

ABSTRACT

PALERMO, JAMES M. "Alone in the Hot Seat" Mentoring Novice Assistant Principals.
(Under the direction of Kenneth Brinson.)

Mentoring is a useful tool in the induction of any new professional. However there has been only limited research in the mentoring of new principals or assistant principals, and few school districts have induction or mentoring programs for novice assistant principals. This study examines one aspect of a mentoring program for new assistant principals in a large southeastern school district. It is an intrinsic case study of novice assistant principals' perceptions of the mentoring relationship and its formation. Data was collected through focus groups of mentors and novices, observations of assistant principal mentors meeting with novice assistant principals, and interviews with a sample of novices and mentors. Following data collection, findings were cross-validated with a survey of the larger cohort of novice assistant principals (n=32).

Findings affirm earlier research with principals (NAESP, 2003; Playko, 1990). Novice assistant principals described the mentoring relationship as "helpful" and "supportive," however they stated that time and proximity were barriers to the formation of a "close, personal relationship." Some novices sought out mentors in their own buildings and tapped cohorts from their Masters in School Administration programs for support. Future research is suggested in the development of the mentoring relationship, to examine both the mechanics of the process and the interpersonal skills necessary to create and sustain a positive mentoring relationship.

Though there are no claims of generalizability from this intrinsic case study it appears that the perceptions of novice assistant principals share common characteristics with the perceptions of principals that mentoring is a benefit during the induction of new administrators. Given the future need for instructional leaders for our schools and the rapid succession of many assistant principals into the principalship, school districts are encouraged to consider the modest investment necessary to implement a mentoring program for new assistant principals and principals.

“ALONE IN THE HOT SEAT”
MENTORING NOVICE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

by

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Dedication

Dedicated to my father, Michael N. Palermo, my first and best teacher, role model as principal, and mentor.

Biography

Jim Palermo is currently principal of Lufkin Road Middle School, designated by North Carolina as a School of Excellence. Jim has twenty-six years of experience as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Believing that being the “principal teacher” of a school means modeling both teaching and learning, Jim has recently led staff development on Continuous Improvement, constructivist approaches to math instruction, and mentoring for administrators. Jim has trained assistant principals and principal mentors for the Wake Leadership Program. Jim is married to Barbara Lennox and has two sons, Anthony and Alec. His father, Michael Palermo, was a principal in New Jersey and New York prior to retirement.

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“Alone in the Hot Seat” Mentoring Novice Assistant Principals

Chapter One: Introduction

Alone in the hot seat; that is the dominant feeling that I recall from my first year as an assistant principal, and apparently others feel the same way. Novice assistant principals report feeling isolated, alone, and under scrutiny as beginning administrators adjusting to their new role (Anderson, 1991; Daresh, 2001). Students often dislike the assistant principal, who is inevitably the school disciplinarian, parents are often wary of contact, and teachers who may recently have been colleagues and friends now view the novice assistant principal as the enemy, supervisor, and evaluator.

After years as a teacher and counselor in public schools and armed with an advanced degree, I thought I was ready for administration. What I found was a rude awakening. Though my graduate program had exposed me to many of the skills necessary for success as an administrator, I was not prepared to lead or to live with the loneliness, isolation, and self-doubt that accompanied a position of leadership. Fortunately I found informal mentors in two veteran assistant principals in my school willing to take me under their wing. I gained skill and confidence talking problems through with them and simply sharing my fears and frustrations.

Years later, as a principal I wonder if the public school system could not do a better job of supporting new administrators. I am committed to serving as a mentor to my assistant principals, but I feel strongly that a formal mentoring program should be part of the induction of each new assistant principal. It is this personal experience that has prompted my interest in exploring the phenomenon of mentoring for novice assistant principals, especially the

nature of the relationship that forms between the mentor and novice during the mentoring process.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study rests on the necessity of recruiting and retaining effective leadership for our public schools. It is widely acknowledged in the literature that a strong instructional leader is key for an effective school (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Taske & Schneider, 1999; Vann, 1991), and it is a fact that there is a nationwide shortage of principals is predicted in the next decade (Educational Research Service, 1998). Principal vacancies are primarily filled from the pool of assistant principals. However, for school districts to be accountable and competitive in the new millennium the common practice of simply hiring and placing administrators to “sink or swim” will not suffice. Gary Bloom, associate director of the New Teacher Center at UC Santa Cruz, acknowledged the quick succession caused by the shortage. “Ten or twenty years ago, you might have been an assistant principal for five, six, or seven years before becoming a principal. Now it might be six months” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 9). Some school districts have recognized the need for additional support for beginning principals and assistant principals and have created a variety of training and induction models for new administrators (Anderson, 1991; Daresh, 1987), some including mentoring for novice administrators.

Importance of the Principal for an Effective School

Evidence indicates that a strong principal is an important component in school effectiveness. A study by Hallinger and Heck (1996) reviewed research studies undertaken between 1980 and 1995 regarding the principal’s in-school effectiveness. Among the more

robust findings: successful principal leadership is aimed toward influencing internal school processes that are directly linked to student learning (e.g., school policies and norms and a focus on instruction and engaged learning time).

An Arthur Anderson report on the New Jersey schools (1997) states, “the key factor to the individual school’s success is the building principal, who sets the tone as the school’s educational leader” (p. 1). The Anderson report goes on to recommend, “increased attention and funding needs to be directed toward programs that attract, evaluate, train, and retain the best principal” (p. 13).

The Looming Principal Shortage

Indications of a looming principal shortage add urgency to school districts attempts to attract and retain qualified administrators. Surveys by the Educational Research Service for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1998) report that about half of the districts responding had a shortage of qualified candidates for the principal positions they were attempting to fill. The nation’s educational workforce is graying and many principals are reaching retirement age. Doud and Keller (1998) have been tracking data on principals in repeated ten-year studies for the Educational Research Service and predict that, “the forty-two percent turnover in the principalship during the last ten years is likely to continue into the next decade” (p.23). Again, most principals are former assistant principals. Given the importance of a principal’s leadership, Allan Vann (1991) argues that school districts have a stake in addressing the needs of beginning assistant principals, helping them survive, thrive, and develop the skills they need to assume the principalship and lead. “Under the watchful and caring eyes of a

mentor, the potential for mistakes due to inexperience or ignorance is greatly reduced and, conversely, the potential for success is greatly enhanced” (Vann, 1991, p.85).

Benefits of Mentoring

The first year on the job for public school principals and assistant principals is an induction – an introduction to the position, the school, and the district. Past and current administrators consistently mentioned mentoring by effective and experienced principals as the most important support in their days as new assistant principals (Educational Research Service, 2000). Daresh (2001) feels that mentoring has benefits for mentors as well as novices and the school district. Novices “gain professional competence, see theory translated into practice, learn the tricks of the trade...and feel as if they belong” (Daresh, 2001, p. 7). In general, mentoring relationships are powerful learning opportunities.

Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring draws its name from Greek mythology. When he set out on his journey, Odysseus left his son Telemachus in the charge of Mentor, whom he trusted to impart wisdom to the boy. Mentoring has a long tradition and is common in many professions. Mentoring is formalized as an apprenticeship in some trades or as a professional internship. “More than one third of the nation’s top companies have established mentoring programs” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2003, p. 9). Though internships are now part of some university graduate programs in educational leadership, mentoring administrators once they have been placed is less common. One of the more prolific researchers in the literature on mentoring for educational administrators, John Daresh, offers the following definition: Mentoring is “an on-going process in which individuals in an

organization provide support and guidance to others who can become effective contributors to the goals of the organization.” (2001, p.3)

There seems to be general agreement that the relationship between the mentor and the novice is of central importance and that this relationship should be one of trust and support, not evaluation, and the literature on this topic will be reviewed in chapter two.

Definition of Terms

Because the terminology used throughout this study may have different meanings in different contexts, and to clarify the terms used in describing this unique case, I offer the following definitions:

- **Mentor:** In the broadest sense, one who offers help and assistance to a novice or protégé. A mentor is usually acknowledged to have wisdom and experience, and may have been recognized for effectiveness. In this study all mentors are currently serving as assistant principals, have been in the role at least two years, have been recognized for their effectiveness, and were recommended by their supervisors. The mentors in the program received a half-day of training in the roles and responsibilities of mentors, an orientation to the program, and an overview of the helping relationship, including active listening. Mentors in this program receive a small stipend for their service.
- **Novice assistant principal:** An assistant principal serving their first year in this school district. The majority of the novice assistant principals in this program had previously been teachers, had recently completed MSA (Master of School Administration) programs and had been newly hired as assistant principals. Some

members of the cohort had previously served as assistant principals in other districts, but all were required to participate in this first year induction program. Protégé or mentee is used synonymously.

- **Mentoring:** An on-going process of support and guidance provided by the mentor for the novice (Daresh, 2001, p. 3). In the district program being studied, mentors were encouraged to develop a helping relationship with their cohort of novices through conversations individually and in small groups, following scheduled monthly meeting and at other mutually agreeable times. They were also encouraged to stay in touch through email and telephone, and to share issues and celebrate successes. An outcome stated in training is that mentors will help inculcate novices in the culture of the school district.
- **Cohort:** A cohort can refer to any similar group. Forty-two novice assistant principals formed the mentoring program cohort in this district induction program at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year. The term cohort is also used to describe the small group (2-4) of novices that was assigned to each mentor. Due to the size of the available pool of potential mentors and because of input from the previous mentor group each mentor was paired with a small cohort of novices.
- **Mentoring program:** As the literature review will illustrate, mentoring programs can take many forms. In this particular district program mentoring was one component of a larger induction program. Mentors were selected, trained, and paired with a small cohort by school level and geographic region of the district. Mentors were asked to meet with novices monthly as part of the program, but

encouraged to have contact with their novice cohort between monthly meetings, arrange school visits, and develop a relationship with their novice cohort.

- **Induction program:** As the literature review again will explore, induction programs, where they exist, vary greatly. Most attempt to ease the transition of novices into their new role, teach some knowledge and skills, and address socialization of novices into the culture of the new system. In the district induction program studied all of these are true. Novice assistant principals have a schedule of thirteen meetings (most half day, some full day) from August to May in their first year of service. During these induction meetings novice assistant principals hear presentations from district central office administrators on the “nuts and bolts” of policies and procedures, as well as best practices and an inculcation in district culture.
- **Peer assistance:** An informal relationship formed between a novice and a peer for help or support. As opposed to the deliberate helping relationship intended between the formal mentor and novice, many novices formed informal mentoring relationships with fellow assistant principals, principals, and others in the school district.

Limitations of the Study

As I will explain in greater detail in Chapter 3, this research study is conducted as an intrinsic case study of one unique program and will be limited by several factors. First, as a study of one program in one school district I will be limited in my view of the larger possibilities and promises of mentoring as it may occur elsewhere. I may be unaware of

successful programs for assistant principals functioning elsewhere that have not been reported in the literature. Second, this district has made a commitment of scant resources to hire a director to design and facilitate the mentoring and induction of novice administrators. I need to remember that this case is unique.

I am also interested in exploring the nature of the relationship that develops between the mentor and novice, but am bounded by time in gathering and reporting the data. Relationships take time to develop and all data was gathered over a four-month period from August through November, 2003. I believe that the quality of a developing relationship can be reported after two to three months and several meetings, but it is possible that a meaningful mentoring relationship could take much longer to develop.

Finally, I am assuming that the respondents are reporting reality honestly and that the data I am gathering and coding is accurate to describe the unfolding mentoring relationships. Respondents are volunteers, data is gathered in confidence, and there is no coercion, but newly hired assistant principals try hard to please many diverse constituents. I trust that they were telling me the truth about the mentoring relationships they were developing.

The Research Question

From my own experience, mentoring helped me adjust to the isolation and fear I felt in my first year as an assistant principal, and I fondly recall the relationships I developed with my informal mentors. But just what were the dynamics of those relationships that helped me? How would I have adjusted if I had not had a mentor, or if the relationship had been different? How might I have fared if there had been a formal mentoring program in the district that had trained mentors, paired me with a mentor, and provided structured time and

tools for support? As a doctoral student and intern I am working with a district program that provides a structured induction program including a mentoring component for novice assistants. After a review of the literature I am curious to know: *What experiences contribute to a novice assistant principal's perceptions of the mentoring relationship in this particular induction program?*

In summary, I have cited the importance of strong leadership for our public schools and described the national trend of growing vacancies in the principalship. I believe that I would have benefited from having a mentor in my first year as an assistant principal, and having an intrinsic interest in mentoring programs for administrators, I began an exploration of the literature on this topic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Induction and Mentoring in Education

I began reading literature on mentoring in the context of mentoring new teachers. As an assistant principal for instruction at a large high school in 1990, I supervised the teacher mentoring program for our school and first gained an awareness of Morris Gogan's clinical supervision model for teacher mentoring (Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1998). Briefly, the model focuses on peer support and skill development in the novice teacher through systematic observation and feedback. Since I had not had a formal mentor myself as a teacher, it was a revelation that there might be a better way to assist novice educators. It was only later that I began reading more widely in the literature about mentoring in general, mentoring as part of a more inclusive induction process, and mentoring specifically for novice administrators.

For the purpose of this research I have read broad descriptions of mentoring and induction, and researched print and electronic journals published in English since 1980. What I discovered is that although there is a growing body of literature in educational journals and books on the topic of teacher mentoring, there is little concerning mentoring of novice principals. I could locate only one article that specifically addressed mentoring of novice assistant principals. From my own experience, I believe that formal mentoring programs for new assistants are rare, and my literature search confirms that they have not been discussed in professional literature.

I believe, however, that much of what is described in the literature for mentoring and induction of principals would generalize to assistant principals as well. In the review that follows I will highlight findings from the literature on induction programs for administrators, describe some of the characteristics of mentoring programs for administrators, and cite a growing body of literature that suggests that an important component of effective mentoring is the quality of the relationship between mentor and novice.

The terms “buddy,” “coach,” and “master teacher” are variously used to describe the veteran teacher assigned to support and assist the novice (Hughes, 2003). Often mentoring is just one strategy of larger induction programs designed to ease the transition of the newcomer. While an induction program may include goals of orientation to the school and district and acquisition of skills for successful teaching, the mentoring component often focuses on the relationship between the mentor and novice (Hughes, 2003).

There is little data documenting the effectiveness of mentoring programs, but the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that mentoring programs for new teachers grew from 39% to 56% of school districts from the 1980 to the 1990 (Hughes, 2003, p. 1619). Data released in 2001 showed that thirty-three states had beginning teacher induction statutes and twenty-nine states included mentoring as part of the induction process (Hughes, 2003, p. 1619). There is not corresponding legislation or similar support for novice administrators.

Though there are exceptions, it is generally agreed that mentoring programs are designed to provide assistance and support for novices, not to evaluate them. Assistance is based on the trusting relationship fostered between mentor and novice with the premise that a

novice would not turn to the mentor for help if there were a threat of evaluation (Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1998).

Induction and Mentoring for Administrators

In the broadest sense, the induction of a new assistant principal is an extended process. It can take a lifetime to acquire the knowledge, dispositions, and skills needed to be a successful administrator, however most new assistant principals have spent years as students and teachers watching administrators. The common public school experience for most American citizens includes twelve years as a student informally observing principals, and most assistant principals served previously as teachers in schools. Each state requires some licensure or certification to be a public school administrator and university programs that teach theory may also include a practicum program including a mentoring component. Following recruitment and hiring, some school districts provide a formal induction program for new administrators, but this is not widely practiced (Anderson, 1991). “Fewer than half of the superintendents interviewed for a 1998 Educational Research Service (ERS) survey indicated that their districts had a formal induction or mentoring program for new principals” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2003, p. 9).

My selected review of the literature on induction programs in the United States yielded descriptions and recommendations for programs, but only two studies show evidence of the effectiveness of such programs. Summarized in Table 1 are common characteristics of three induction programs. Table one follows with the name of the program, author and publication date, and a summary of the characteristics of each program.

Table 1: Common Characteristics of Selected Induction Programs

<i>Program</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Common Characteristics</i>
SREB Model for Leadership Development	Crews & Weakley (1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and small groups sessions • Mentoring • Structured problem identification and problem solving process
Principal's Inservice Program	Daresh (1982)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of 6-10 principals meeting with facilitator • Goals include: personal professional development, school improvement, collegial support, and continuous improvement
Administrator Induction Program	Rogus & Drury (1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large group sessions • Small group support sessions • Mentoring • Clinical support, coaching, and corrective feedback by practitioners
Extra Support for Principals (ESP)	Weingartner (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive mentoring program with formal training for mentors

As shown in Table 1, though each of the programs studied was structured differently, most included large group orientation sessions, smaller group sessions, and some form of mentoring. Most paired mentors with novice principals 1:1, though the Principal's Inservice Program grouped 6-10 principals with one facilitator. The majority of the programs involved some component for problem identification and coaching, though ESP focused primarily on mentoring.

Two studies from the 1980s examined induction programs for beginning principals. Barnett and Mueller (1987) surveyed principals who had participated in the PAL program and Daresh (1982) questioned principals participating in I/D/E/A (Institute for Development

of Education Activities). Table 2 which follows describes the studies, their methods, finds, and recommendations. As the findings in Table 2 suggest, one common theme is the need for on-going peer-assistance or mentoring.

Table 2: Studies of Induction Programs

<i>Author & Title</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Findings</i>	<i>Implications/ Recommendations</i>
Barnett & Mueller (1987) <i>The Long-Term Effects of Inservice Training for Principals</i>	62 principals and assistant principals participating in Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) program in California, Utah & Arizona	Questionnaire Groups were divided into continuing principals, those who had not participated for 1 year, and those who had not participated for 2-3 years.	The influence of peer-assisted training was most strongly felt by those who continued to work with their cohort.	Group support, trust, and close relationships were responsible for fostering collegial support. On-going supportive peer-assistance supports professional growth.
Daresh (1982) <i>Coming on Board: Characteristics of the Beginning Principal</i>	12 1 st and 2 nd year principals in the Mid-west	In-depth interviews	Common problems and issues included: role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulties with socialization	Improved practicum experience Specialized inservice Collegial support “buddy system” Mentors

As Table 2 suggests, there is a need for novice principals to have on-going support during and after their first year in the principalship. New principals have problems related to job knowledge and socialization, and a support system can meet these needs.

Given the importance of a principal's leadership and the potential influence of the induction year on rookie administrators, it seems clear that school districts have a stake in addressing the needs of beginning principals and helping them develop the skills to lead rather than merely survive. Though these studies were done with novice principals, I believe that the implications of Table 2, including the need for close relationships, and a supportive mentor are as true for novice assistant principals as for principals.

Anderson (1991) found that some of the problems common to beginning principals include: a sense of isolation, learning the culture of the school system, and a lack of feedback. However, one cannot assume that all mentoring relationships will be beneficial. Anderson (1991) advises that novices be paired carefully with mentors and cautions that untrained mentors may simply pass on ineffective practices, perpetuating traditional processes and norms that need to change. Effective mentors should be active listeners who help guide novices to a greater understanding of their own circumstances.

School boards and school district officials recognize that formal preparation for the principalship must include a practical component to impart necessary real-life skills (Educational Research Service, 2000). Internship programs can help, but a mentoring program for a new administrator on the job can provide feedback and support when a complex new experience demands new skills. The Albuquerque Public School System developed Extra Support for Principals (ESP) in 1994 with this need in mind (Weingartner, 2001). In this program a district coordinator examines beginning principals' backgrounds, asks them to supply a list of experienced principals with whom they would like to work, then matches them with veteran leaders. Results indicate that new administrators, as well as

mentors, benefit significantly from ESP. Another mentoring program, established by the Southern Regional Education Board's Leadership Academy, provides a coach, typically a retired principal or superintendent, who provides technical assistance and collects information from participants to help them develop as leaders (Crews & Weakley, 1996).

Hopkins-Thompson (1999) advises that successful mentoring programs include: careful screening, selection and pairing of mentors and protégés, training for mentors and protégés, and a learner-centered focus. Novices need support and encouragement in a non-threatening, non-evaluative environment, and should self-assess and identify new skill sets or performances to learn.

According to Daresh (2001), administrative mentoring programs can have two primary purposes, career advancement and/or psychosocial development. For assistant principals the logical path for career advancement is through the principalship. Equally valid, given that "the life of the school leader is lonely, frustrating, and full of interpersonal conflict...is the need for someone to provide for the school administrator's psychosocial development" (p. 25). There is the image of the school leader as the Lone Ranger with the implication that "You're the boss. Fix your own problems, and don't ask for help from anyone. If you can't do the job on your own, you're a failure" (p. 2). This attitude is essentially unsound and unhealthy, contributing to stress in the lives of novice assistant principals.

Daresh (2001) proposes an alternative to the "sink or swim" model of school administration, stating that it is not "in anyone's best interest to assume that only the strongest and most self-reliant should survive as school leaders" (p. 3). Daresh proposes that

districts plan, implement, and evaluate formal mentoring programs that will enable school administrators to find helpful colleagues on an on-going basis. However, Daresh feels that it is a mistake to apply the same practices and structures from a teacher mentoring program to administrators. Daresh (2001) makes a case that administrators are different from teachers in significant ways, and deserve their own program of professional development because:

1. The research base on administration is not clear enough to guide mentoring programs.
2. Administrators do their jobs in isolation from their peers.
3. New administrators are not new to schools.
4. Administrators are bosses.
5. Administrative peers are usually not true equals to the beginner. (p. 26)

Treating novice administrators like beginning teachers “does not take into account the differences in complexity and span of influence of the two positions” (Daresh & Playko, 1990, p. 74).

Mentoring: The Relationship Component

In both broad personnel literature and educational journals, there is a growing body of literature (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Daresh, 2001; Playko 1990; Barnett, 1990; Monsour, 1998) that suggests that the quality of the relationship between the mentor and novice is critical to the success of the novice. Writing in the *Personnel Journal* and describing managers in general (including school principals), the Woodland Group (1980) distinguished between the roles of coach, sponsor, and mentor, emphasizing that the mentor-protégé relationship “is deeper and reflects the implied definition of trusted counselor and guide” (p. 920).

Though education is specialized work, principals and assistant principals are managers, and Buckingham and Coffman (1999) conclude that the most valuable aspect of a manager's job is building relationships. Buckingham and Coffman synthesized research by the Gallup Organization that incorporated interviews of over a million employees over twenty-five years. They were looking for patterns that would enable them "to measure the core elements of the workplace needed to attract, focus, and keep the most talented employees" (p. 23). They found that they could assess the relative strength of an organization by asking twelve questions, dubbed the Q12:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the equipment and materials I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company (school) make me feel like my work is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, have I talked with someone about my progress?
12. At work, have I had opportunities to learn and grow? (p. 28)

Knowing expectations, feeling valued, and having opportunities to grow are of greater value to employees than pay or promotion. A major theme in this research is the importance of positive, helping relationships at work.

Mentoring relationships are a major step toward helping neophytes feel valued, helping reduce the sense of isolation, and increasing opportunities for positive psychosocial development. Playko (1990) comments on the value of the mentoring relationship, which she feels should center around “the fact that there is someone who is available, dependable, honest, sincere, trusting, and willing to provide collegial support” (p. 31). Collaboration that will enable both participants to learn and grow is also important to the relationship.

Drawing on her own experience, Playko (1990) lists the following characteristics of a positive mentor-protégé relationship:

- Commitment to maintaining, improving, and continuing the partnership so that both participants can reap the available personal and professional benefits.
- A mutually-enhancing process with the potential of being as helpful to the mentor as to the protégé.
- A two-way interactive activity in a risk-free environment where both mentor and protégé are encouraged to express inner feelings, thoughts, and questions regarding their professional roles or personal problems.
- Motivation for both mentor and protégé to stimulate a desire for both to grow personally and professionally. (p. 30)

Mutual respect and trust are themes (Playko, 1990, Monsour, 1999, Barnett, 1990) that are repeated in the literature on mentoring relationships. Monsour (1999) conducted a study of participants in Minnesota’s LEAD Administrators’ Academy Mentoring Program that found these and additional themes. Monsour observed, “strong and successful relationships were those in which there was a high regard for mutual respect

and trust. It was an equal partnership... requiring open and honest communication. Both parties must demonstrate a sense of commitment to each other, to the program, and to the process” (p. 97). Barnett (1990) also observed the importance of trust in the mentoring relationship. “If the strategies for creating a sense of trust are not developed early on, there is less likelihood that mentors and interns will establish a relationship that permits experiential learning” (p. 21).

Commitment, collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and support are all qualities that are shown in the literature to enhance a mentoring relationship. However, the studies cited thus far were of managers in business or novice principals. Daresh (2001) makes the case that novice administrators (principals and assistant principals) are different than teachers, but there is little in the literature to specifically address novice assistant principals.

Calabrese and Tucker-Ladd (1991) make a case for principals responsibility to serve as mentors to their assistant principals. While I do not disagree with the idea that “the principal has a personal and professional responsibility to the assistant principal...to provide opportunities for growth, development of self-confidence and motivation to pursue higher goals” (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, p. 68). I believe that the dual roles of mentor and evaluator would hamper effective mentoring of novice assistants by their principal. Monsour (1998), Daresh (2001), and Walker & Stott (1994) all stress that evaluation by one’s direct supervisor will impede the development of the trust that is necessary for effective mentoring. Though the characterization of boss management is particularly harsh, the Woodlands Group (1980) adds, “the mentoring relationship most

effectively exists outside normal boss-subordinate patterns, because bosses administer rewards and punishments” (p. 920).

One study (Walker & Stott, 1994) did address mentoring for assistant principals aspiring to the principalship in Singapore. In affirmation of the notion that mentoring programs for principals may generalize for assistant principals, many of the same goals and strategies for induction apply in this instance, and Walker and Stott emphasize that “a strong, open relationship has proved to be the key to successful mentoring” (p. 77). In describing the successful mentoring relationship, Walker and Stott list several factors that could provide a model for a mentoring program for assistant principals, including:

- Trust must be established.
- Mentors must communicate their expectations to protégés.
- Mentors need training.
- It is preferable for the relationship to be established away from the school environment.
- Facilitator involvement in the program is vital (p. 74-75).

The dynamics of the caring, helping relationship common in programs for managers and principals applied for assistant principals in the Walker and Stott study. I believe that the core aspects of a helping relationship described in the literature - commitment, caring, trust, respect, collaboration, and honesty -will provide the support and psychosocial development of assistant principals when provided in a systematic district program.

In summary, a review of recent literature searching with the keywords “mentoring”, “principals”, and “assistant principals” yielded few studies describing mentoring programs for administrators and even fewer (Barnett & Muller, 1987; Daresh, 1982) that found an

effect as a result of the program. Only one description of a formal mentoring program for novice assistant principals (Walker & Stott, 1994) was found in the review. There is literature to suggest the importance of the helping relationship in the induction of new professionals, including principals. However, the lack of additional literature focused specifically on the mentoring relationship in programs for novice assistant principals emphasizes the importance of this study. With the opportunity at hand to utilize my graduate internship to study this particular program as an intrinsic case I began to formulate a theoretical framework and method to examine the experiences and perceptions novice assistant principals had of the mentoring relationship.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Theoretical Framework

As a former assistant principal with an interest in helping novice assistants adjust to the loneliness and frustration of their new jobs, I believe that it is significant to focus on their feelings and perceptions of themselves and their role. I could have focused instead on skill acquisition, but I believe that adjustment to a new role and effectiveness in that role is more about relationships than skills, and I believe that an effective mentor can help the novice feel better about himself and more well adjusted.

For this study I wanted to understand and describe the essence of the helping relationship between mentor and novice assistant principal. My goal was to focus on what mentoring means to the novice assistant principal, especially the relationship with the mentor and how this helps with the adjustment to the loneliness and frustration inherent in the position. I believe that the assistants' perception of self is integral to their adjustment and effectiveness and I have a hunch that there is something in the relationship that can be captured in words. The notion that a manager's success in the workplace all boils down to relationships (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) fits with my experience and personal perspective.

My choice to study the mentoring relationship between mentors and new assistant principals in this particular induction program is, in Robert Stake's words, "no choice at all" (Stake, p. 3). Stake explains that this happens in qualitative research when one is curious about a case, "a specific, a complex, functioning thing" (Stake, p. 2), in this case the mentoring component of our district's induction program. As a graduate intern working with

the program director on the training of mentors and facilitation of the program I have an intrinsic interest in this unique program. Through a confluence of events that has brought me to this particular place at this time in my career, I have literally fallen into this research. The mentoring component of the induction program for these forty-two novice assistant principals is the case under study, and I am curious to know more about the mentoring relationship and how it is formed.

Research Design

Measuring the relationship between a mentor and novice assistant principal is not an easy task and I have chosen a qualitative methodology to describe the effect of mentoring for novice assistant principals. I have access to a cohort of forty-two assistant principals who will be mentored for one year by experienced assistant principals as part of a school district induction program. Few such programs exist nationally, and this will be an intrinsic case study of one program in a large southeastern school district. Though the research study is not designed as a program evaluation, the results of the study will be shared with the program director in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Program Description

The mentoring program for new assistant principals is offered as part of the school district induction program for all first year assistant principals. This large, southeastern public school district (100,000+ students and 127 schools) is committed to a succession program that will fill the constant need for new administrators created by growth and attrition. The rationale cited in the program description describes the current marketplace for administrators and acknowledges the cost to recruit and hire quality administrators to fill key

leadership positions. “A high quality induction program with a mentoring component is critical to inculcating new administrators into the organization and ensuring their success.” (Wake County Public Schools).

The induction program for assistant principals is part of a larger Leadership Academy funded by a partnership between the public school system and private business. The Academy provides an induction program for new principals and assistant principals as well as a variety of staff development for administrators and teacher leaders. A director runs the Academy and has designed the induction programs from best practices in leadership literature and based on the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards, national standards for school administrators. The director selected the mentors, based on recommendations from area superintendents, and paired the mentors with cohorts of 2-4 novices by level and region. A half-day of training was provided for the mentors, who receive a small stipend for their participation.

The purpose of the larger induction program for new assistant principals is to acquaint participants with the culture and procedures of the school system, and to introduce them to key central office personnel. At monthly meetings held all year long novices hear presentations from central office directors on topics like budget, teacher evaluation, discipline, and transportation. At the end of these monthly meetings, time is devoted to meetings between the mentors and their cohort.

Roles and responsibilities form the core of the training for mentors, along with a review of active listening. Mentors are encouraged to be effective communicators, willing to listen empathically and to provide constructive feedback to novices. Novices are encouraged

to take responsibility for their learning and to be risk takers, seeking advice and assistance as needed, and staying open to feedback. Novices are also encouraged to reflect and journal as part of a process of continuous improvement, and to share their writing with their mentors. Above all mentors and novices are encouraged to stay in touch with one another.

Role of the Researcher

I immersed myself in the process with mentors and novices by observing them in monthly meetings, but also examined the process from the outside as an observer. I observed and interviewed participants objectively – that is without interjecting myself into the relationship between mentor and novice - while understanding that my interpretive lens is highly subjective. I am a career educator with twenty-five years in public education and a vested interest in helping new assistant principals be successful. From my deep, personal belief that public education is a cornerstone of our American democracy, that we have an obligation to shape as well as reflect our society, and that principals are critical agents setting the vision and goals of our schools I know that I am hardly objective in any effort to assist new assistant principals.

However, in terms of the specific strengths I bring to this research, I believe that my experience as an educator and mentor informed and assisted me in my role as researcher. Though I was working alongside mentors and novices, my role was clearly not to evaluate. I am a volunteer intern in the mentoring program and have promised confidentiality in all communications with participants.

The fact that I am currently a principal in the same district where I was studying mentors and novices adds credibility to my report. I had eight years of experience as an

assistant principal and vividly recall my difficult first year, so I believe that I empathized with novices. I have worked in the district for seventeen years and believe that I know the culture of the district well.

I believe that my experience to date gives me an advantage for accurately capturing the observation data. As an administrator I am a trained observer and have had twelve years of experience observing and writing hundreds of teacher observation reports. Though the observations and interviews of this field work are a different form of data collection, I believe that I have learned to listen and see well, and have also learned how to be objective and keep myself out of the report. In addition to my training and experience as a clinical observer I have received mentor training, have trained mentors, and have served as a mentor to several assistant principals. A large part of the teacher mentor training is in observation skills, and I believe that this improved my preparation for the observational task at hand.

Sampling Procedures

As a doctoral intern, I participated in the district induction program whose broad goals included orientation to the school district and its culture, instruction in the knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective administrator, and retention of novice administrators. In my role as volunteer intern I met monthly with mentors and novices. At the first meeting for new assistant principals, August 1, I described my study to the group and formally asked permission to observe participants meeting with mentors. At the same time I asked for volunteer mentors and novices to participate in interviews [See Appendix A, Permission form].

The mentoring program being studied takes place in a large southern public school system (100,000+ students and 127 schools) with a large cohort of new assistant principals each school year. Forty-four new assistant principals began the induction program in August, 2003. Currently all newly hired assistant principals are required to participate in the induction and mentoring program for one year. The system encompasses urban, suburban, and semi-rural communities and provides a mix of candidates for study. From this cohort, I selected twelve participants, eight novices and four mentors. Participants are all volunteers, and include elementary and middle school assistant principals. I sought out participants from the group who are new high school principals as well, however few volunteered for the sample and those who did later declined, citing a lack of time.

I screened permission forms and selected volunteers who fit a demographic mix that represents the larger population in the county school district. I selected both male and female assistants, different ethnic groups, and geographic regions in the county in the sample of assistant principals and mentors for the study. All novices are first year assistant principals with some prior experience in education. Ages of participants vary, though most are in their late twenties or early thirties. Assistant principal mentors have a range of experience and were chosen for the program based on recommendation by superiors.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study was gathered through several methods: observation of mentors and novices at monthly meetings, interviews with a sample of participants, two focus group sessions, some journal reflections, and a survey of participants. Though not an active participant in the induction program, I was introduced from the beginning as an

administrative intern and doctoral student studying the mentoring program. I was present at the scheduled monthly meetings of the mentors and novices and had access to conversations between participants. I observed mentors and novices meeting in cohort groups. Interviews were conducted in two primary methods; first with individual participants, and then with focus groups of novices and mentors.

The induction program from which I draw my sample runs from August through May of the school year, and there were scheduled monthly meetings when the cohort heard presentations (usually by members of the administrative cabinet) in sessions designed to raise awareness and impart critical information for novice administrators. At the end of each session one to one-and-a-half hours was allowed for the assistant principal mentors to meet with their cohorts of novice assistant principals. It was in these sessions that I observed mentors meeting with their cohorts of novice assistants monthly during the fall of 2003.

At the first induction session, then later during monthly meetings I was forthright in portraying my role as researcher and explaining in general that I was taking notes on mentoring with an eye to examine mentoring relationships. At the same time, I guaranteed participants confidentiality, and obtained consent forms from participants to record behavior and conversations. I reiterated to participants that my goal was to describe the process of mentoring and that I was not present to evaluate any participant.

In the past, I primarily listened during mentoring sessions, but from August through November I floated between groups and also joined conversations and answered questions; I became involved while trying also to remain an observer. Participant observer best describes

my role in this phase of the fieldwork. Following each monthly session I recorded “notes to self” on observations.

Interviews were the second data collection device. I conducted individual interviews with twelve participants, four mentors and eight novices, focusing on their own words about their feelings and perceptions concerning the mentoring program. My goal through interviews was to capture the meaning of the participants’ shared experience of mentoring. I attempted to listen carefully to responses from participants, and then reduce the data to describe common themes from their shared experience in this mentoring program. I used a transcription service for a quick capture and on-going analysis of the data.

A third method for data collection emerged during the study. Participants had been urged to keep a journal of reflections on the mentoring program. At the suggestion of one of the participants I asked the twelve mentors and novices to share written reflections on the mentoring relationship. Several did so, sending these to me periodically via email from September through November. These were also coded for inclusion in the study.

The fourth method of data collection consisted of two focus group sessions conducted following two monthly meetings. Beginning with the same open-ended questions used in individual interviews I met first with a group of mentors, then later with a group of novice assistant principals. I took notes on comments and facilitated a roundtable discussion with each group. The notes were typed in a two-column note format and coded for themes. The meeting of mentors was held over lunch and the discussion began with structured interview questions, but ranged widely in responses and follow-up.

The fifth method of data collection was a survey [Appendix C] created during the study and administered to thirty-two participants at the monthly meeting in December. Interviews with the sample and focus groups had yielded several predominant themes to describe the mentoring relationship and its formation. I was curious to know if responses from the larger group would validate findings from the sample. The survey was distributed near the close of the meeting of novice assistants, was confidential and anonymous, and was dropped in a box on the way out the door. Attendance at the monthly meetings varied, but a survey was received from each of the novice assistant principals in attendance.

The author created the survey and makes no claims concerning its validity or reliability. It was administered to compare the perceptions of the selected sample with the larger cohort and demonstrate internal validity for this particular research project.

As the program proceeded from the first meeting of the mentors and their cohort I began collection and simultaneous analysis of the data. From the first observation of the mentors meeting with their cohort groups I converted notes and transcripts from meetings, focus groups, and interviews to a two-column format and spent time reading and coding the notes and transcripts.

As a wholistic approach to data analysis I posted coded notes and transcripts on chart paper and hung them on two walls in a spare bedroom in my home that I temporarily converted into a research study. Reading and rereading the transcripts and notes I used different color markers to connect the codes I identify as themes in chapter four. Large portions of chapter four were written on a laptop computer directly from the coded notes on the wall by following and connecting threads of multicolored markers.

Conclusion

My goal was an intrinsic case study of the mentoring relationship between assistant principal mentors and novice assistant principals in one particular southeastern school district induction program. Through observation, focus groups, interviews, and a survey I hoped to capture something of the essence of the mentoring relationships for novice public school assistant principals. Currently school districts can be roughly divided into two groups, those that do provide formal mentoring programs to novices and the majority that do not. In the broadest sense, the findings of this study will be transferable to districts nationally that do provide mentoring programs, and in a more particular sense, the results may inform districts and programs that have a similar “fit.” In terms of describing mentoring relationships I hope that the results will inform districts that do not currently have mentoring programs. However, as an intrinsic case study I make no claims beyond describing what I found in this particular program.

In conclusion, I hoped to capture an accurate description of the relationship between several pairs of assistant principal mentors and novices in one particular school district induction program. I did not expect to generate a theory that would apply for all novice assistant principals. However, I did hope that there were enough commonalities between the experiences of novice assistant principals that the results of this study would inform readers of the distinction of having a mentoring program as part of the induction process versus the absence of such a program. I believe that I could have benefited from having a trained mentor as a new assistant principal and that this program is beneficial to the participants. I also believe that the future health and effectiveness of our public schools depends on a deep

pool of new assistant principals. I hope that this study will shed some light on mentoring relationships for those novice assistants who may feel “alone in the hot seat.”

Thus far I have developed a case for assistant principals as the pool of future instructional leaders to fill the growing national void, and explained how mentors can assist in the induction of novice administrators. Chapter three developed the rationale and methodology for a study of a mentoring program for a cohort of novice assistant principals to examine the relationship that develops between mentors and novices. Chapter four will report the findings of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The study of novice assistant principals took place over six months (August-December, 2003) in one large southeastern school district. There were 208 assistant principals serving in 127 schools throughout the school district at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year. Forty-four were new assistant principals involved in the district induction program. The school district currently has more than 108,000 students and according to enrollment projections, the student population is expected to reach 131,000 students by 2010 and 160,000 by 2020.

With the school district's growth demanding the addition of new schools each year, the aging and retirement of many principals, and the steady movement of assistant principals into principalships, an annual cohort of novice assistants of this size is likely to be the norm for the foreseeable future. Structured induction of these novices into the system and support through mentoring is a district commitment. Mentoring is only one component of the district's induction program. Novice assistants also have scheduled half day meetings each month when they have presentations from central office staff on the "nuts and bolts" of school administration: discipline, transportation, facilities, and personnel practices, as well as curriculum and instruction. The last hour of each meeting is reserved for mentors and novices to meet.

On August 1, at the conclusion of a district-wide conference, novice assistants met their mentors for the first time. There were speeches of welcome from the superintendent and members of the administrative cabinet, distribution of induction program notebooks and

a review of the contents. Mentors and novices had an opportunity to meet and conduct a structured “Get Acquainted” meeting [Appendix B]. Mentors had been prompted to use this format in previous training. Though not all mentors or novices were present, the majority of cohorts met over lunch and I pulled an “orphan” group without mentors together for an informal “Get Acquainted” meeting. Assistants were sent back to their schools the next day and most would not see their mentors again for at least a month. As I later learned, most were in touch via phone or email, during the month.

I attended the monthly meetings of the novice assistant principals and observed members meeting with their cohorts (usually two or three novices per mentor) each month. In addition, I conducted a focus group of mentors on October 15 and another focus group of novices on November 18. Individual interviews were conducted during October and November at the assistant principals’ schools. The survey was administered December 8 at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Thirty-two of the forty-four novice assistant principals were in attendance and completed surveys that day.

Participants

Participants in the study were interviewed at their school sites over the course of several weeks beginning with a structured interview and follow-up questions. As Table 3 will show, the novice assistant principal sample included a mix of gender, race, school level and geographic region in this large county school district. Though an effort was made to include high school assistant principals, no volunteers were secured.

Table 3: Novice Assistant Principal Sample

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>M/F</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>School Community</i>
Diana	F	African-American	Middle	Suburban
Alice	F	Caucasian	Middle	Rural
Betsy	F	Caucasian	Middle	Suburban
Bob	M	Caucasian	Middle	Suburban
Danielle	F	African-American	Middle	Suburban
Anna	F	Caucasian	Elementary	Rural
William	M	Native American	Elementary	Urban
Julie	F	Caucasian	Elementary	Urban

As Table 4 shows volunteer participants were again chosen to represent a mix of gender, ethnicity, grade level, and school community. Again, though one high school assistant principal mentor originally volunteered for the study, he later declined due to a lack of time to arrange the interview.

Table 4: Mentor Sample

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>M/F</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>School Community</i>
Rita	F	African-American	Middle	Urban
Mike	M	Caucasian	Elementary	Suburban
Serena	F	African-American	Middle	Rural
Scarlet	F	Caucasian	Elementary	Rural

A brief biography of each of the participants follows.

Novice Assistant Principals

Alice is a forty-one year old Caucasian female working at a rural middle school. She is in her eighteenth year in education. She received a Masters degree in Education in 1991

and a Masters in School Administration in 1996. She is a national board certified teacher and has taught and worked in the same county school district her entire career. She started out at an inner city middle school “which was a wonderful start because of the diverse population.” Alice stated: “I got to stretch my wings, as how to handle classroom discipline and that became one of my stronger aspects of teaching.” Alice had put off becoming an administrator for personal reasons, but “I decided when this job became available it was time to make the move.” Alice is one of two assistant principals at a middle school with rural roots. The principal of the school is a novice as well.

William is a Native American male working at an urban elementary school. He taught for six years after receiving his undergraduate degree. He taught middle school language arts and science in two different school districts, then left the classroom to return full time to work toward his Masters in School Administration. He served as an intern in the same school the previous year prior to being named as assistant principal. William’s elementary school is a diverse, inner-city magnet school and it is just what he wanted. He said: “I really think I have the best job in the world. I love being here. This is the prize that I had my eye on all last year.”

Bob is a twenty-eight year old Caucasian male working at a suburban middle school. He states, “My education career started in high school. I knew that I wanted to teach for a long time.” He attended undergraduate school in the northeast, but decided to move south to start his teaching career. After teaching middle school language arts for six years Bob enrolled in a Masters of School Administration program at a local university. He did his

internship the previous year at the same middle school where he had taught language arts and where he has now been hired as an assistant principal.

Julia is a Caucasian female working at an urban elementary school. She received her teaching degree and worked for five years prior to acceptance in a principal's fellows program, a state scholarship program to encourage future principals, to work on her Masters in School Administration. She stated "the internship was a great experience...it really prepared me for my experiences here." Coming to a new school district for her first job as an assistant principal has been "a little rocky...in terms of learning new rules and procedures."

Betsy is a Caucasian female working in a suburban middle school. When asked about biographical information she stated that, "Both of my parents are educators, my brother is, my sisters-in-law. The war stories are great at the dinner table. I decided from the beginning when I was going to college that I was going to teach." She taught middle school in another system for several years prior to returning to graduate school. After several more years of teaching Betsy took a job in the central office working in Human Resources for four years. This is her first experience as a school-based administrator. Because of her experience teaching in the system and working in Human Resources, Betsy feels "seasoned" and like she is "having a fantastic year."

Diane is an African-American female working in a suburban middle school. She was born in Brooklyn and went to Catholic school in New York prior to returning to a rural southern school system to finish her secondary school education. Though she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in middle grades education she left teaching after three years to attend Law School. She has a law degree and worked in the legal sector for a year and a half

prior to returning to education. Next, Diane earned a Masters in School Administration and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at a local university. She originally left teaching in the early 1990's due to low pay, is glad to see that there have been improvements, and credits changes in her career to personal life changes.

Anna is a Caucasian female working in a rural elementary school where she also completed the internship portion of her Masters in School Administration program. The school is a multi-track year round magnet. Anna previously taught language arts in grades six and seven for a total of eight years. At that point Anna took two years to stay at home and begin a family, then returned to graduate school as a principal fellow. All of her public school experience, as a student, teacher, and now administrator, has been in the same school district.

Danielle is an African-American female working in a suburban middle school. She was a teacher for twelve years at another middle school in the same district prior to earning her Masters in School Administration at a local university. She states that "after going through several principals in twelve years, they kept saying, 'You would be good at this [administration]' ." Danielle is joined by another novice assistant principal at the same school right down the hall in another office.

Mentors

Scarlet is a thirty-six year old Caucasian female working at a rural elementary school. Scarlet was a teacher and an instructional resource teacher prior to earning her Masters in School Administration. She also received training in a Future Leaders program in the school district. She has been an assistant principal at the same elementary school for years. For

personal reasons she has not pursued a principalship, and she describes being happy with her current role and responsibilities. This is Scarlet's second year serving as a mentor in the induction program.

Rita is a forty-year-old African-American female working at an urban middle school. She started her career in education in 1998, teaching in special education for seven years. In her words, she "tried to stay in graduate school as long as I could and not work." After a year serving as a coordinator of community and school programs, Rita was encouraged by her principal to enter the Future Leaders program (a district program for aspiring administrators), then return to graduate school in the Principal Fellows Program. She served two years as an assistant principal at a rural middle school in the same county, and then transferred to her current assignment where she is in her fourth year. She is still in graduate school working toward a doctorate and has the goal of a principalship. Though Rita has been encouraged to think about working at the elementary level, she says, "my entire career has been in middle school...and my passion is at middle school."

Serena is a thirty-three year old African-American female currently in her sixth year as an assistant principal at a rural middle school. Serena earned her undergraduate degree in elementary education and Masters in School Administration from the same state university and stated that she had taught "from kindergarten to fifth grade, up and down that range" before making the switch to middle school.

Mike is a thirty-six year old Caucasian male currently in his third year as an assistant principal at a suburban elementary school. Mike has had varied experience teaching in public and private schools and also worked briefly for the government recruiting teachers

from military personnel. Insecurity with funding in that program motivated him to pursue a position in administration in this system.

Theme: The mentoring relationship is helpful in meeting assistant principals' needs for information and knowledge to be effective in their new jobs.

All new assistant principals in the induction program have advanced degrees and are licensed administrators. All have been teachers and have extensive experience working in schools. Over half had worked in internships and as assistant principals prior to this experience, but many new assistants report that they are unprepared for the daily “nuts and bolts” of administrative work. A theme that emerged from observations, written reflections, and individual interviews is that mentors help novices gain the information and knowledge they need to be effective in their new roles.

This theme first became evident during observations of novices working with mentors in cohort meetings on October 15. As I floated between groups, novices were sharing with mentors and each other. Participants were offering each other support and swapping war stories. Mentors were offering advice, wisdom from their own experiences, and facilitating cohort discussions.

In my notes of that session I recorded: “Following induction session [I] gave novices a break and as they returned they paired up with mentors who had come. Novices were asked to bring journal entries to share. As I circulated around the room and listened in at groups they were mostly sharing questions and concerns about daily tasks common to administrators.” According to my notes novices asked mentors about:

- SST (Student Support Teams) - (Mentor) “It wasn’t meant to be automatic placement in special programs. At my school when a kid is not being successful, when you are trying to figure out why something is not working...that’s when you take them to SST.”
- Observations – (Novice) “We had a problem at my school with a fight in the cafeteria and we (principal and assistant) were both in observations.” (Peer) “At my school we sit down and talk and cover each other. We make up a schedule and share that.”
- PGPs (Professional Growth Plans) – (Novice) “I haven’t written mine, have you?”
(Mentor) “They’re due at the end of October.”
(Novice) “No, really?”
(Mentor): “Your principal should have asked you for one.” (Stares from novices.) The mentor then explained the process and that it might be good initiative to broach the subject with the principal who is also new.
- Special programs procedures – (Novice) “I had to stop an IEP meeting. The student was new to us and the sending school had not done the testing when they were supposed to. We were out of compliance and the kid is failing. I didn’t know what to do, so I stopped the meeting.”
(Peer) “That was exactly the right thing to do. Call somebody in central office. Call the compliance specialist or somebody.”
(Peer) “Yeah, and you gotta have a plan before you go back in there...”

- Discipline – (Novice) “I’m the fashion police at my school. But I had to talk to a teacher who was wearing this top...you know, with the spaghetti straps, bare shoulders. I went and talked with her and asked if she had a sweater to put on. It was embarrassing!”

Throughout the hour-long meeting mentors responded factually from their own experience, offered advice, and facilitated peer learning with other members of the cohort. Though support was another theme that emerged, the bulk of conversations in the cohort meetings focused on “nuts and bolts” and mentors offering help.

I had already begun individual interviews with novices and continued the interviews during October and November as they could be scheduled. The theme of help was not a frequent response to questions posed to novices about the mentoring relationship, but it did emerge from two different interviews.

Diane went on at great length about how her mentor had been helpful in providing her with a specific skill that has made her daily routine more manageable. “For instance, the biggest thing that she has done to help me is with regard to the way I handle discipline records. I mean it seems like a simple thing, but it was completely overwhelming me and I’ve never had to really deal with coming up with a filing system.” Diane had expressed her frustration with record keeping and her mentor had offered a simple tool, color-coded file folders with student labels generated by the data manager that was immediately helpful to her. “I am now able to quickly access that file folder and quickly ascertain what the situations have been with this student and how we dealt with it as well as looking at my notes

and it's just awesome...I feel like it has given me such control over what is, realistically speaking, a major part of what I do in this capacity.”

Anna expressed in her interview that her mentor had helped her think about balance between her career and family life. Both Anna and her mentor have young children and she seemed to appreciate the similarities in gender-specific experiences her mentor shared. “I’ve been able to connect with her that way and I talk to her a lot about balancing family, work, and mothering.”

At a focus group of novices on November 18 the theme of the mentoring relationship being helpful came up again in the comments of several novices. Responding to the question, “What is your perception of the mentoring relationship?” responses included:

- “[The relationship] provides an opportunity to call on a colleague when I need help without feeling like I am being a nuisance.”
- “It is helpful to share ideas, strategies, experiences.”
- “It is an advantage to have an outside opinion and person to discuss important issues. It is also helpful to have an AP as a mentor, they are currently experiencing similar situations, job responsibilities, and challenges.”

Help was a definite theme that emerged in response to the question in the focus group meeting, which followed a monthly induction meeting and preceded the meeting with mentors.

It is curious that the theme of help emerged strongly in observations and the focus group meeting, but was only a minor theme in two out of eight interviews with novices. Perhaps with time and proximity as barriers to more frequent meetings or other contact between

mentors and novices the helping component of the mentoring relationship is more evident at scheduled meetings.

Mentors were asked about their perception of the relationship and two of them did cite help as their intention. Scarlet stated that she perceived that “the sharing sessions [at monthly meetings] were valuable to help.” Scarlet is unique as a mentor in the respect that she has organized several meetings for her cohort of novice assistants outside of the regularly scheduled monthly meetings. However, her definition of an effective mentor involves letting her protégés set the agenda. “They just seemed very stressed about having to do things and I thought, okay, I can do that or I can really try to be helpful and let this be an outlet so that they are comfortable and relaxed here and we can talk about some things.” Scarlet implied that a mentor enhances the relationship by being helpful, not by adding more stress.

Serena also repeated the theme of help in her interview, including the notion of help as information and knowledge: “The one issue someone brought up was ‘I don’t know how to get my observations done because everybody is trying to get them done’ so I made a recommendation that they sit down and meet with their administrators...so there were some helpful hints given.” Also, describing the monthly meeting, Serena stated, “There were some suggestions that were made around the table to other mentees about things to do to help them out, so it ended up helping.” Later, when help was mentioned again, the theme begins to shift to help as emotional support: “After the session we did last time just sitting down, venting, talking, and just communicating and to understand that other people are going through the same things is very helpful because some of them left last time saying, ‘Okay, now I know it’s not just me.’”

In summary, though help emerged as a theme reported by novices in the focus group session and in observation of mentors meeting publicly with their cohort at a monthly meeting, it was not a predominant theme in all interviews. Two novices did suggest that the mentoring relationship was helpful, but the theme did not emerge on its own from the others. Could it be that some novices needed more help than others, or that some individual relationships were not helpful? Or perhaps some respondents want to be complementary in the public session but are more forthright about the nature of the relationship in a private interview. These issues will be addressed in concluding comments in chapter five.

Theme: The mentoring relationship is perceived by novice assistant principals to support them emotionally.

The theme of emotional support as a perceived benefit of the mentoring relationship was even more evident than the theme of help throughout observations, interviews and the novice focus group comments. During the observation of novices meeting with mentors on October 15 novices openly shared “war stories” with one another and networked. Praise and encouragement were heard from mentors, as well as acknowledgement that “We’re all in this together.” During interviews, five novices mentioned the theme of support. Diane was easily the most prolific on this theme. Diane is a single mother who is going to graduate school. She felt that she shared much in common with her mentor and felt she could share her feelings confidentially with her mentor. “It’s a good feeling knowing that I can talk to her candidly about anything with regard to personal life or work life or this program in general without feeling like she’s going to then go back and tell anyone else.” Diane stated

that she perceived the relationship was based on honesty and trust and that she felt like her relationship with her mentor was “more of a budding friendship.”

Later in the interview Diane expanded on her perception of the relationship. “My mentor, gosh, I look at her and truly see a relationship that is very similar to having a big sister who is kind of looking out for you and who is somebody you can talk to when you completely feel like you are about to lose it, knowing that it is not going to be anything that can show up in an evaluation. The dynamics of it I guess would be more personal, genuine...” In closure, Diane returned to the idea that trust and honest sharing had provided her emotional support, “The fact that I can really trust her and open up to her has been really one of the best things that I have had.”

Anna echoed Diane’s perception of the mentoring relationship as “a good working relationship and a good friendship.” Trust and confidentiality contribute to the relationship, and an aspect of support for Anna was not feeling overwhelmed by isolation, that she was not alone. “I went from feeling that everything is going to be great to I have a lot of responsibility on my shoulders and I’m really overwhelmed by this feeling...[It was] very comforting to know that somebody else was in the same position.”

Julia had not had a lot of contact with her mentor, but talked about availability as an aspect of support. “I haven’t had to call him for an emergency or advice yet. I feel like I could pick up the phone and call him. Like he said if he can’t answer the question he would find someone who could.”

Alice also described this availability as a perception of support, but echoed another theme that proximity is a barrier to the mentoring relationship. “She was very friendly, very open,

and I feel like I could call her for anything. Unfortunately with the way my day goes, I tend to reach out to who is closer...”

Bob’s description of his perceptions of the mentoring relationship repeated the theme of support in isolation. When asked for adjectives to describe the mentoring relationship Bob replied, “It’s definitely supportive.” Like Anna, Bob felt support in not being alone. “She’s more on my level going through the same things that I’m currently going through and that’s been nice. When I call her, e-mail her, complain about late buses, and bus discipline she knows exactly what I am talking about because she is still going through the same thing.”

During the focus group meeting on November 18, the theme of support was echoed in several comments from novices:

- “The mentor/mentee relationship has provided me with a ‘safe confidante’ whom I can speak with openly about issues that concern me and my in-house colleagues.”
- “I would compare the relationship to having an older sibling I can call on for advice if it is needed.”
- “Any support, however brief, is helpful.”
- “She has been willing to help, personally and professionally...supportive attitude.”

Novices were clear in observations, interviews, and the focus group that they feel supported in the mentoring relationship and that this support meets their needs, though this is only part of the story, since many novices have sought out and found other mentors.

Though the research investigates the novice assistant principals' perceptions of the mentoring relationship, I was also curious to know mentors' perception of the relationship. The theme of support arose in the focus group of mentors on October 15. Comments recorded included:

- “Novices need time to talk, to vent”.
- “They need feedback...to know that they are doing OK”.
- “They need to network. It’s good for them to realize they are not alone...that it’s OK to be shell-shocked. They feel shell-shocked and we have all been there. It’s OK.”

In individual interviews assistant principal mentors also stated the perception that support was a critical piece of the relationship. Scarlet combined helpful information with emotional support, saying, “When someone is frustrated, yes, you call on them during the week and say things, ‘Is there anything I can do to help you out with that?’” Mike was less forward, but wanted to be accessible and available, which novices perceived as support. “What I have told them is that I am here, I am available.” Mike also did not want to be intrusive, “I don’t want to smother them. I don’t want to be all over them or call them every week...I want them to know if they have a question... there is somebody they can call or email.”

Serena also stated that she perceived that support was an important component of the mentoring relationship, especially combating feelings of isolation. “It’s OK to be feeling the way you are feeling...if you are new at the game you are definitely going to feel overwhelmed. That’s okay and it is normal.”

Emotional support emerged strongly as a benefit of the mentoring relationship in all methods of data collection. Even those novices who had little contact with their mentors described feeling supported by the mentoring relationship. The theme emerged strongly in observations and focus group comments, but was also evident in the majority of the interviews.

Theme: Time and proximity are perceived to be barriers that impede an effective mentoring relationship.

Though it was not apparent at the monthly scheduled meetings of the mentors and their cohorts, as soon as everyone left and returned to their own schools they became absorbed in their busy jobs. Time and proximity apparently became barriers to the on-going creation of an effective mentoring relationship. This theme emerged during the focus group of novices, was echoed by the mentors in their focus group meeting, and was a recurring theme in many interviews. I include it here as “the perception of novice assistant principals of the mentoring relationship” but it could as easily be included in the following section to describe the difficulty of forming an effective helping relationship.

When I met with novices in a focus group I heard comments about time and proximity as barriers such as:

- “We plan to have lunch but schedules cannot be coordinated.”
- “Time makes me turn to those physically closer to me.”
- “We haven’t really had a chance to spend too much time in sustained dialogue.”
- “We are all so busy, it’s hard to get together.”
- “Not being at the same school or close by is hard.”

- “We’ve each missed meetings and it is hard to get together.”

Foreshadowing comments I would hear later in interviews, some assistant principals having trouble meeting with their official mentors turned to their colleagues for help and support, though others used technology to stay in touch with mentors. “[She] has been available to me via Nextel to help me find answers to questions that have presented themselves.” At least one novice preferred the distance of her mentor stating, “It was good to have someone I can call without the pressure of being on site with the mentor.”

In the focus group meeting of mentors, they agreed that time and proximity were barriers, but there were also suggestions to overcome these obstacles. A high school mentor complained about poor attendance by some novices at the scheduled monthly meetings. “I have two new people from the same school, and they can’t both be out of the building at the same time. Their principal won’t let them both come.” Citing the lack of time to meet and difficulty of high school administrators to leave the school, one mentor described how he “schedules ball games to meet his protégés and hang out on the sidelines.” Other mentors stressed contact with protégés and cited frequent emails and phone calls.

In interviews with novices, four out of eight perceived that time and/or proximity contributed to difficulty in the mentoring relationship, and several cited this as the reason that they turned to others to meet their needs. It is interesting that they often cited the same needs, for help with information or emotional support, but that a variety of others met these needs for them in friendships or informal mentoring relationships.

Danielle exemplified this shift to a colleague in the same building when proximity to her mentor was an obstacle. “It’s been difficult because she [mentor] is at a different school so

it's tough to keep in contact...what I have been doing is using the person that I came through the program with and the new A.P....we just lean on each other for support." Danielle expanded on the expediency of this arrangement. "It's a lot easier to be with people that you are already surrounded by. To be able to talk to them and discuss things." Time was also a factor for Danielle. "It's tough trying to call across the county to a mentor and get in touch with her when a lot of stuff has to be handled immediately."

Betsy expressed much the same perception, that both proximity and time made the mentoring relationship difficult. "It does take a will to establish a relationship and it is difficult to do when it is by e-mail or telephone...if it would be possible someone in a close proximity might be helpful. You might actually have time to meet and just go have a cup of coffee and talk, but I know it's a great distance and a large county."

Talking about time Betsy also touched on the trust necessary for a helping relationship. "I think you've got to establish trust to be effective. I can't do it with email. I can't do that with just a telephone conversation. I think that with any kind of relationship what you have to do first is to build some sort of trust and maybe this is something we need to take time enough to do. It's not that our peers are not trustworthy kind of persons, but I think you need to have time to have conversations before you start getting into something like that." For Betsy, a mentoring relationship should be formed through interpersonal contact – "face time."

Bob perceived pros and cons of the proximity issue then began to describe the informal mentoring relationship he had formed with a fellow assistant at his school. "I think in one way it's an advantage to have mentor who is removed from the building who sees things

from a different light through her experiences. Sometimes it's a disadvantage because they are not here day-to-day and if I have something I want to see them about they are not as accessible. I have formed a relationship with one of our A.P.s over here where she is almost like my mentor at school.”

For Alice time and proximity were perceived as barriers, but there was also a perception that her mentor did not know the unique circumstances of her school. She often turned instead to another assistant principal in her building instead of calling her mentor. “She [my mentor] doesn't know our kids, she doesn't know our environment, and while there may be times when she and I could sit down and talk about general things, how you should do things as an A.P. or handle situations, the proximity of my people here on campus are what I have turned to... I have not taken the time to call her just because I have the support here.”

Again, the prevalence of this theme, that assistant principals perceived that time and proximity were problems in the formal mentoring relationship, is a significant comment on the quality of the relationship, and also a comment on their perception on the formation of this new relationship. In interviews and focus groups novices touched on themes of communication and the interpersonal skills necessary to forge a positive helping relationship. These themes will be explored further in the next section.

Theme: Mentoring relationships are formed through communication.

While it may seem obvious that a new interpersonal relationship requires communication, comments during interviews and the focus groups, and my observation of mentors' meetings with novices adds some insight into the mechanics of a relationships formation and quality. Mentors first met novices at a summer conference and held a formal

“get acquainted” conference that was their first communication, and their first chance to begin to form a relationship. Later, there were scheduled monthly meetings, supplemented with email, phone calls, and in some cases by privately scheduled meetings. This just begins to tell the story of the types and quality of the communications between mentor and novice, and does influence novice assistant principals’ perceptions of the mentoring relationship.

During the focus group of novices I heard about the various ways that mentors communicated with novices:

- “Besides the monthly meetings we have emailed a few times.”
- “She is available to me via Nextel.”
- “Email correspondence has been great.”
- “I email in an emergency.”

In their focus group meeting mentors cited “frequent emails and phone calls” as the primary means of communication with their cohorts between monthly meetings, though individual interviews with novices raise the question whether this was reality or a good intention.

Four out of eight novices (Diane, Danielle, Betsy, and Bob) mentioned that they had been in contact with their mentors via email, though for Betsy it was a less than satisfying method of forming a mentoring relationship. Diane and William both mentioned phone contact when asked about formation of the mentoring relationship, though for William it was “not a lot.”

Novice assistants did respond in interviews that effective aspects of communication were important in the formation of an effective mentoring relationship. Under this theme I heard aspects of the helping relationship like openness, availability, accessibility, trust, and

active listening that were necessary for the formation of a mentoring relationship, though some ascribed these attributes to their mentors and some did not.

Diane was very positive about how her mentor had created the mentoring relationship. “Just being honest and upfront and I think we both are able to get a good read on each other even in our initial meeting.” Diane may have preferred a one-on-one relationship with her mentor, because she commented, “I find myself really thinking about ‘Okay, am I monopolizing the conversation and am I allowing this other new assistant principal to express herself?’” However, she felt like her mentor could manage the communication and complemented her. “She is really good at listening and in guiding you into thinking of solutions.”

William has had little contact with his mentor, and does not perceive a great need to communicate with his mentor, but felt that his mentor was open and accessible: “I like him and he is very easy to talk to. I feel like if I needed to talk to him or if I needed his advice on something he will be right there.”

Betsy also commented that her mentor enhanced the relationship with good listening skills. “Having someone there - just a confidante or just a good listener - is extremely important when you’re going through this.” Betsy is not turning to her mentor regularly and not having the time necessary to establish trust was a problem for her in the formation of a mentoring relationship. “I think that with any kind of relationship what you have to do first is to build some sort of trust and maybe this is something we need to take time enough to do.”

Danielle is also not in communication with her mentor, and trust is also an issue. “Right now we are not communicating at all. We see each other at meetings and we will say, ‘How is everything going?’ but at the same time you know that at 11:30 [end of scheduled monthly meetings] I’ve got to get back to school.” Danielle spoke positively about her relationship with a peer at school when commenting on communication with her formal mentor. “We are not able to communicate which makes it a little tough for us when we do meet because if you really haven’t gotten to know each other by now you really don’t share things that I normally share with [peer].”

Julia had not had much contact with her mentor either, but did feel that he was available and accessible. “I haven’t contacted him by e-mail or phone or anything. I just haven’t felt the need to do that I guess. I think he’s kind of leaving it up to us to contact him if there’s anything that we need. I do feel like I could do that.”

Alice also had not been communicating with her mentor, in part because she feels supported by peers on her campus, but also because she feels that the cohort arrangement is a barrier to communication with her mentor. “The other new A.P., she and I are not on the same page. I found it interesting and I found myself actually stop talking because of that. My mentor and I seemed to get along fine and I enjoyed talking to her...that was interesting because I found myself just kind of sitting back and removing myself from the conversation just because of the dynamics between the other A.P. and I, but not the mentor.”

The information gleaned from focus groups and interviews suggests that speaking in person, or in writing, forms a new mentoring relationship through communication, both literally or over the phone, but that there is also a deeper affective dimension of

communication between novices and mentors. The interpersonal skills of mentors and novices do affect the formation of the mentoring relationship. Further, I sensed a subtle distinction between theory and practice in the novices' perceptions of the mentoring relationship and its formation. Novices were saying that the mentoring relationship was helpful and supportive, but that they were not in touch with their mentors.

In conclusion, in order to form a mentoring relationship novices and mentors need to communicate about helpful tips for skill acquisition or on a deeper affective level to aid in their emotional support. However, some novices reported having little communication with their mentors outside of the scheduled monthly meetings. Time and proximity were frequently cited as barriers to the formation of the relationship. Mentoring is a good idea, novices seemed to say, but that they do not have time to call their mentors and play phone tag when they need help or support. Instead, some practical novice assistant principals have not formed meaningful mentoring relationships with their formal mentors, but have turned to others for help and support.

Theme: Practical alternatives to assigned mentors – Novice assistant principals often find their own mentors and form informal mentoring relationships with others.

During the course of the study two different pictures of novices' perceptions of the mentoring relationship emerged. Themes of help and support and positive perceptions of the mentoring relationship emerged from the data of observations of the scheduled monthly meetings of mentors with their cohorts of novices and comments about those meetings. The picture began to shift in comments from novices in their focus groups, and a different perception of the relationship was expressed in individual interviews with novices.

During the focus group meeting with novices, themes of help and support were tempered by comments about the barriers of time and proximity. When asked about how the mentoring relationship was formed, novices described the various methods of communication and the interpersonal skills necessary. However, in individual interviews with novices, when probing for their perceptions of the mentoring relationship the theme that emerged was that the formal mentoring relationship as it is structured in this particular program is a good plan that works for some, but not for other novices.

In each structured interview questions were asked to probe for novices' perceptions of the mentoring relationship and also how it was formed. Diane was unique in that she perceived a "growing friendship" with her mentor who she regarded as "a big sister." Betsy did not have a close relationship with her mentor, citing proximity as a difficulty, "Ideally it would be somebody who is in your building...closer proximity would be helpful." Of the eight novice assistant principals interviewed, six stated that they had developed informal mentoring relationships or found the help and support that they described as a mentoring relationship from peers in lieu of their formal mentors. During interviews I probed respondents to describe these relationships, how they had been formed, and how they were meeting their needs.

Anna has received help and support from her mentor who is in touch with her and who has scheduled additional meetings to develop the relationship, but she still has formed an informal relationship with a fellow assistant principal at her own school. The same themes of help and support, trust and friendship apply equally in this relationship as with her mentor. "[Peer] and I bounce ideas off of each other often. Something will happen and we will go to

each other's office, 'Okay, this just happened, what would you have done?'" Anna described her relationship with her peer as "a good working relationship and a good friendship. It's a trusting relationship. I trust that if I tell him something that it's going to stay there in his office." Anna also described how the peer relationship is helpful, "We really make sure that we cover for each other at meetings...he will take really good notes and bring them back to share them."

Bob also was complementary toward his formal mentor and perceived the relationship in a positive light, but had turned to a seasoned peer on his own campus. For Bob, distance from his formal mentor was an obstacle to the relationship. "Sometimes it's a disadvantage because they are not here day-to-day and if I have something I want to see them about they are not as accessible. I have formed a relationship with one of our A.P.s over here where she is almost like my mentor at school."

Bob's informal mentor is accessible, knowledgeable, and helpful to him. "She has been doing this for a while. She is one of those I think who could be a principal if she wanted to, but she has chosen to stay at the A.P. side for now so she has just years and years of experience. At anytime I call her and say, 'Are you busy? What's going on?' She just says 'Yes, but what do you need?' and we will just sit down and sort of bounce things off of each other. That has been very helpful."

Bob described a level of support from his peer that is a function of her close proximity. "Yes, there is definitely support. She actually gave me the other day (I don't know where she got it) but it was a gift certificate to get a massage somewhere. She said, 'I thought you might need this,' and that just brightened my day up a little bit. There definitely is an

emotional side to that. It's almost forming more than the relationship with [formal mentor] just 'cause we don't have as much contact. Nothing against her personally she has been great, but I think it is easier to form that relationship with somebody who you see on a daily basis."

Alice described her mentor as "friendly, open, and accessible" but found that a fellow assistant and her principal were meeting her mentoring needs. "It allows you to come to school with the confidence that you are not alone. I think that for me is very important. I have the confidence of knowing that if I am in trouble in any situation whether it's just a question or I have a situation such as Friday morning we had a major fight in the cafeteria. I know someone is there to physically, mentally, and emotionally to help me. [Having them as] my informal mentors has helped me in all those aspects of making me feel more successful as a new person."

Alice also described the dynamics of her school as "unique" and perceived that her mentor may not be as familiar or helpful as her peers. "She has been very open with, 'Call me anytime,' friendly, etc. but she doesn't know our kids, she doesn't know our environment, and while there may be times when she and I could sit down and talk about general things, how you should do things as an A.P. or handle situations, the proximity of my people here on campus are what I have turned to."

Proximity and support on her own campus influenced Alice to turn to her peers rather than call her mentor. Alice also described a positive mentoring relationship with her principal, a theme echoed by others. "I have not taken the time to call her [mentor] just because I have the two supports here. My principal is very supportive. I feel very

comfortable going in and talking to him as my support not as my boss per se. This is his first year as a principal so he's actually going through some of that also so as someone who was just an A.P. last year he has actually served as a mentor to me too."

When I interviewed Danielle in early November she had had little contact with her formal mentor, and in fact had not known she was her mentor when they first met. "Actually I met her at one of the first A.P. meetings that we had at the [regional meeting]. I actually did not know that she was my mentor. Maybe she knew, but just didn't say anything. We went out to lunch together..." Since that first meeting busy schedules and distance made communication difficult for Danielle. "We have met at one small brief meeting and we sent one e-mail since then. This has been real difficult because she is at a different school so it's tough to keep in contact because you are busy all day and you never get a chance to breathe." Despite the lack of communication with her mentor, Danielle cited a need for help and support, but had turned instead to a peer on campus who is also new, as well as a friend from her Masters in School Administration program. "Basically what I have been doing is using the person that I came through the program with and also using the new A.P. here who happens to be from my hometown and we got hired at the same time. We are both new and we just lean on each other for support."

Several area universities have Masters of School Administration programs that prepare and license educators as school administrators, and I found that several novice assistant principals in this cohort had recently graduated together from these programs. Through the programs novice assistants had friends and networks that provide ready access to some of the support and help intended by the formal mentoring program. In addition to

Danielle, Julia and William both cited informal mentoring from friends in their Masters in School Administration programs as an alternative to their formal mentor.

William is a confident and self-assured assistant principal who also interned in the same school where he is now a novice A.P. William is unique in expressing the perception that he does not need a mentor, in part because his principal and teachers on the staff meet his need for support. “There is not a relationship that exists between us other than the formal title of mentor/mentee. I think a lot of that is because I think I have a strong support here with my principal. I go to him for things and I think that there are teachers here who I have to say to some degree are mentors who have been in the school for a while who know the culture.”

William stated that he liked his mentor and felt that he was accessible, but he hadn't found a need to call. “I like him and he is very easy to talk to. I feel like if I needed to talk to him or if I needed his advice on something he will be right there.” He gave an example. “The principal here was gone for a week and that was in the back of my mind when he said ‘I will be gone for this week’ I knew that if something happened whom do I call? I had handy [mentor's] number just in case something happened.” It didn't.

Like Danielle, William has an emotional support system with members of his Masters in School Administration cohort. “I have a group that I meet with once a month that was organized by one of our professors at [area university] and she is very much an advocate for kids, social justice, we get together and talk about what's going on our schools and what our big problems are and we are each others sounding board...I see a huge benefit in having that.

I wonder where I would be emotionally if I didn't have that. I think I have an advantage in having those kinds of things in place."

Julia described circumstances very similar to William's and her perceptions of the mentoring relationship were similar as well. Julia described her mentor as available and ready to help, though she had not felt the need to contact him. "I feel comfortable asking him just about anything. I haven't had to call him for an emergency or advice yet. I feel like I could pick up the phone and call him. Like he said if he can't answer the question he would find someone who could."

Instead Julia turns to her grad school cohort for help and support. "There is a group of us that gets together about once a month to talk about some issues and that's been really great. I could call on them at any time and often times do at the end of the day to say here's what happened to me today, how about you, how was your day, what would you have done in this situation, here's what I did, what do you think? I've kept in close contact with a few people that I graduated with and that's been incredibly supportive."

Julia also is in touch with professors from the graduate program who have offered support. "I feel real close with a couple of professors who I worked with last year and they have been real supportive. They occasionally check in or send an e-mail, so I know that they are still there. Even though I graduated I know they are still interested and invested in my success."

In her description of her peer group support Julia commented about the time and trust necessary to form a mentoring relationship. "I developed a relationship with them over two years in study groups, sessions, and test taking situations where we were kind of forced

together in groups to solve problems and so I think we developed, under a kind of pressure I guess, this great trust and a really good bond and so there a couple of people who I just feel very comfortable just talking to them about anything related to work and really trust their advice and I had enough time to know or get to know them to know that we share similar philosophies about kids and about learning and to me that's really important. I have to have that before I can really talk to someone about a problem I'm having..."

Julia has formed a similar bond of trust with her principal. "He was the A.P. here for four years before becoming a principal. So I think that right away enabled me to trust just his sense about things and judgments that he would make because he knows the staff very well, he knows the school very well, he knows the system, he's very comfortable in that role. Our styles are very similar and we got along really great right from the start when he interviewed me and so I feel real comfortable working with him and I definitely consider him to be a mentor."

In summary, a surprising finding in the study is that six out of eight novice assistant principals described mentoring relationships as helpful and supportive, but that time and proximity made communication with their formal mentor difficult outside of scheduled monthly meetings. In individual interviews these novices described how they had filled the need for closer contact with mentors at their schools or with colleagues from graduate school. Two novices described how their relationship with their program assigned mentor was meeting their needs, but the majority of novices in interviews had turned to others and had formed mentoring relationships with someone other than their assigned mentor. Conclusions

about this finding and the implications for the program in this study will be examined in chapter five.

Findings – A Summary

From observations, focus group sessions, and interviews my findings concerning novice assistant principals' perceptions of the mentoring relationship in this particular program and how they were formed can be summarized as:

- Novice assistant principals expressed positive perceptions about mentoring.
(Mentoring is good.)
- Mentoring relationships are helpful for the acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Mentoring relationships can provide needed emotional support.
- Mentoring relationships take time to develop.
- Mentoring relationships need to be built on trust.
- Mentoring relationships require effective communication (openness, honesty, accessibility).
- Time and proximity are barriers to mentoring relationships and their formation.
- When novice assistant principals need help and support they sometimes turn to others with whom they already have a relationship, or to those who are more accessible.

When I engaged individual novices in interviews about the mentoring relationship the conversations often strayed from a discussion of the formal mentoring to other relationships that were meeting their needs. It appeared that novices did need help and support, but they were not getting it from their formal mentors. I was curious to know if the perceptions of

this sample of eight novice assistant principals represented the perceptions of others in the larger cohort of forty-two new assistant principals in the program. Based on the information I had gleaned thus far I created a survey and asked the thirty two assistant principals in attendance at the regularly scheduled December meeting to respond.

Survey Results

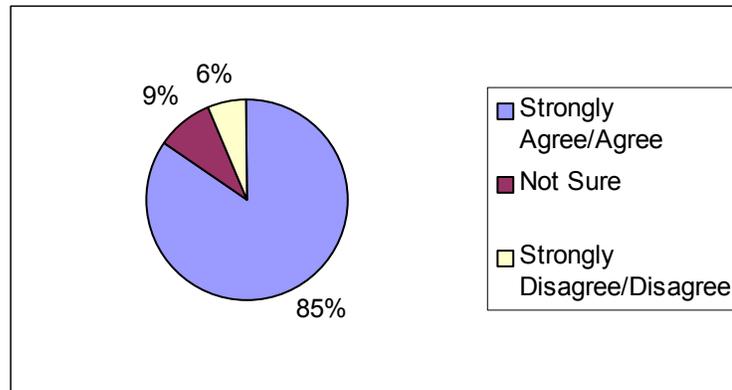
I designed the survey to further explore the themes that I had heard in my sample of novice assistant principals. Using a Lickert scale I asked respondents to rank their responses to nine questions. Though they are not named as such, the broad themes describing the mentoring relationship revolve around help (Questions # 1 and #6), emotional support (Questions #2 and #3), communication (Questions #4, #5, and #10), barriers to the formation of the mentoring relationship (Questions #8 and #9) and alternative support (Question #7).

The data from the survey is attached. [Appendices D and E] In Appendix D all responses are totaled. In Appendix E like responses are grouped by collapsing positive (strongly agree/agree) and negative (disagree/strongly disagree) responses. Tables were created from these tables to graphically illustrate responses by themes.

In general the responses from the larger cohort add internal validity to the themes expressed by the smaller sample of novices. Examination of the questions and responses by themes, and additional anonymous comments from the participants on the surveys add some shades of meaning.

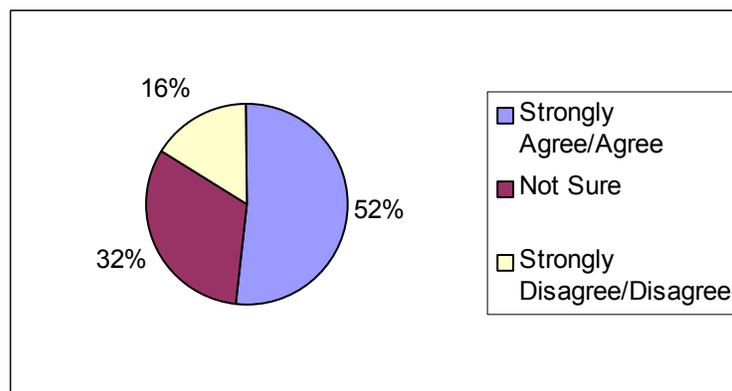
In Table 5 below respondents add validity to the theme of help with 85% responding that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, “My mentor has been helpful to me.”

Table 5: "My mentor has been helpful to me."



Though in Table 5 twenty-seven of the thirty-two respondents agreed that their mentors had been helpful to them, the number who agree falls drastically when the question is posed as “made my job easier.” (Table 6) In answer to question six (job easier) only sixteen agreed, while ten (almost one third) were “not sure” and five disagreed. Perhaps the disparity is between the more general term “help” and the more specific utilitarian connotation of “made my job easier.”

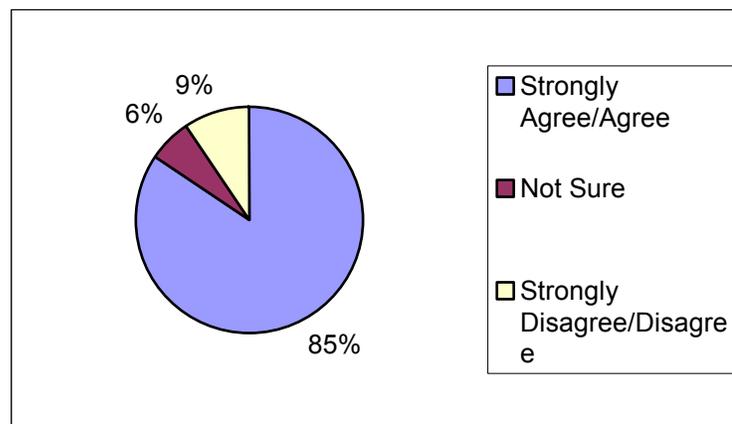
Table 6: "Having a mentor has made my job easier."



Written comments on the theme of help ranged from broad and general (“The program is beneficial to new assistant principals.” “This has been a wonderful experience.”) to specific (“[Mentor] has been very helpful in many aspects of this mentoring program.”), but reflected the majority opinion that mentoring was a positive, helpful experience. Another comment reflected the dynamic between help and barriers: “My mentor provides good information and is a valuable resource – but she has three of us – so I feel that she is ‘maxed out’.”

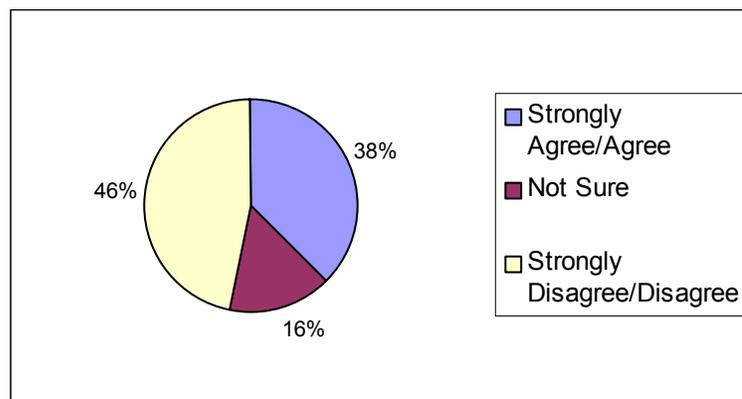
Though both questions two and three attempt to capture the theme of emotional support in the mentoring relationship there is a definite difference in degree between Question #2 “feel supported” and Question #3 “close personal relationship.” As Table 7 shows, responses of the larger group reflect the sentiments of the sample of novices. Most of those interviewed said that they felt some level of support when a mentor was accessible, even if they were not turning to their mentors.

Table 7: "I feel supported by my mentor."



Twenty-seven of thirty two respondents in the large group expressed “support.” However, as Table 8 shows graphically the majority of the respondents in the larger sample (fifteen) did not feel that they had a “close, personal relationship” with their mentors, and among novices interviewed only Diane described the level of support as a “friendship.”

Table 8: "I have developed a close personal relationship with my mentor."



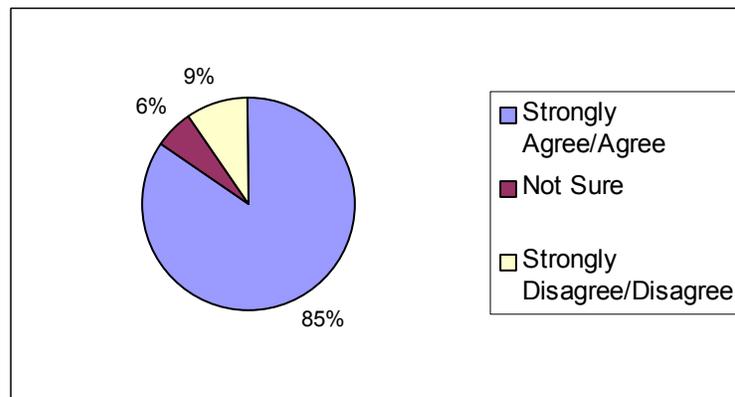
Written comments from survey participants on this theme also suggest support from mentors (“This program is great. It has really added that extra support in the tough situations”), but not a closeness, and time is mentioned as a barrier. “I enjoy my mentor, however time and place is an issue in terms of me maximizing my time with her. She is very supportive.” One comment reflects William’s statement that he did not feel a need for a mentor. “I feel the mentoring program is a very important component to the new AP position. Though I have not needed support from him, I feel supported.”

Mentors and novices in the cohort were paired primarily by level (elementary, middle, high school) and region. One comment about the random pairings may provide insight into some negative responses to the question of the “close, personal relationship.” “I think a mentor is a very personal thing and matching up with someone one is really

comfortable with by chance is a toss up.” The respondent goes on to explain that they found support from another mentor elsewhere, “but my appointed one has not been a positive experience.”

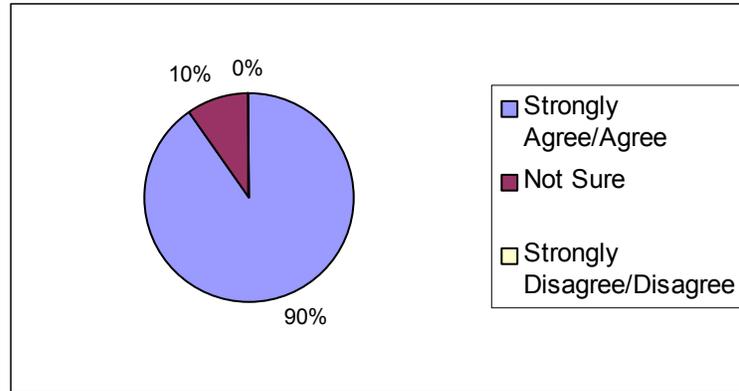
Survey results on methods of communication bear out interview results that some novices have little contact with their mentors outside of monthly meetings. Similarly, trying to gauge novices’ perceptions of effective aspects of communication, the large majority indicated that their mentors were “open” and “accessible” (Question #6) and that they felt that they could “trust” their mentor not to violate confidentiality, but that they simply had little contact. Table 9 below illustrates this dynamic.

Table 9: "I feel that I can talk about any issue or concern with my mentor."



Another aspect of communication that respondents ranked highly was confidentiality. Though many novices did not have frequent contact with their mentors, Table 10 shows that they felt that they could trust their mentors not to violate their confidentiality.

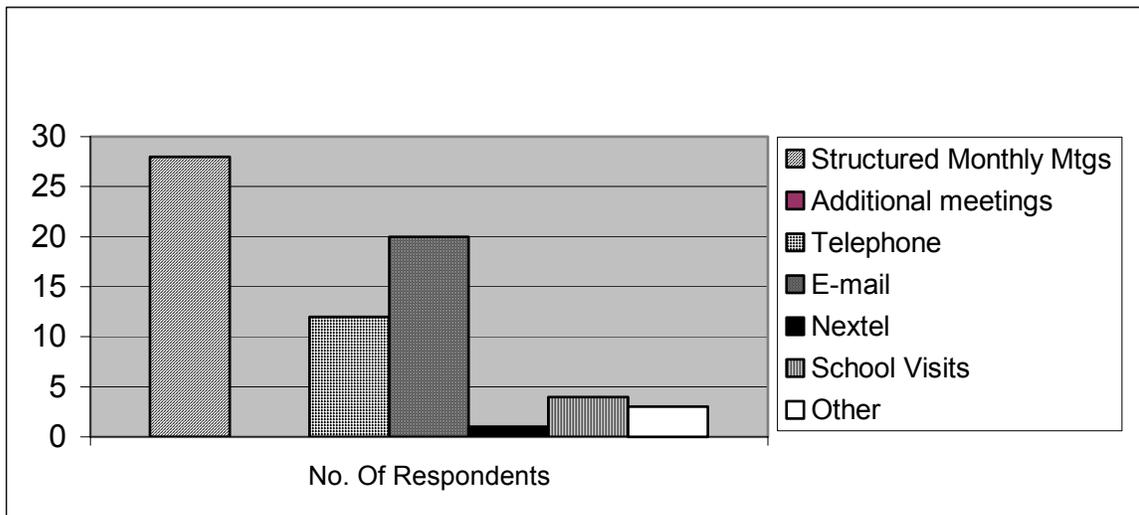
Table 10: "I trust my mentor not to violate my confidentiality."



The sample population indicated few communications outside monthly meetings.

Table 11 allowed for multiple responses to methods of communication between novices and mentors.

Table 11: "Communication with my mentor has occurred through: "

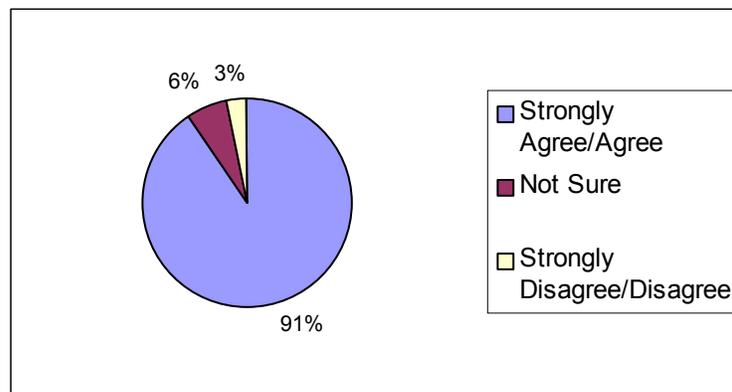


There were no written comments on the subject of communication, however a closer examination of participant responses to Question #10, which asked that respondents check “Any that apply” for methods of communication, bears out that there was little “face time”

between mentors and novices outside of scheduled monthly meetings (no one responded to “Additional scheduled meetings,” four had done school visits, and two had met at the job fair or another system event). Twenty novices said that they kept in communication with mentors via email and twelve on the phone, but it would appear that some novices have little or no communication with mentors outside of scheduled monthly meetings.

As Table 12 shows, the overwhelming majority of respondents from the large group reflected the smaller sample on the question of alternatives to the formal mentoring program.

Table 12: "I have found support outside the formal mentoring program."

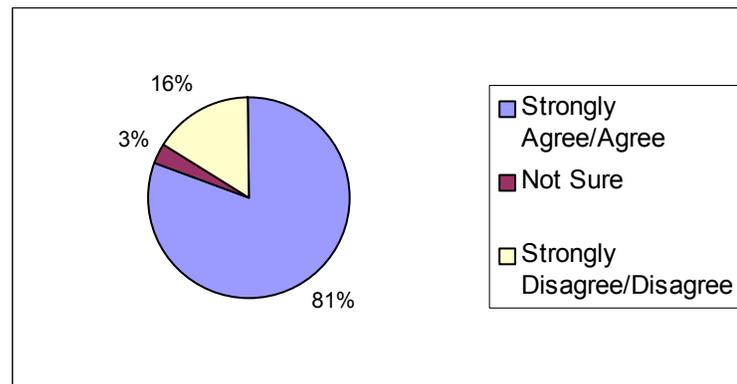


In interviews I heard that they had sought out colleagues at their schools, peers from an internship or Masters in School Administration program, or their principals. Some comments from survey participants included: “I have sought out a mentor – or selected someone as a ‘mentor’ role so I don’t feel isolated...” “I have found support through other means.” Combining themes of outside support with communication: “I have not had many opportunities to dialogue with my mentor. I have not had any reason to go to her with concerns because I have a veteran AP who is very competent and gives me guidance at my

school. She [the mentor] has not reached out to me. The only contact I have had with her was at AP meetings.”

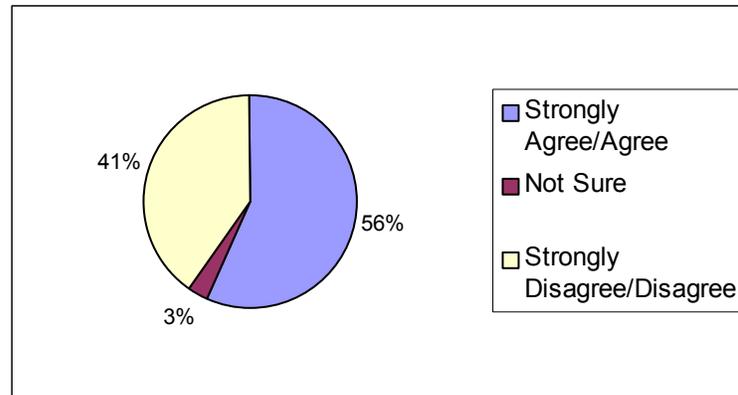
If many of the novices in the small sample as well as the larger cohort had turned to others for help and support I was curious to know why and whether the reasons cited by the sample would be reflected in the larger population. As Table 13 indicates, twenty-nine out of thirty-two respondents, a clear majority, cited time as a barrier to the mentoring relationship.

Table 13: "Time is a barrier to the mentoring program."



One written comment summed it up: “I enjoy my mentor, however time and place is an issue in terms of maximizing my time with her.” Two respondents shifted to problem-solving and made recommendations: “It would be great to assign required time at the mentor’s school.” And in a recommendation that addresses both issues of time and proximity: “I would love to see time built into the program for on site visits between mentor/mentee.”

In general, the survey data on the question of proximity as a barrier is not as clear as the issue of time. As Table 14 shows, respondents in the large group were split (18 agree / 13 disagree) on the question of proximity as a barrier to the mentoring relationship.

Table 14: "Proximity is a barrier to the mentoring program."

Clearly respondents said in question #7 (Alternative outside) that they had turned to others for a mentoring relationship, but apparently for some it was not because of distance. One respondent summed up the ambivalence reflected in the survey responses: "It is good to have a mentor at a different school because I gain a different perspective. However, distance is an issue."

From observations, focus groups, and interviews my finding is that novice assistant principals do need help and support, but that in my sample they were often not getting it from their formal mentors. The survey of the larger cohort yielded similar findings. While the majority of novices described their mentors as helpful and supportive, and described mentoring relationships of openness and trust, most had turned to others for support. The majority of respondents in the survey did not agree with the statement that they had a "close, personal relationship" with their mentor. Implications and recommendations of this finding will follow.

Summarizing the data from observations, focus groups, and interviews along with the data from the survey indicates that novice assistant principals in this study had positive

perceptions of mentoring but most stated that this need was not being met by their assigned mentors. They described how establishing the mentoring relationship takes time and communication and that many of them had little contact with their mentors outside of scheduled monthly meetings. Though mentoring relationships were described as helpful and supportive, time and proximity were barriers that frequently redirected novices to other peers and colleagues for mentoring relationships.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Recommendations and Reflections

Conclusions

Findings from the study of the mentoring relationship with novice assistant principals support descriptions of mentoring relationships with novice principals. The findings that novices in this program described mentoring relationships as helpful and supportive suggest that new principals and new assistant principals have similar needs. The vast majority of novice assistants in the study, whether in focus groups, interviews, or the survey stated that mentoring was helpful, confirming research that “principals typically identify other school leaders as their primary source of help in becoming a school leader” (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 13). Novice assistant principals in the study also stated that they felt supported emotionally in their mentoring relationships, echoing Marsha Playko’s (1990) comment on the value of collegial support. Help and support were two important components of the mentoring relationship commonly cited in the literature as benefits of mentoring for principals and these were true of the assistant principals being mentored in this study.

Study findings describing the development of the mentoring relationship also echo descriptions of principal mentoring programs in the literature. Trust is cited in the literature (Playko, 1990, Monsour, 1998, Walker & Stott, 1994) as a central component in the development of an effective mentoring relationship, and though it was sometimes noted by its absence, trust emerged from the study as a common theme novice assistant principals used to describe their relationships with their mentors. Effective communication also emerged as a theme that is supported in the literature (Walker & Stott, 1994).

In this particular mentoring program for novice assistant principals, time and proximity were cited as barriers to the development of an effective mentoring relationship. Though possible recommendations will be discussed below, it is interesting to note that novices often praised their mentors and described the mentoring relationship as helpful and supportive when at the same time they described having difficulty connecting with their mentors. It is also interesting to note that some novices found a value in the mentoring process, but found time and proximity to be barriers to meeting with their formal mentors. Some of these novices found mentors among the assistant principals and principals on their own campuses. Some novices turned to former professors and colleagues from their Masters in School Administration programs for help and support.

Most novice assistant principals in the study, even those who had sought out alternative support, met with their mentors once a month at regularly scheduled induction program meetings. As the survey data show, for some novices these monthly meetings were the only face-to-face contact with their mentors. The survey also suggests that while some novices had phone or email contact with their mentors between meetings, others had no contact.

An assumption on my part was that there was some sort of relationship formed between mentor and assigned novice assistant principals. Though only one survey comment described a negative response (“I have sought out a mentor...but my appointed one has not been a positive experience”), perhaps the question should have been *if* a relationship had been formed, not *how*.

During focus groups I asked how the mentoring relationship was formed. Novices described the various methods of communication used and the interpersonal skills necessary (trust, openness, honesty). What became evident in individual interviews and later in comments in the surveys is that not all mentors and novices had developed anything more than a superficial relationship – an “on call” contact person they could turn to in an emergency. The majority who did not perceive that they had a “close personal relationship” with their mentor emphasized this in the survey. The effect is what Robert Malone calls an artificially constructed mentor-protégé relationship that results in a neutral-effect relationship at best (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 13).

Recommendations for the school district

As an intrinsic study the findings of this research are most applicable for future versions of this particular school district induction program. Again, such a program for novice assistant principals is rare, and though it was conceived and designed upon best practices, in the spirit of continuous improvement I offer the following recommendations that my research suggests would improve the support and induction of novice assistant principals. Recommendations include:

- Train all assistant principals in basic mentoring skills. In order to develop a pool of potential mentors and also to enhance the communication and interpersonal skills of assistant principals, I suggest a brief training program for all assistant principals in mentoring roles and processes, as well as an overview of aspects of the helping relationship. I recommend incorporating program designs described earlier in this paper (Daresh, 2001; Playko, 1990; Barnett, 1990). Though I

recommend continuing to assign mentors and facilitate a formal program of mentoring, having all assistant principals trained should improve the effectiveness of informal mentoring arrangements made by participants. If novices seek out a mentor on their own sites, having some training in the process of mentoring should enhance the informal mentoring relationships established.

- Identify and train enough mentors to provide a one-on-one mentoring relationship for all novice assistant principals. Though there was not a majority opinion expressed that the cohort approach (two or three novices to one mentor) was a detriment, it was stated by at least one survey respondent. (“I feel that my mentor is maxed out.”) Certainly a 1:1 ratio would allow more time for both participants, make the relationship more exclusive and special, and perhaps make meeting easier.
- Schedule more time for communication. In focus groups, interviews, and the survey I heard that there is not enough time to develop an effective mentoring relationship. (“I would love to see time built into the program for on site visits between mentor/mentee.” “It would be great to assign time at the mentor’s school.”) Time is a precious commodity in the life of busy administrators, but there appeared to be a benefit to assistant principals from the time spent with mentors. What I really heard here is that they wanted a facilitator to structure and schedule time for meetings and communication.
- Add more structure to increase opportunities for a personal relationship to develop. Requiring that a relationship develop seems artificial and impersonal,

but perhaps suggestions to mentors to contact their novices between meetings can provide more opportunities to communicate and for a relationship to grow. A periodic group email reminder to mentors to stay in touch or reach out with a phone call is certainly possible. The mentors in this study receive a stipend for their participation and they have made at least a verbal commitment to communicate with their novice cohort. A monitoring system for mentors to log contact hours could add accountability and emphasize the importance of this verbal contract.

- Rethink time and locations for meetings. Thus far mentors have met with novices at scheduled monthly induction meetings. Additional meetings were recommended, but the findings suggest that few assistant principals were taking advantage of outside opportunities. Attendance at monthly meetings (usually held in the mornings at one central location) varies, but averages around 80%. Perhaps breakfast or dinner meetings of mentors and novices (especially if the meal can be provided) would be a better draw for busy administrators. Mentor/novice meetings have always been paired with monthly induction meetings, but perhaps one or more meetings should be scheduled strictly for a social gathering and time for mentors and novices to talk and network.
- Maximize existing cohort groups. More should be done to identify and take advantage of existing cohort groups to provide on-going support and peer mentoring. Several of the individuals interviewed in the sample, and others surveyed identified members of their graduate cohort or fellow interns as informal

mentors. Using a survey to gather and compile this information in a database would be a good first step to maximizing a support system already in place.

Recommendations for further research

There is general agreement in the literature on the benefits of mentoring for educators and the participants in my study concur that the mentoring relationship helps and supports them during their induction. However, some novice assistant principals in my study report that they had not developed a “close, personal relationship” with their mentor. Also, though my research did begin to uncover both some concrete actions to establish communication and some of the interpersonal skills necessary, I do not feel that I fully explored the “how” of mentoring relationship formation.

Playko (1990) described the characteristics of a positive mentor-protégé relationship for principals, and my research suggests that these hold true for assistant principals as well. But exactly what can a district program do to motivate participants to make that commitment to the mutually enhancing partnership? I believe that future research should be done with assistant principals in the field of mentoring, to explore both the participant behaviors and the program structures that result in a positive mentoring relationship. Potential research questions might include: Is there a positive helping relationship formed during mentoring? If so, what are the interpersonal behaviors and program structures that help create that positive relationship?

Another finding from the study was the large number of participants who sought out peer assistance in one form or another. Though these were sometimes referred to as “informal mentors” by participants these peers had not been trained in mentoring, and this

was not the stated or implied intention of the relationship when it was formed. It is what busy assistant principals do when they need help or support and did not or could not turn immediately to their formal mentor. I believe that this phenomenon could benefit from further study to compare and contrast formal mentoring with self initiated peer assistance.

I would also recommend a repetition of this research with attention to some of the variables that were not addressed in my study. I have already mentioned that mentors in this program are paired with a cohort of 2-4 novices. Would the findings on relationships and their formation be similar or different in a 1:1 ratio? Most mentor/novice pairings in my study were same gender, but what exactly were the effects of gender on the mentoring relationship? I also did not specifically address ethnicity or years of experience and would be curious to know how these variables affect the relationship and its formation. I believe that each of these areas has the potential to yield insight and useful information for those interested in mentoring of administrators.

Recommendations for district programs in general

Though this is an intrinsic study of one particular district mentoring program and I make no claims that the finding will generalize to other districts, my findings describe aspects of the mentoring relationship for assistant principals that validate earlier studies of mentoring for principals. Mentoring has been described as a useful strategy for the development of novice principals and my findings are that it is a useful strategy for novice assistant principals in this particular district induction program. Because I feel strongly that such programs can help novice assistant principals, and because I doubt that a well-designed program can harm a novice I suggest that school districts seeking to recruit and retain new

administrators consider developing and sustaining a mentoring program for novice assistant principals.

Districts seeking to create such a program would be wise to review the literature and incorporate best practices described above, including:

- Create the mentoring program carefully, with thoughtful selection of mentors.
- Provide training to mentors.
- Provide opportunities for communication and growth of both mentors and novices.
- Provide structure and facilitation.

Remembering the importance of the principal as instructional leader in an age of educational accountability and cognizant of the shrinking pool of administrators, school districts, superintendents, and boards of education should think differently about the succession of leadership, including new assistant principals being named in their schools. I would like to suggest a “farm team” metaphor with assistant principals as the minor league players being groomed for the big league. Minor league players have support including trainers and coaches to help them be successful so that when the scouts come looking for the next major league pitcher they are at the top of their game. I believe that a successful succession plan to fill the growing void of instructional leadership would include more support, training, and coaching of our minor league players, our assistant principals, so that when they are tapped to go to the “big show” we won’t be leaving a rookie alone in the hot seat.

Final Reflections

Looking backward at the year-long process of involvement in this induction program, planning the study, data collection, analysis, and interpretation brings a range of emotional responses. I hope that I have shed some light on some dynamics of the mentoring relationship in this particular district induction program and in the process made a contribution to the slim literature on mentoring programs for assistant principals. Also, if one is interested in sustaining improvement of our public schools and assumes the role of principals in instructional leadership, then I hope I have raised an awareness of the need for mentoring for novice assistant principals.

Reviewing the methodology of the study and the data it yielded I am struck by the differences in themes and nuances that emerged from interviews as opposed to observations and focus groups. In particular, it seemed that large groups of novices together sang praises for their mentors and complemented them, listing examples of help and support. This was not the case in individual interviews. Was this unique to my sample of novice assistant principals? It might have been, because a larger group in the anonymous survey did indicate that their mentors had provided help (85%) and support (also 85%).

Themes that emerged from data in focus groups were validated by the observations in meetings and by the survey data. Was there something about the interviews that yielded the different data? Are novice assistant principals in a public setting more likely to have a proclivity to positive comments about the mentors, but to be more honest in a private interview? Two things I would do differently after reflection would be to ask direct questions about help and support in interviews rather than the open-ended format used and to

refine survey questions to yield more specific, quantifiable details about the mentoring relationship (e.g. the number of meetings between the mentor and novice, the amount of time spent together, choices from a list of adjectives describing the relationship). More specific data from these methods should increase the internal validity of the data collected from observations and focus groups.

The major lesson I have learned in the process of this research is that it is truly never done. I have learned first hand that it is true that the more we learn, the more we discover that there is to learn. I am anxious to revise my survey and administer it to the cohort at the end of their first year in the mentoring relationship. I hope that the results will shed more light on the data collected to date, and point me in directions for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Structured Interview Questions

Structured Interview Questions: Novice Assistant Principals

1. Describe how you feel in your new role as a first year assistant principal.
2. Describe how you feel about the mentoring process thus far.
3. Describe advantages or disadvantages of mentoring.
4. Describe what you feel would be a perfect mentoring relationship.

Structured Interview Questions: Assistant Principal Mentors

1. Describe how you felt in your first year as an assistant principal.
2. Describe how you feel about the mentoring process thus far.
3. Describe advantages or disadvantages of mentoring.
4. Describe what you feel would be a perfect mentoring relationship.

Appendix B

“Get Acquainted” Meeting Form

Mentor Self-Assessment Tool

1. _____ Open with greeting and rapport-building comment.
2. _____ State the purpose of the conference.
3. _____ Ask the new administrator’s feelings about the new role.
4. _____ Reflect/paraphrase content and feelings.
5. _____ Describe the role of the mentor/coach.
6. _____ Describe the proposed annual mentoring program.
7. _____ Ask the new administrator about their theories and beliefs.
8. _____ Ask the new administrator about their perceived strengths.
9. _____ Ask the new administrator about areas that they would like to improve.
10. _____ Ask new administrator for input: What would you like to gain from this relationship?
11. _____ Acknowledge and reflect content and feelings.
12. _____ Ask if there are any concerns or issues that have not been addressed.
13. _____ Determine when to meet again. (Regularly scheduled meeting or another time.)
14. _____ Close by thanking the new administrator for meeting with you.

Appendix C Survey

Assistant Principal Perceptions of Mentoring Relationship

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My mentor has been helpful to me...					
2. I feel supported by my mentor...					
3. I have developed a close, personal relationship with my mentor...					
4. I feel that I can talk about any issue or concern with my mentor...					
5. I trust my mentor not to violate my confidentiality...					
6. Having a mentor has made my job easier...					
7. I have found support outside of the formal mentoring program...					
8. Time is a barrier to the mentoring program...					
9. Proximity is a barrier to the mentoring relationship...					
10. Communication with my mentor has occurred thorough: (Check any that apply.)					
___ Structured monthly meetings					
___ Additional meetings we have scheduled					
___ Telephone					
___ E-mail					
___ Nextel					
___ School visits					
___ Other _____					

Please feel free to add any additional thoughts/comments concerning the Assistant Principal Mentoring Program.

Appendix D
Survey Results

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My mentor has been helpful to me.	8	19	3	2	0
2. I feel supported by my mentor.	14	13	2	3	0
3. I have developed a close, personal relationship with my mentor.	4	8	5	14	1
4. I feel that I can talk about any issue or concern with my mentor.	15	12	2	3	0
5. I trust my mentor not to violate my confidentiality.	16	12	3	0	0
6. Having a mentor has made my job easier.	8	8	10	4	1
7. I have found support outside of the formal mentoring program.	18	11	2	0	1
8. Time is a barrier to the mentoring program.	11	14	1	5	0
9. Proximity is a barrier to the mentoring relationship.	8	10	1	11	2
TOTAL:	102	107	29	42	5

10. Communication with my mentor has occurred thorough: (Check any that apply.)

- 28 Structured monthly meetings
 - 0 Additional meetings we have scheduled
 - 12 Telephone
 - 20 E-mail
 - 1 Nextel
 - 4 School visits
 - 3 Other _____
- Courier mail -1
Job Fair - 1
County/System Events - 1

Appendix E

Survey Results Combined

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
1. My mentor has been helpful to me.	27	3	2
2. I feel supported by my mentor.	27	2	3
3. I have developed a close, personal relationship with my mentor. .	12	5	15
4. I feel that I can talk about any issue or concern with my mentor. .	27	2	3
5. I trust my mentor not to violate my confidentiality.	28	3	0
6. Having a mentor has made my job easier.	16	10	5
7. I have found support outside of the formal mentoring program. . .	29	2	1
8. Time is a barrier to the mentoring program.	25	1	5
9. Proximity is a barrier to the mentoring relationship.	18	1	13
TOTALS:	209	29	47

10. Communication with my mentor has occurred thorough: (Check any that apply.)

	No. Of Respondents
Structured Monthly Mtgs.	28
Additional meetings	0
Telephone	12
E-mail	20
Nextel	1
School Visits	4
Other	3
Job Fair	- 1
County/System Events	- 1

Appendix F

Invitation & Informed Consent Form

North Carolina State University

Title of Study: Novice Assistant Principal Perceptions of Mentoring Relationships
Principal Investigator: Jim Palermo Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kenneth Brinson

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore novice assistant principal's perceptions of the mentoring relationship in one particular district induction program. If you agree to participate it would require a time commitment of one to two hours. You would be asked to participate in a focus group interview, and another individual interview with the researcher. You would also agree to be observed meeting as part of the regularly scheduled district induction meetings. Interviews will be audiotaped.

The information obtained in this research study will be shared with the induction program director and sponsors to help plan future programs as well as to inform other districts planning mentoring programs for assistant principals. I anticipate that participants would also benefit personally from the self-reflection involved in the process.

The information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and destroyed at the end of the study. Pseudonyms will be used in writing the report so that participants cannot be linked to the study. If you have questions at any time about the study you may contact the researcher, Jim Palermo, at (919) 363-1070. If you feel that you have not been treated according to the description in this form, or that your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7513, NCSU Campus (919) 513-1834.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You may decline to participate at any point in the study without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw during the course of the study your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study."

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G

IRB Approval

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina

**Office of Research
and Graduate Studies**

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored Programs and
Regulatory Compliance
Campus Box 7514
1 Leazar Hall
Raleigh, NC 27695-7514
919.515.7200
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Debra A. Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: August 7, 2003

Project Title: Novice Assistant Principal Perceptions of Mentoring Relationships

IRB#: 178-03-8

Dear Mr. Palermo:

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101.b.2). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review.

NOTE:

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations.

For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429; the IRB Number is: IRB00000330

2. Review de novo of this proposal is necessary if any significant alterations/additions are made.

Please provide your faculty sponsor with a copy of this letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debra Paxton
NCSU IRB