schools with both. When asked to describe her first
year as a novice principal, she responded by saying:

My first year as a novice principal was very hard. I didn’t have an assistant principal.
This made it even more difficult. So I spent many, many long nights here trying to
figure out how to basically do a dual role of principal and assistant principal. I did
have a mentor that helped me a lot. I appreciate him for that because without him I
don’t think that I could have survived. I learned being an assistant principal is quite
different from being a principal. When I was an assistant principal, I was Biden and
my principal was Obama. Part of my role was to help keep everybody happy and keep
things moving for the principal. I was the mediator and spokesperson for the
principal. I would listen and explain the position of the principal to calm the storm.
But when I became Obama, I learned that I had to make decisions that everybody was not going to necessarily like (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Rodgers laughed as she thought about describing her most proud accomplishment as a novice principal:

I am proud of rebuilding the culture and climate of the school. At first I wasn’t so proud because to reach this accomplishment I was not well-liked and not seen in a favorable way. As an assistant principal, I thought of myself as a sweet person. I loved people and wanted to make them happy but as principal that’s not always possible if you do your job, especially, if you are honest and have crucial conversations to correct things (personal communication, August 15, 2015).

Perceptions of Various Form of Support

Mentor support. Mrs. Rodgers felt that her survival could also be credited to the support that she received from her mentor. She stated that it was wonderful to have someone to bounce her ideas off of and share her feelings, as well as guide her through some difficult situations and issues and give her much-needed advice. She stated, “It was nice having a seasoned person that I trusted who had experiences and who could talk me through things so that I could avoid making mistakes.” Mrs. Rodgers said there was nothing else she felt that she had missed from this mentor experience and that she did everything she desired. She only wanted one more year of mentoring (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

When asked if there was any additional support she needed in any areas, she stated that a principal induction program would have been beneficial. She said this is what she was accustomed to when she worked at her previous school system. Mrs. Rodgers stated that it
gave her the ins and outs of the district and taught her how the school district functioned. She also thought that a more systematic, formal mentor program would have proven to be more beneficial. She thought that it would be helpful to novice principals to have a series of meetings with specific monthly topics (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Supervisor support.** Mrs. Rodgers shared that her contact with her supervisor was essential to her survival. According to her, the support and the training she was allowed to participate in broadened her thinking and skills in her leadership practices. Mrs. Rodgers said she could tell that her supervisor had started to reduce the amount of support given to her by her second year in the principalship. She felt that she still needed a little more support but [she] didn’t want to say anything (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Networking support.** Mrs. Rodgers stated that she learned a lot from her district principal meetings and her cohort principal meetings. According to Mrs. Rodgers, these meetings helped her build good professional relationships. These relationships gave her someone to lean on when she needed to ask crucial questions and no one else was there to ask. Knowing that they truly understood helped make the loneliness dissipate (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Mrs. Rodgers also took advantage of networking with principals and workshop presenters outside her district for additional knowledge and support. This also enabled her to share newly found information with her colleagues within the district (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Professional development.** Mrs. Rodgers stated that she did not attend any training that was designed only for new principals. The training and staff development that she
received that seemed to impact her attitude and behavior came from Race-to-the-Top and the Distinguished Leadership and Practices. According to Mrs. Rodgers, “It helped to shape my leadership practices” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Summary of the Findings**

This section restates the research questions that guided the study and summarizes findings from the data analysis of this research study.

**Research Question 1.** How were the six novice principals supported during their first, second, or third year in the principalship?

*Different forms of leadership support for novice principals.* The novice principals in this study received a variety of support through a one-year, unstructured mentoring program. Each novice principal received leadership support in different forms in the following ways: mentoring support, supervisor support, opportunity to network with peers, and professional development.

*Mentoring support.* All six principals were assigned and notified by their supervisor by telephone or email that they would be receiving a mentor (Romo, Newton, Vick, Smith, and Rodgers) except for one. Mrs. Manning’s mentor showed up at the door and announced himself as being her mentor. Everyone appeared to be happy about receiving a seasoned or experienced person for support. They did not spend time being concerned about the mentor selection criteria or the person’s formal training as a mentor or coach. None of them knew how the mentors were selected, how they were matched or if the mentors had any formal training as a mentor. They were all told that the mentor was a successful retired principal. Four of the mentors (for Romo, Newton, Vick, and Smith) were from another school district
and the other two mentors (for Manning and Rodgers) were from Triangle Public Schools. Manning and Rodgers knew their mentor. Rodgers’s mentor had recently served as her interim assistant principal and had been her assistant principal during her first teaching position. Rodgers had never worked with her mentor. She knew him as a colleague.

There was no evidence of any plan of action for each mentor to follow. They were expected to meet with their novice principal and serve their needs no matter what their needs were. The novice principals and their mentors were engaged in the following activities together: walkthroughs, daily debriefings, honest feedback, observations, conferences with teachers and parents, and observation of the principal in meetings (staff development, Professional Learning Communities, faculty meetings).

There were some inconsistencies in the amount of time and the number of days the mentors served the novice principals shown in Table 4.2. It was not clear what the criteria were for determining how many days or how much time each novice principal was given. The amount of time and the number of days were distributed by the supervisor (area assistant superintendent of elementary schools). The novice principal gave no indication that there was a time sheet to monitor the days or time the mentor was present. One could only assume that the neediest person received the most time and the most days of service; however, there were no data to back that assumption.
Table 4.2

*Mentor Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>Received</th>
<th># of days/wk</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vick</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Smith</em></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Manning</em></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>0.5/month</td>
<td>2-3 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodgers</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Assigned Race to the Top mentor/coach first year

**Supervisor support.** All of the novice principals had a good rapport with their supervisor (area assistant superintendent) and stated that she had an open door policy. Although she was approachable, she only did one to two face-to-face visits with Romo, Newton, Vick, Smith, and Manning during the school year. Vick and Manning did not find her visit beneficial their first year. Her visits mainly involved mid-year and final observations. The novice principals stated that this might have been the case because she inherited the entire fleet of elementary schools, which consisted of over 30 schools. Manning made note that she came to do a walkthrough because a new instructional program was being unveiled at her school. They all agreed that she made herself available to them through principal and cohort meetings. She was always a telephone or email away. She would always respond to their needs. Sometimes her assigned staff would do walkthroughs, but the
principal would not always receive feedback. The novice principals valued and wanted her
input. Mrs. Rodgers referred to her as being like a “nurturing mom” and credited her survival
as a first year principal to her supervisor. The supervisor made weekly visits to her school
and always encouraged her (personal communication, August 15, 2014). Mrs. Rodgers and
Mrs. Smith both were under the supervisors’ leadership in the central office as Title I
specialists. Mrs. Smith did not describe her relationship in the same manner as Mrs. Rodgers.
She stated that she did not get any special favors because she had been a part of the
supervisor’s central office team.

The supervisor provided several opportunities for all principals to network and build
professional relationships during the principal and cohort meetings. She encouraged them to
help each other through difficult times and situations. The supervisor provided training at
every meeting based on the district goals and principals’ needs.

**Networking with peers.** All novice principals were given the opportunity to engage in
networking with their peers during the principal and cohort meetings. Mrs. Newton stated
that the system was structured in a manner that enabled principals to build relationships with
other principals. She said, “The networking was almost like an unspoken establishment that
existed that we all depended on. We were able to lean on each other for support as well as
bounce ideas off each other” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

**Professional development.** Novice principals were engaged in various kinds of staff
development. Some of the novice principals (Romo, Newton, Smith, Manning, and Rodgers)
were involved in training for new principals. Some of the topics that were covered dealt with
school budgets, operational and logistical trainings, evaluations, and human resources
(Romo, Newton, Smith, Manning, and Rodgers). Manning and Rodgers were engaged in training provided by the state from Race-to-the-Top and the Distinguished Leadership Academy. Romo, Manning and Rodgers attended training provided by the High Five Consortium. All staff development outside the school district was approved and supported by their supervisor. The principals (Manning and Rodgers) whose schools were labeled as Race-to-the-Top schools were required to attend the trainings.

Table 4.3

*Staff Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Development</th>
<th>District Meetings/Training</th>
<th>Training for New Principals only</th>
<th>Cohort Meetings &amp; Training</th>
<th>State Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romo</td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
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</table>

*Meaningful dialogue between novice principals and supporters.* Communication was the key to building professional relationships between mentors and novice principals and between supervisors and novice principals. The mentor teams that seemed to gain the most out of their relationships were those who had two-way communication and various ways to communicate (face-to-face, telephone, email). These teams usually stayed in constant communication, even after hours. The mentor was always available for the novice principal.
Romo stated, “We had a wealth of conversations.” She shared that “it helped her to be able to bounce ideas off others and to have someone to talk things over with” (personal communication, August 20, 2014). All the novice principals engaged in a wealth of conversations with their mentors, with the exception of Manning.

The communication between the novice principals and their supervisor was considered good. She had an open door relationship with each of them, which meant she was always available to them when they needed her. Most of her communication was by telephone, during monthly meetings, and through emails. All novice principals agreed that when you contacted the supervisor, she would respond. Rodgers received the most communication with her supervisor onsite and during principal and cohort meetings, while the others received minimal contact. The novice principals did not receive the same number of visits from the supervisor. Rodgers received weekly visits while the others received very few visits (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

**Socialization to the principal role.** Most of the novice principals had some difficulty transitioning into the role of the principal. It was a challenge for Newton because she returned to her home school district to the same school where she had served as the assistant principal. She said, “I was no longer treated the same way after my return to the district as principal.” She had to adjust to her new situation. Others (Romo, Vick, Smith, Manning, and Rodgers) have had difficulty trying to hold other roles other than that of the principal. They had difficulty trusting others to take the lead role and relinquishing some of their duties and powers. When the principals failed to trust others to assume the leadership role, principals had an overload of tasks or duties to complete. These practices contributed to principals
having to wear additional hats needlessly. Vick admitted that she spent a lot of time “trying to navigate and figure out [her] role as a principal.” She stated that she had “a lot of learning curves that first year.” She also shared:

I would say my most challenging time during my first year was trying to determine my role as a principal, making the transition from assistant principal to principal, and expecting teachers to be cloned in my teaching image (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Smith found transitioning from the central office to the principalship was quite different from her expectations. She discussed the many roles that came with the job. She said, “There was never enough time in the day to take care of all the tasks.” She was guilty of “placing too much emphasis on matters that could be handled by others” (personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Research Question 2. How did the novice principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

Mentor support. All the novice principals felt that having a mentor was most helpful and contributed to their success and survival. Romo felt as if she had been thrown into the principalship until she received her mentor. Rodgers stated that “it was wonderful to have someone to bounce ideas off of, share her feelings, and guide her through some difficult situations.” These were the sentiments of all the novice principals. All the novice principals (Romo, Newton, Vick, Smith, and Rodgers) had a good mentor experience with the exception of one (Manning). Manning stated:
I don’t think that I got what I needed from my mentor. Maybe if the mentor had been more visible and present in my building, he could have seen some things that I didn’t necessarily see. I felt that the mentor was suppose to be a successful principal who was suppose to have more insight than myself and offer me something more substantial (personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Manning said that although her experience was not what she needed it to be, she still believed in mentor support—not just for the new principal but for all principals.

For Romo, the missing link to this program was not using the experiences of the novice principals involved in this mentoring support program as a tool to build a better and stronger program. They all agreed that there needed to be a two-to-three-year structured and systematic program that mentors needed to be assigned as soon as possible, and that mentors should be skilled and trained. The program should also include a developed system to match mentor and novice principal, criteria for the selection of mentors, district team building meeting for all mentors and novice principals, and equal mentor support.

**Supervisor support.** All of the novice principals agreed that the supervisor was supportive with her open door policy and provided principals with training and time to network. Although they all knew the number of elementary schools that she was responsible for, they all wished for more face-to-face interaction and on-site visitations with their supervisor—at least three times per year not including the evaluation. They all felt that she had something valuable to offer to them such as her input, feedback, and suggestions. Manning stated, “As a novice principal, sometimes you need a little bit more interaction with your supervisor” (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
**Networking support.** The novice principals were very appreciative of the time allotted for them to be able to network with their peers. They found that to be one of the most beneficial uses of time. It helped to dissipate the feeling of loneliness, while giving principals someone to lean on during difficult times. Novice principals appeared to gain a lot from the sharing of ideas and resources. The intimate small group of the principal cohort afforded the new principal an opportunity to feel comfortable while sharing.

**Professional development.** Smith felt that the training for new principals was beneficial but sometimes overwhelming because it was too much information given at one setting. She stated, “There were key pieces of each workshop or training that I took away [because] it was a lot of information [so] I had to pick and choose what to absorb” (personal communication, August, 14, 2014). The training given to the new principals did not change the attitudes or behavior as result of participation because all of them had some experience with the topics as an assistant principal. The training provided by Race-to-the-Top, the Distinguished Leadership Academy, and the High Five Consortium changed the attitudes and behaviors of the novice principals because the topics dealt with transformational leadership, ownership of the building as leaders, and school culture. Regarding the training from Race to the Top, Manning stated the following:

> It geared me to start viewing things globally when trying to move a whole unit. It helped me with my tunnel vision. I started thinking in a more holistic manner. I had started looking at how one decision could affect the many facets of the organization or how my reaction would affect the masses (personal communication, August 15, 2014).
The supervisor offered each novice principal additional staff development at the principal and cohort meetings that dealt with the district goals and the needs of its principals. The cohort meetings enabled principals to network with each other, have relevant trainings, have crucial conversations with their peers, and do group walkthroughs at each other’s schools and share their observations.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the results of this qualitative, single-case research study. The study yielded context-rich descriptions and explanations regarding the perceptions of a group of principals about the support they had received during their first three years in the role of principal. The findings of the study were organized and presented according to the principal participants’ responses to each of the research questions that guided the study. Based on the responses of the interviewees, information related to four major themes was presented: (a) leadership support in different forms; (b) meaningful dialogue between novice principal and supporters; (c) the clarification of, and socialization into, the role of principal; and (d) perceptions of various forms of support. Responses gathered from the group of novice principals followed the two qualitative questions. Chapter 5 will discuss the major findings of this research study, relate the findings to previous research, and present the implications of the findings; in conclusion, the chapter will make recommendation for further research.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This qualitative single-case study investigated the perceptions of a group of elementary novice principals who participated in a one-year, unstructured, pilot principal mentoring program. The researcher investigated how well the program supported the needs of each novice principal. The study afforded the novice principals an opportunity to give their authentic word regarding their experiences and their perception of the support received during their participation in the program. The intent of the study was to address the lack of a systematic, comprehensive support program for novice principals amidst a national shortage of highly qualified school leaders.

The research questions guiding this qualitative single-case study were the following:

1. How were the novice principals supported during their first, second, or third year in the principalship?

2. How did the novice principals perceive the support they received within the first three years?

To answer these questions and understand the participants’ experiences and perceptions, the researcher collected data through a pre-interview survey, semi-structured interviews, and written responses. In Chapter 4, the findings were presented in terms of the two research questions. This chapter will analyze and interpret the findings, discuss the implications of the findings, and propose recommendations for future research.
The findings of this study do affirm the need to support novice principals during their first three years in the principalship; however, many of the study’s findings were unexpected. In particular, traditional mentoring was found to be less crucial than other forms of support that novice principals received. The data analysis revealed that a variety of support systems were important in addition to mentors, including supervisor support, peer network support, and professional development opportunities. Based on this finding, the initial problem with which this study began (the need for a research-based formal mentoring program in the Triangle School District) may be redefined as a need for interrelated support systems for novice principals. Indeed, to whatever extent each principal participant had access to such a support system, that principal was aided in survival and success. Two key features of the effective support system were discovered in this study: meaningful dialogue with supporters and proper socialization into the role of principal. Both the meaningful dialogue and the role socialization could occur through coaching (rather than mentoring per se) and were perceived as most effective when continued into the second and third year of the principalship. The next section discusses each of these conclusions in greater depth.

**Different Forms of Leadership Support for Novice Principals**

Like the novice principals referred to in the literature review for this study, the principal participants in this study received different types of support and were helped in a variety of ways (Fourtenbary, 2008). The findings revealed that the novice principals received mentoring, supervisory, networking, and professional development support.

**Mentor support.** The Carnegie Foundation study indicated that the most effective way to prepare and support principals in their leadership careers was to provide a mentoring
program (Malone, 2002). Consistent with the literature, the study found that participants had a general acceptance of the mentor program and felt that it was beneficial in the areas of reflection, support, collegiality, empathy, and encouragement (Lashway, 2002). They tended to welcome the support from their mentors, much like their counterparts did in previous studies (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The mentor support appeared to aid in the reduction of frustration in completing administrative tasks. Having easy and immediate accessibility to their mentors’ assistance enabled them to complete daily tasks with confidence and meet the next challenge without being bogged down with the nuts and bolts of running a school. Most of the mentors worked beyond the hours allotted to them by the district to assist their mentee with the exception of one. The mentee had access to his or her mentor at all times through text, email, and telephone. Mentors sometimes made extra visits to schools if needed. It also afforded them the opportunity to empower teachers to be the lead person.

Mentors provided their novice principals with the comfort of having a person available to bounce ideas off of. They sometimes just listened and provided a much-needed shoulder to cry on. When faced with difficult issues such as personnel disagreements or angry parents, having their mentor provided them with someone to call to vent their frustration or obtain feedback on how well the situation was handled. Mentors were also essential in helping the novice principals with the navigation of school politics involving personnel, parents, board members, and community partners. Like many of their colleagues included in the literature reviewed for this study, the majority of the participating principals (except one) liked having mentors and felt supported by them (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006).
The support they received from their mentors assisted with the reduction of stress and isolation and helped the novice principals to be more effective in their job.

According to some of the mentees, the mentors helped them by taking on a coaching role. This entailed directing the mentee toward some end result but giving the mentee the option of choosing how to get there, all while strategically assessing and monitoring the progress and giving advice for effectiveness and efficiency. The coaching mentors may have tried to stay impartial and focused on improvement in behavior but were not always consistent in this behavior. Based on the findings, it appeared that the roles of the mentor changed, sometimes resembling that of a coach and sometimes a formal mentor. It was difficult to differentiate between the two based on the practices described in the data.

Despite the evident benefits of the mentoring program, and although mentoring support did play some role in the support of novice principals, the findings indicate that mentoring was not the only—and perhaps not even the most important—support system that contributed to the success and survival of these principals. The lack of understanding, preparation, and organization of building an effective mentoring program may have hampered its effectiveness. There were other interrelated supports that took on the resemblance of mentoring practices that enhanced the support received; these will be discussed in later sections.

**Supervisor support.** The findings indicated that the culture of support for novice principals could extend beyond relationships with assigned mentors; district leaders could assume the roles of model, mentor, and coach for the beginning principal. This entails being available, accessible, and willing to offer advice, counsel, and support in a non-judgmental
and non-critical manner. This culture of support could begin with the superintendent and extend to the district office administrators and experienced principals. This type of support expands beyond the traditional system of mentoring by challenging and engaging the supervisor to be more involved and viable in mentoring/coaching practices to support the novice principals.

Although all of the participants believed that supervisors’ mentorship and coaching could have been helpful, only one of them was satisfied with the level of support she received from her supervisor. The other principal participants in this study felt very strongly that having more face-to-face individual on-site visits from their supervisors (assistant superintendent of elementary schools) would have been very beneficial. They felt that the supervisor’s input, suggestions, and observations regarding their school would have been valuable. The one principal participant who felt that she had received enough on-site visits described the supervisor as a “nurturing mother” (personal communication of Mrs. Rodgers, August 15, 2014). Two participants of the study saw her visits as too short and irrelevant during their first year. They all agreed that she did an excellent job providing additional support in the principal and cohort meetings, which involved providing them with networking opportunities and receiving valuable professional development.

**Networking support.** Although peer networks were not an explicit subject of this study, the participants did, like principals in other research studies, often feel like isolated links in the chain of command, caught somewhere between students, teachers, parents, and the district office (Zellner, Ward, McNamara, Gideon, Camacho, & Edgewood, 2002). Surrounded and even overwhelmed by all the people clamoring for their attention, the
principals nevertheless often felt extremely lonely. They were starved for the opportunity to talk openly and honestly about what their life was really like. In this dissertation study, principals expressed becoming allies and guides for each other through their networking support systems. Principals created conversations and helped each other through reflection and dialogue. In that way, they found their own individual pathway to effective leadership.

All participating principals were given opportunities to network with their colleagues during principal and cohort meetings. They shared that it helped to dissipate the loneliness and gain an additional resource. Zeller et al. (2002) research confirmed this practice of principals supporting principals. Indeed, research indicates that mentoring may aid novice principals in establishing a network of peers and experienced professionals who can provide support and guidance (Barnett, 1995), which may in turn build the new principal’s confidence and competence in his or her new occupation.

In this study, the findings revealed that the supervisor played more of a role than the assigned mentor in establishing the novice’s network with both experienced and novice professionals through the cohort and principal meetings. The assigned mentors did attend some of the meetings when allowed by the district, but according to the mentees, they only did so as observers and supporters of the novice principals. One principal participant (Newton) said, “The networking was almost like an unspoken establishment that existed that we all depended on. We were able to lean on each other for support as well as bounce ideas off each other” (personal communication, August 14, 2014). They all utilized their peers to lean on and get through difficult times. Malone (2000) noted that when principals were asked to identify a vital component of their survival in the principalship, they most often identified
other school leaders as their primary source in helping them become good school leaders. All
the participants of this study agreed with this research, expressing that their mentor network
experiences played a vital role in their survival and success.

One participant credited her survival to her relationship with her colleagues and with
other retired principals, whom she adopted as her mentors on her own initiative, due to her
unsuccessful experiences with her assigned mentor. (She referred to the support as mentoring
or mentor-adopting, though the support may also be described as coaching.) The fact that this
participant had to reach out to other retired principals for assistance makes one question how
and if the mentors were being monitored or held accountable for their performance in
assisting their mentee adequately. As stated earlier, this one-year program was called a
mentoring program but lack some key criteria for being considered an effective mentoring
program.

**Professional development.** The results of this study indicated that the novice
principals needed time away from the pressures of the job to collaborate with other principals
from other school districts about how to build a positive culture at their schools, analyze data,
and develop relationships with their staff, parents, and community members. Professional
organizations such as NCPAPA, Race-to-the-Top, and Distinguished Leadership and
Practices for administrators played an important role in providing this time for professional
development and collaboration. Along with opportunities to collaborate with other principals
within their district during principal and cohort meetings, novice principals were given time
to reflect and problem-solve about district-specific issues such as building professional
relationships, budget reductions, and implementing district-wide initiatives related to
curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Fourtenbary, 2008). Despite the benefits of such experiences, all novice principals and mentors were not given time to meet exclusively with other beginning principals within their district to share and have crucial conversations. They tended to bond on their own time in fragmented groups rather than all together.

In addition to getting support with the nuts and bolts of the administrative tasks of the principalship, novice principals also used these professional development opportunities to get help integrating and applying the theory learned in their credentialing programs and their daily work (Hertting, 2000). Research suggests “that school leaders, throughout all stages of their career, can benefit from a mentoring system in which seasoned leaders help the [novice principal] place theory and practice in the context of experience” (Malone, 2001, p. 2). Research studies show that graduate training alone does not translate into excellently led schools. One principal participant (Manning) made a brief reference about using the information she acquired from her graduate program to assist in her leadership role but there was no evidence of her assigned mentor (or her adopted mentor) working with her to place theory and practice in the context of experience. Therefore, it was not documented in the findings. Mentors were sometimes allowed and invited to join their mentees in professional development trainings. This was seen as being beneficial to the mentee and mentor, although the mentor’s presence did not appear to be necessary for the mentee to benefit from the training.

**Meaningful Dialogue between Novice Principal and Supporters**

All the principal participants agreed that they valued the communication that they had with their mentors as well as with their peers and supervisors. They all felt that it boosted
their confidence and competency to have a seasoned principal, peers, and supervisor giving them support and communicating with them on a daily basis if needed. It also reduced their feeling of isolation just to have someone to listen to their concerns and give them feedback on situations. They also valued and enjoyed having access to their mentor even after hours. They all, except one, took advantage of the opportunity. All of the participating principals in this study, with the exception of one, acknowledged the importance of communicating with their mentors, peers, and supervisor in order to be productive school administrators. One of the principal participants acknowledged that she and her mentor were not a proper fit because her mentor only met with her two to three hours on a designated day twice per month and had minimal interaction, which hindered their communication.

**Socialization to the Principal Role**

The findings of this study corroborated other research that indicates that the role of the principal has changed drastically over the past 15 years (Levine, 2005). The job of the principal “has become more difficult and expectations of the job have become more ambitious” (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001, p.7). The literature is explicit about the constant stress that principals experience. School reform efforts have had a direct impact on the stress felt by principals with increased demands and heightened accountability pressure (Whitaker, 2001). These new roles and pressures have overwhelmed principals, especially newcomers to the role of the principalship. The principal participants voiced their concerns about not having enough time in the day to address all of the responsibilities of the job. They were all confused about their role as principals as well as the many hats they were expected to wear.
It is in this context that the conceptual framework of this study, the theory of role socialization, is significant. Socialization theory led to the development of the concept of developmental stages through which principals pass as they become socialized to their new roles (Lovely, 2004b). Although socialization was not explicitly referred to in the research questions for this study, the novice principals did speak indirectly about the stages of role socialization. As shown in Figure 1, the novice principals in this study struggled as they transitioned into their new roles. During their first year, all of the principal participants in this study struggled in the early stages of survival and control. At the survival stage, the individuals experienced initial panic and shock at the weight of their responsibilities as principals (Lovely, 2004b). One of the participants shared how she expected someone to meet and greet her, take her on a tour, and share information about the school. Instead, she was just given the keys and left to figure everything out herself, which left her in shock. Other participants expressed similar challenges.

Each principal had to move quickly from being an outsider at his or her school to becoming a trusted leader and colleague who carried the school’s vision. They had to learn how to abandon their previous roles of teacher or assistant principal to take up the mantle of being the principal by using their social behaviors to assist in moving through the role of stranger, complex learner, researcher, and reflector as displayed in Figure 1 (Wardlow, 2008). Like most assistant principals who assume the role of principal, the principal participants of this study originally thought because they held the assistant principal position that they had all the skills necessary to be successful as a principal. This is especially true if they were successful assistant principals and teachers. They sometimes make assumptions
and develop practices without taking the time to learn the cultural dynamics of their school and district which can sometimes be detrimental to themselves and the organization.

For all the principal participants, the support they received from various sources assisted them in growing beyond the survival and control stage. The participants seemed to be on their way to becoming insiders at their schools. The support they received from their mentors, networks, and professional development opportunities helped them to pass through the initial stages rather quickly so that they could move on to the stage of stability, where “frustrations become routine and management-related task were handled effectively and efficiently” (Villani, 2006, p. 18). The support that the principal participants received helped them to focus on their long-range goals. They all shared stories about mistakes and challenges they faced their first year, but fortunately they also were able to share stories about how they recovered from those challenges and mistakes and were able to move forward to meet new challenges and be accepted in their organizations as insiders. As these findings show, it is important to consider the process of role socialization when providing support to novice principals (Ryland, 2005).

As the findings of this study indicated, the participating principals agreed that there needed to be a two-to-three year structured systematic mentoring/coaching program in place to support the needs of the novice principal. One of the principal participants stated that during the first year of the principalship, the new leader does not always know what to ask or what he/she really needs help with. The first year is the most difficult because of the learning curve. The new leader of the school is trying to learn as he/she is doing the job but not always understanding the job. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) reported positive findings from
assessments of the two-year Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction (IAMI) program. Most participants were satisfied with the program, and they stressed the importance of support and reflective conversation in helping them to integrate into their new role. The results of this study of the Triangle School District indicated that a two-year program may be beneficial in supporting novice principals. No other research was found to confirm the impact a two-to-three year program would have on the success and survival of a novice principal, but it does seem evident that these longer programs would provide more time for the novice principal to become more fully socialized into the role of principal.

Implications for Practice

This study originated when Triangle Public Schools, experiencing a surge in the retirement of veteran principals, hired many novice principals at once who then struggled to transition into their new roles as principals. The assistant superintendent of elementary schools recognized that the new principals under her leadership needed additional one-on-one support, so she compiled a list of successful retired principals to serve, to use her term, as “mentors.” The assistant superintendent simply met with each prospective mentor, shared expectations, and make mentor–mentee assignments. Her objective was to give her new principals some immediate and much needed support; the program was developed quickly, with little preparation, funding, or research into mentoring program best practices. Given this context, the practical significance of this dissertation study is that it could possibly give the district some feedback on and insight into the perceptions of the principals who participated in the mentoring program. The findings could inform the improvement of the existing
program or the development of future support systems for new principals in the Triangle Public Schools.

While the original intent of this qualitative single-case study was to investigate the perceptions of a group of elementary novice principals regarding the mentoring program, the study produced unexpected findings that led to a shift in focus to other forms of support. The data revealed that other support systems in addition to mentoring may have contributed to and influenced the success and survival of novice principals. The findings from this study have implications for principals, school districts, university programs, and state departments of education.

**Implications for principals.** The findings of this study suggested that although mentoring could be a beneficial practice for novice principals, so could other support systems identified in the study, such as networking peer support, supervisor support, and professional development support. The cohort and principal meetings provided the time for networking, small group meetings, and professional development. These support systems appeared to be most effective for the novice principals and thus should be continued.

In addition, principals need to continue to avail themselves of the resources at hand, such as the non-traditional, unconventional systems of mentoring and coaching discovered in this study. All of the principal participants expressed the desire for more contact and coaching from their supervisors; they all valued their supervisors’ skills, expertise, and input. They felt that the supervisor’s visits were invaluable. Although there were scheduling and workload constraints due to the high number of elementary schools to be served, the principal participants felt that newcomers needed one-on-one visits from their supervisor to
set the tone and give clear district directions. Principals and supervisors should make an effort to carve out time to meet at least three times per year in addition to their evaluation visit. Another unconventional system of support was discovered and implemented by a principal participant when her mentor experience was not successful: she adopted a mentor from a pool of retired principals who were willing to volunteer their services to support a new principal. This participant reported a positive experience with this self-selected mentor.

Implications for school districts. This study indicated that the principals of the district who participated in the interviews and the survey were very interested in and opens to the prospect of the district adopting and committing to providing a research-based, structured, systematic support system for all principals. Thus, the district might find it beneficial to develop and implement a more effective and successful three-year mentoring or coaching model for newcomers. Research suggests that districts now have other non-traditional, cost-effective methods of mentoring, such as virtual mentoring and/or e-mentoring, to utilize in giving support to newcomers to the profession and district. This dissertation study also discovered other non-traditional, unconventional, and cost-effective ways to render support to novice principals, such as utilizing the supervisor as a coach, adopting a mentor from a pool of volunteer retirees, and expanding the use of peer networking.

Implications for universities. The findings suggest that universities’ educational administration programs need to make changes to reflect today’s school accountability standards. The managerial-style leadership of the past is often ineffective in bringing about improved student learning. Principals must have the instructional background to be able to
lead teachers through school improvement efforts. Many university programs have not adapted to the changing needs of today’s future administrators. Fusarelli (2008) reminded us that “the changing demographics, especially when coupled with the push for high-stakes standardized tests and the resulting racial and socioeconomic status achievement gap, necessitate a rethinking of the way universities prepare school leaders” (p. 5). In addition, universities should consider forming partnerships with local school systems and assist in the recommendation, planning, and implementation of systematic, research-based support programs for novice principals. Universities are at the heart of education research, and school districts have a wealth of situations waiting to be researched and studied. Partnerships with local school systems would have the added benefit of enabling the universities to continue to track the progress of their alumni students.

**Implications for state departments of education.** The findings in this study have further implications for state departments of education, which can provide ongoing professional development to all novice principals, not only to those who are principals of schools that qualify for Race-to-the-Top funding or that are selected for the Distinguished Leadership and Practices for Administrators. The professional development on transformational leadership, school culture, and bringing about changes in your building are essential trainings for all beginning principals, whether or not the school is considered high-risk. The state department of education has the same requirements for all school, so it stands to reason that the state should consider finding a way to provide sufficient and appropriate training to strengthen the leadership of the schools’ newest leaders.
Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings of this study on how novice principals were supported and perceived that support, the following further research is recommended:

1. Study of peer networks as a support system.

2. Study of non-traditional approaches to mentoring, such as e-mentoring or virtual mentoring, in order to determine these approaches’ cost-effectiveness and their overall effectiveness for improving novice principals’ leadership skills.

3. Comparative study of the perceptions of different demographic groups who participated in the one-year pilot mentoring program.

4. Study of how socialization theory correlates to principals’ support systems.

5. Study on the impact and importance of second and third year mentoring/coaching for principals.

6. Study on how to develop, implement, monitor, evaluate, and fund an effective mentoring or coaching program for novice principals.

7. Study on mentoring/coaching veteran principals, a group whose needs are often neglected.

Conclusion

Without question, the job of a principal is multi-faceted and extremely demanding. Principals in general, and especially novice principals, need a variety of supports to help them on their way to success. This single-case study afforded a group of novice principals an opportunity to use their authentic words to describe their experiences and their perceptions regarding the support received during their participation in a one-year, unstructured
mentoring program. The support that the novice principal participants received from various sources seemed in general to be aligned with their needs, although the level of support varied by principal. Sergiovanni (1992) observed that the type and quality of support systems that are provided to novice principal determines, for better or worse, the kinds of principals we have, which in turn determines, for better or worse, the quality of our schools. With this observation in mind, school districts, university educational leadership programs, and principals themselves must work to create the necessary support systems that will enable novice principals to move through the process of role socialization, from bewildered newcomer to seasoned leader.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Pre-Interview Survey

Directions: Please answer the following questions by circling your response or writing in the provided space.

Name: _____________________________ School: ___________________ Date: _____________

1. What is the highest degree earned:
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - PhD/EdD
   - Other: ______
   Field of study: ________________

2. What is your age:
   - 20-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60-69

3. What is your gender? Female or Male

4. What is your race/ethnicity?
   - Black/African American
   - American Indian
   - Asian
   - Filipino
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   - White
   - Two or more races
   - Decline to State
   - Other: ____________

5. Number of years teaching: ______
6. Number of years as an administrator: ______
7. Current site and district: ______________________________
8. Administrative positions held: ______________________________
9. Please list any other quasi-administrative or leadership roles or duties:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

10. Did you participate in any formal training or induction program specifically designed for beginning principals?  Yes or No
If yes, please list the program (s). ________________________________

11. Did you have an assigned mentor? Yes or No
   If yes, how often did you meet? ________________________________
   What days did you meet? ________________________________
   What time did you meet? ________________________________
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form for Research

Title of Study: The Effectiveness of Principal Mentoring Programs for Novice Principals

Principal Investigator: Andrea D. Carroll    Faculty Chair: Lance Fusarelli

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study conducted by Andrea D. Carroll, an Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate from North Carolina State University, North Carolina. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those who participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher named above.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of study is to describe the perception of novice principals about the support they received during their first three years and how the program could be improved upon. The study will describe the types of support received and the novice principals’ perceptions of that support. The study will ask participants to describe the activities that they believed to be most effective in helping them during the first three years of the elementary school principalship.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will need to do the following:

- Complete Pre-interview Survey requesting information about you, your educational experience and training.
- Participate in an interview conducted by the researcher lasting 45 minutes to an hour at a private location convenient for you.
- The interview will be audiotaped only with your permission. If you don’t wish to be audiotaped, the researcher will take handwritten notes to create a transcript.
- Participant will review the transcript of the interview for accuracy and discuss the review with the researcher either by phone or in person at a location and time convenient for you.
• Respond to one email prompt asking you to reflect on your first year as a principal. The prompt will be sent to you after you have met with the researcher to discuss the interview.
• Provide the researcher with agendas or handouts from any induction training or mentor /mentee meetings in which you participated.

RISKS
There are no physical risks to participating in this study. Potential risks, discomforts or inconveniences include intrusion into your personal and professional life; concerns about confidentiality and embarrassment and psychological stress. In order to minimize intrusion to your personal and professional life, the interview will be limited to one and half hours and held at a time and location convenient for you. The review of the transcript may be conducted by phone or in person, whichever is convenient for you. Response to the email prompt will be at your convenience in terms of length and time. It is estimated that the total time commitment for participation in this study is one hour or less. Regarding concerns of confidentiality, all identifying information about you, your school, and your school district will be removed from the interview transcriptions and the final research dissertation through the use of pseudonyms. If you experience any embarrassment, stress or discomfort while participating in the Pre-interview Survey, the interview, the interview review, the email prompt, and while collecting the agendas or handouts, you may stop at any time. You may decline to answer any questions during the Pre-interview Survey, interview or email prompt, or decline to provide any of the documents or materials requested by the researcher.

BENEFITS
I hope that participation in this study may provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your first three years as a principal. Potential benefits to society include providing information to school district officials or educational policy makers as they design effective support programs for beginning principals.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Pseudonyms will be used for your name, the name of your school and the name of your school district. The researcher will not use your data for any purposes other than for this research study. You have the right to review the audiotape of the interview and the interview transcript, the documents collected and your response to the email prompt. All research records will be kept on a password-protected computer in the researcher’s home. Only the researcher and her dissertation chair will have access to the records. The files will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

COMPENSATION
For participating in this study you will receive a $25 gift card to Nantucket or Cheesecake Factory upon completion of the survey, interview, and transcript review, email prompt, and
document collection. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will not receive any compensation for partial completion of the study.

QUESTIONS REGARDING RESEARCH
If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures, you may contact the researcher, Andrea D. Carroll, at 919-699-0371.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant is research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. David Kaber, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-3086) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-513-2148)

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time.

Name of Subject (Print) ___________________________
Subject’s Signature __________________________ Date: ______________

PERMISSION TO AUDIO-TAPE THE INTERVIEW
I give my consent for the researcher to audiotape the interview.

Signature of Subject: _______________________________________

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR
In my judgment, the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of the Investigator: ____________________________
APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Introduction

The interview will consist of eight open-ended questions about your experiences and should take 45 minutes to an hour. During the interview, notes will be taken and follow-up questions will be asked based on your answers. At the end of the interview, you will be given the opportunity to add any details you would like to contribute. Afterwards, you will have the opportunity to review a transcript of the interview, in order to verify that I have accurately transcribed your answers. All notes and recordings will be confidential and private. Do I have your permission to record the interview? Do you have any questions?

Body of the Interview

1. Tell me about your experience as an educator.
   Were you a classroom teacher? If so, how long, and at what levels or in what subject areas? Why did you become an elementary school principal? What was your administrative experience prior to becoming a principal?

2. Tell me about your first year as a Triangle Public School principal.
   Describe something you are most proud of. Did any support or training you received contribute to this success? If so, how? Describe an event or program that presented a challenge to you. Did any support or training you received help you to meet this challenge? If so, how?

3. Did you attend any workshops or professional development for new principals, only? If so, name the type of professional development or workshops? Do you recall any of the content of these workshops? If so, what do you remember? Did these workshops assist you in your work as a new principal? If so, how? Did your attitude or behavior change as a result of your participation in these workshops?

4. Did your district provide any support during your first years? Were you assigned a mentor/coach? If so, how was your mentor assigned to you? Was your mentor formally trained as a mentor or a successful retired principal from the district? What activities did you and your mentor/coach do together? How often did you meet? How did you communicate? What kinds of topics did you discuss in your meetings?
Who initiated the contact? You or your mentor?
Was your work with the mentor helpful to you? If so, how? If not, why?
What activities would you have liked to have done with your mentor?
Did you have contact with your supervisor during the first three years?
If so, how would you describe the contact with your supervisor?
Was the contact with your supervisor helpful to you as a novice principal?
If so, how? If not, what would you have been helpful to you?

5. When you look back on the training and support that you received as a new principal, what and which of these were most helpful during your first three years?

6. Was there anything missing from the support and training you received?
   Tell me what would have helped you in your work?
   Tell me what support and/or training do you wish you had received?

7. What are three things that you wish someone had told you about the job of a principal before you got the job?

8. What metaphor describes your first three years as a principal?

9. Tell me how you would improve the mentoring program that gave you support your first three years of your principalship?

**Summary and Closure**
Is there anything else that you would like to add that I didn’t ask you about?

Thank you for your time. I will contact you in a few weeks after I have transcribed the interview I’d like for you to review your responses to the interview questions. Would you be willing to review the interview transcript so that I can be sure that I accurately captured your thoughts? May I contact you via email if I have any follow-up questions?
APPENDIX D

Novice Principals’ Metaphors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novice Principals' Metaphors</th>
<th>Metaphors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romo</td>
<td>My principalship was like navigating a ship on icy waters. You must keep the destination in mind because it makes the difference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>My principalship was like a beast.</td>
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<td>Vick</td>
<td>My principalship was like sinking or swimming. The support was there but the support was not in the water with you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>My principalship was like fine wine. It keeps getting better with time.</td>
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<td>Manning</td>
<td>My principalship was like a whirlwind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rodgers</td>
<td>My principalship was like a tornado.</td>
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APPENDIX E

Principal Needs Assessment Survey

Are you:
○ ☐ Male
○ ☐ Female

Were you a participant of a formal or informal mentoring program?
○ ☐ Yes, formal
○ ☐ No, formal
○ ☐ Yes, informal
○ ☐ No, informal
○ ☐ No Support
○ ☐ Other: ______________________

How many hours per week did you meet or consult with your mentor?
(Answer this item if the answer to the previous question was YES)

Did you participate in a cohort in your principal preparation program?
○ ☐ Yes
○ ☐ No

What degree did you earn in order to be licensed as a principal?

Institution attended to earn this degree?

Year of graduation with this degree?

How many years were there between completion of your principal licensure program and the time that you became a principal?

Previous position prior to principalship?
○ ☐ Teacher
○ ☐ Assistant Principal
○ ☐ Central Office Staff
○ ☐ Other: ______________________

Please rate your confidence level in each of the questions

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<td>are you in your ability to provide helpful feedback to teachers about their professional practice?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to use the building leadership team to accomplish school improvement goals?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to provide collaborative professional development focused on school improvement goals</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to adapt your leadership behavior to the needs of a current situation?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to use</td>
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<td>conflict productivity?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to manage day-to-day</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to establish effective</td>
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<td>student behavior management system?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to allocate resources</td>
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<td>appropriately to accomplish building goals?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to establish positive</td>
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<td>working relationships with students, parents, and staff?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to hire quality teachers?</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to find time for personal rejuvenation?</td>
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<td>Confidence with coaching and support</td>
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<td>How confident are you in your ability to take time for reflection on professional practice?</td>
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APPENDIX F

IRB Letter

From:  Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date:   June 18, 2014

Title:  An Analysis of the Perceptions of Novice Principals on the Utilization of Mentor Support and its Effectiveness

IRB#:  4059

Dear Andrea Carroll,

The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. This protocol will expire on 6/12/2015 and will need continuing review before that date.

NOTE:
1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.
2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.
5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Sincerely,

Deb Paxton
NC State IRB