

MOTIVATION AND PREPARATION OF TEACHERS
WHO BECOME ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

By
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Abstract

Despite the fact that most school administrators were classroom teachers at some point in their educational career, there is little to no literature on the transition from classroom teachers to new assistant principals. What are their motivations for leaving the classroom and becoming an assistant principal? What are the perceptions of the assistant principal role? And how do these people plan and prepare for their new administrative position? The purpose of this study was to better understand the preparation and transition experience of those who became assistant principals, and aimed to add knowledge to the limited work on assistant principals. A survey of assistant principals who were within their first five years in the position was used. Each participant was asked questions based on specific points in time during their career (e.g. think back to when...) as well as open-ended questions where they could respond with more information. The study showed key aspects of the typical person who is in the transition process (e.g., earns/holds a Master's degree in Educational Administration, is motivated to help teachers grow and influence others, realizes the internship is most valuable to building relationships with the mentor and a collegial network, and takes on a positive learning attitude to overcome personal and professional challenges). The typical person realized the most important roles and responsibilities are to ensure and maintain a safe and secure environment for all students, student discipline, and the professional development of teachers. The person also realized a variety of roles and responsibilities that are unique to the assistant principal position based on school and district needs or principal preference. Finally, the person understood the biggest challenges in the position involve remaining calm in student discipline and Special Education (SPED) situations, balancing work and family time, and disagreement with administrators and teachers when the actions negatively impact students. Ultimately, this is a person who initiated a move

from teaching in the classroom to leading in the front office as an assistant principal in a new administrative role.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There is a great need for assistant principals today in schools because of the roles and responsibilities they fulfill and for the important leadership position they hold in the overall picture of school organizations. While there is an extensive literature on principals as building leaders, along with their roles and responsibilities, as well as principal preparation, there appears to be little to no research on assistant principals, and even less on the transition from teachers into new assistant principals (Armstrong, 2012; Hausman, et. al., 2002; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Norton, 2015). But what motivates a person to become a new assistant principal and leave behind teaching in the classroom? How did current assistant principals perceive the role of the assistant principal while still working as a teacher? And once the decision was made to begin the process of becoming an assistant principal, how does one prepare for the future administrative position and transform into a new assistant principal? The answers to these questions are important to school leaders, especially to those who aspire to become a new assistant principal or who want to know more about the preparation for the transition to become one.

Research shows there is a large difference between the work of the assistant principal and the principal (Wahlstrom, et. al, 2010; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Kafka, 2009). However, assistant principals make up the largest portion of secondary school administrators, most of whom intend to become a school principal. But little is known of the assistant principal transition process, particularly the socialization from their interest in the position (while still working as a teacher) to earning the position as a new assistant principal. The framework used in this study on new assistant principals is based on the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003), a leader in the research of new administrators. Even though Browne-Ferrigno conducted her work with a

cohort studying to be principals, she noted four stages in the transition process: role conception, socialization, role-identity transformation, and purposeful engagement. More recent research by Armstrong (2012) noted, “The transition from teacher to assistant principal is a significant personal and professional turning point within the organizational landscape of schools that has largely been ignored in the field of educational administration” (p 398).

Since the overwhelming majority of administrators were teachers at one point in their career, a study of how individuals navigate the pathway from teaching to leading a school adds value to the field of educational leadership. This work helps uncover the valuable responsibilities and unique roles assistant principals have in their buildings, how assistant principals operate within school organizations, who they report to in these organizations, and how they navigate the personal transformation to become an assistant principal. Motivations for the transition, as well as perceptions and realities of the assistant principal position, also add to the educational leadership literature. Those aspiring to become an assistant principal, as well as those currently in educational leadership roles, will find the research and findings worth reading. I am one of those going through this transition. My study intends to add new knowledge to the limited research on the often overlooked and understudied position of assistant principals, and in particular, one undergoing preparation for transition into a new assistant principal. My findings in the study will add knowledge to this limited area of research on the transition of teachers into new assistant principals. Furthermore, my findings will add to the body of research on school leadership succession and the larger body of research on educational leadership.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that school administrators were classroom teachers at some point earlier in their educational career, little is known about the preparation process of those undergoing the transition. While often their first entry into the administrative ranks is as an assistant principal, there is little to no literature on the transition of new assistant principals. What are the motivations for leaving the classroom and becoming an assistant principal? What are the perceptions of the assistant principal role? And how do these people plan and prepare for their new administrative position?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the transition process of new assistant principals. This study seeks to understand the motivations of new assistant principals, their roles and responsibilities, and how they prepared during the transition to becoming an assistant principal.

Research Questions

1. What were Assistant Principals' motivation(s) for leaving the classroom as teachers and becoming school administrators?
2. Prior to becoming assistant principals, how did these former teachers perceive the future role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?
3. As a classroom teacher, how did current assistant principals prepare for their future administrative position?
 - a) Technical Preparation (e.g. coursework, professional organizations, licensure)
 - b) Mentoring, Observations (i.e. socialization into the role, collegial networks)
4. How do assistant principals describe their current role and responsibilities compared to their pre-service expectations?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

School Organizations and Responsibilities

There is a great need for assistant principals in school leadership today. But how does a teacher become an assistant principal? What process occurs when an individual transitions from working in a classroom with students to being a leader in the broader school organization? In the early days of school leadership, it was the principal who was selected from the ranks of teachers and who was thought to be transferable to the leading position. In some instances, local policy makers, reflecting on the values and mores of their communities, selected individuals who were perceived as exemplifying those same values and mores, to become school principals (Joachim & Klotz, 2002). Consequently, experienced and effective teachers became school leaders while others who remained teachers in the classroom focused on students and academic content. There was a time with no assistant principals.

The emergence of bureaucracy as a rational, traditional model by Max Weber (1922) helped to create an understanding of the structure and bureaucracy of how schools are organized and responsibilities of those in the organization. Weber distinguished three types of leadership authority in bureaucracy: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic. The traditional form requires belief and obedience to the person in authority. The rational-legal type consists of rules and legal authority owed to the person in the position of authority and is the most professional, rational, and legitimate form of authority. The third form is charismatic, which rests on devotion to a person for their heroism or sanctity (Scott, 2007, pg. 47).

As school organizations grew with increased enrollment and the principal had more leadership responsibilities, the need for an assistant principal position was created and developed

into what it is today. Currently, the assistant principal is an entry-level administrator position in the larger school organization and it is situated between the principal and the teachers (see Appendix E). It is clear from the research that the assistant principal works at the base of the administration leadership structure, is the administrator next in authority to the principal, and carries out those duties assigned by the principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This role has several duties that may include safety and supervision of students, maintaining attendance records, student discipline, proposing the schedule of classes and extracurricular activities, overseeing curriculum in various departments, managing requisitions of supplies, supervising bus transportation, and conducting teacher evaluations (Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002). Since school organizations today are large bureaucracies and as such employ highly educated and qualified professionals to work as school administrators and teachers, they have a responsibility to educate a mass of students as efficiently as possible. Because educating children is an ambiguous pursuit, “loose-coupling” is inherent in these highly professional bureaucracies (Ingersoll, 2005). Therefore, how an assistant principal operates in the organization varies somewhat depending on the principal, teachers, and the school board.

Much of the school leadership literature today remains focused on the principal and their responsibilities. Their core leadership role is setting directions, developing the faculty and staff, structuring the workplace, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). As a result, the principal has the responsibility as building leader (Crow, 2006) to establish the vision of the school (Crow, 2006), clarify the school-wide mission (Crow, 2006), organize school plans that align with the district strategic plan, and delegate responsibilities to assistant principals (Davis, Darling-Hammond, La Pointe, & Meyerson, 2005).

One who becomes an assistant principal leaves behind the teacher role of working most closely with students in the classroom. Teachers have direct responsibility for student learning in the school organization. Using passion and expertise in the subject matter, teachers engage and teach students, while using classroom management skills to maintain order in the learning environment. While the assistant principal may impact student learning and growth, school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, Anderson, 2010). Unlike the assistant principal, teachers find gratification in stability, recognition, and autonomy (White and Crow, 1993). Beyond the school building, the local board of education is a small, elected group of community members who have the responsibility to provide district governance, set goals for the school organization, and hire the assistant principal. The board of education hires the superintendent who is the top administrator over the assistant principal. The superintendent sets the district strategic plan to achieve the goals set by the board of education and uses a team of assistant superintendents, district-level support services, principals, assistant principals, and teachers to reach those goals.

Building-Level Administrative Responsibilities: The Principal and Assistant Principal

The principal is the top school leader who has primary responsibility at the building and uses the assistant principal to assist in meeting those responsibilities. Building-level administrative responsibilities support safe learning environments in schools (Lyons, 1999; Crow, 2006). Since the responsibilities of the principal are so demanding, the assistant principal has become an integral part of the building leadership team, where the principal uses the skills

and talents of the assistant principal to not only meet those responsibilities, but also guide the assistant principal into a possible future principal position.

The high school principal position is one of the most essential, complex, and challenging assignments in the public education system (Pounder and Merrill, 2001). Principals are ultimately responsible for supervision, discipline, school safety, attendance, student activities, building maintenance, teacher evaluations, textbook distribution, duty schedule, at-risk programs, assessment data, staff development, department supervision, community activities, graduation, curriculum development, transportation, and requisition of supplies (Armstrong, 2004, Wahlstrom, et. al, 2010). They are responsible for statewide assessments, Advanced Placement (AP) testing, and the care and maintenance of a multi-million dollar building. Over time, the changing role of the principal position has become more demanding in response to societal changes and school reform efforts (Pounder and Merrill, 2001). In their study of how the principal roles have changed, Beck and Murphy (1993) wrote an expansive description of the changing role expectations of principals over the last century using many metaphors: values broker (1920s), scientific manager (1930s), democratic leader (1940s), theory-guided administrator (1950s), bureaucratic executive (1960s), humanistic facilitator (1970s), and instructional leader (1980s). In the 1990s, building administrators also became transformational leaders due to school restructuring reforms, problem solving, decentralized leadership, and systemic change. Then, in the 2000s, administrators also added the role of politician in the community competing for students (Beck and Murphy, 1993; Hallinger 1992; Kafka, 2009).

Since the principal is expected to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of an instructional and transformational leader in schools today, this created a need for the assistant principals to help carry the burden and engage with teachers at the building-level. The principal role sets the

instructional climate, or the steps the principal takes to set the tone and culture in the building, as well as the instructional actions, or the explicit steps principals take to engage with individual teachers and their growth (Wahlstrom et. al, 2010). Consequently, principals use the skills of assistant principals to work more directly with teachers today to influence student achievement through two important pathways: support and development of effective teachers, and implementation of effective organizational practices (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson, 2005). Knowing and using the most effective principles for organizing the school building are those developed through the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, which is a program of the Council of Chief State Officers that helps oversee principal licensure. They identify six professional standards for principals. One professional standard calls for the principal to be “an educational leader who promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (CCSSO, 2008). Therefore, as the instructional leader at the building-level, the principal is the lead learner in the community of teachers and students, who is also people-oriented, an instructional resource for teachers, an effective communicator, and highly visible (Joachim and Klotz, 2000).

The principal is also responsible for transformational leadership in the school based on current changes in society. Principals must not only keep up with a rapidly increasing knowledge base but also create school environments that are focused on continuous learning and building learning capacity (Crow, 2006). The secondary school principal lays out a vision for the school, clarifies the school-wide mission and goals, organizes subject-area departments, and helps create and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations (Lyons, 1999). Principals increase capacity of teachers to engage in data analysis for instructional

decision making (Wahlstrom, et. al, 2010). They enlist the assistant principals to collaborate with the teaching faculty and study data to maximize quality instruction time for student learning.

Even though the relationship between the principal's actions and student achievement is indirect, the importance of this role in developing and maintaining school culture, promoting a vision of academic success for all students, and creating professional learning communities, has clearly been supported by theory and research (Crow, 2006). The principal is important, yet his or her role and responsibilities are challenging, proving the ability to integrate a "variety of role expectations" is a necessary element of a successful school leader (Hallinger, 1992, p.44). Niece (1993) found through his study of secondary school principals, they are people-oriented and interactional, able to function within a network of other principals, and have administrative practitioners who acted as mentors for them.

Since the principal has primary responsibility of so many things at the building, many of these responsibilities are delegated to the assistant principal out of necessity and for legacy purposes. The assistant principal is the title assigned to the administrator who is next in authority to the principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006) and the job of assistant principal in a public school is a demanding position (Calabrese, 1991). The assistant principal position is relatively new and has become essential out of a need to assist the principal in meeting their responsibilities. Initially, schools struggled with the significant increase in enrollment from 1900 to 1920, thus the position of assistant principal was created (Glanz, 1994). In the early years, assistant principals were called classroom supervisors and general supervisors (Glanz, 1994). It was only beginning in the 1940s and 1950s did the role of the assistant principal evolve from its previous designation to the term assistant principal (Glanz, 1994).

Today, typical day-to-day responsibilities delegated to an assistant principal include such duties as student management and discipline, attendance, student activities, staff support, and building supervision (Hausman et al., 2002; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Management roles and dealing with the daily operation of the school, such as scheduling, crisis drills, bus and lunchroom supervision, and student discipline are common tasks for assistant principals (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1991). More recently, Norton found that current assistant principals are expected to perform as a leader of the school, maintain effective community relations, and be an instructional leader to plan and participate in professional growth activities (Norton, 2015).

Due to the differences and needs among schools, a principal may further delegate unique responsibilities to the assistant principal today in order to achieve school goals. For example, with the increase in accountability for student achievement in schools today, the assistant principal may help improve interventions in the math department. One solution might require intervention during the school day. In another example, a school might need to increase the senior class graduation rate, and the assistant principal may develop a workable plan during freshman year where students sign a banner pledging to graduate and display it until the graduation ceremony. Yet another school might need an administrator to oversee the 1:1 student laptop program by implementing a smoother checkout process. Assistant principals recognize the responsibilities delegated to them, based on the context and setting of the school, what Crow referred to as custodial (continue the tradition, no change) or innovative (create new ways to do things) work as they complete these unique responsibilities. The assistant principal must know whether the school needs custodial or innovative leadership (Crow, 1993).

Transforming From Teacher to Assistant Principal

Transforming from teacher to assistant principal is a process that begins with the initial interest in administration. Teaching is the most common gateway into most administrative positions. Over 99 percent of public school principals have some teaching experience (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003, p. 24). The interest in administration creates change in the personal orientation for a teacher that involves leaving behind the comfortable known role as a teacher for exposure to new areas of personal growth and development into an administrator. This exposure can be seen in the transformations from teacher to principal orientation (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 478).

Educational leadership opportunities for teachers serve as their first foray into working with administrators. This introduction and participation in administrative tasks occurs in leadership activities such as coaching a team, leading a school club, overseeing the school prom, coordinating freshman orientation, and/or working as a department chair. Each administrative task involves interacting with other administrators. As a result, the teacher begins professional growth in the context of role conceptualization by understanding the roles and responsibilities of the school principal and assistant principal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The participation in administrative responsibilities helps shape the outlook during the transformation, because these new responsibilities are different from those of a classroom teacher. According to Daresh and Male (2000), those who step into educational leadership roles for the first time face enormous responsibilities as they walk a path to reduce conflict among constituent groups, stress over the physical and political, and act as a steward of a multi-million dollar physical plant. Furthermore, Brewer found a relationship between administrative opportunities and teacher behavior, which

depends on the likelihood of obtaining an administrative position and the monetary rewards of doing so (Brewer, 1996, p. 318).

There are several motivations for leaving the classroom for an administrative position. The motivations in the transitional thinking process are: “I can do this administrator job,” “I can make more money,” and “I can influence the school organization.” As a teacher in the classroom, learning a fresh, new role can be daunting, but having the opportunity to fulfill the administrator responsibilities is very motivating. Knowing that one can do the administrator work and fulfill the role occurs when the teacher begins to see and understand the new administrative role within the context of his or her school wide leadership responsibilities with other administrators. This part of the process involves leaving behind the known teacher role in exchange for the new, unknown role as an administrator. It means leaving behind the role as an expert in the classroom, the responsibilities of planning daily lessons, working in a classroom full of students, and collaborating with other teachers in the department in exchange for school wide leadership responsibilities with other administrators. Those undergoing this transformation begin to mimic the leadership characteristics of administrators in the school and begin to let go of a student focus found within the classroom setting. They complete administrative tasks alongside other principals and assistant principals, developing a sense of confidence in this new role. They understand the administrative responsibilities clearer as the focus turns toward school-wide effort and away from a classroom focus on students. This broader perspective beyond the classroom builds confidence and clarity, adding the knowledge, skill, and experience needed to transform into an administrator.

Another motivation for becoming an administrator is an increase in salary. By participating in the typical and unique administrator responsibilities, and experiencing the feeling

of additional stress that arises from dealing with dozens of classrooms and hundreds of students, perceptions develop further about the administrator role and the salary earned for the work. The typical increase in pay that differentiates the salary between a teacher and an assistant principal is 15 to 40 percent (Brewer, 1996). In 2014, the median annual salary of assistant principals approximated \$77,962 (Norton, 2015, p 7). Gates, et al, found that school principals earned on average 33 percent more per year than experienced teachers in the same school, and that superintendents and senior district administrators earned more than principals (Gates, et al 2003). However, the increase in work responsibilities, longer workdays, and use of leadership skills as an administrator brings the increase in salary. Administrator contracts are longer, too. Administrators usually start a new contract on July 1, and prepare the building for the upcoming school year with staff and students. Once the teachers arrive mid-August and students are attending classes, there are the host of responsibilities to attend to during the school day, along with additional work continuing beyond the regular school hours and into the evening. These responsibilities include supervision at school events, games, and ceremonies, leadership meetings in the building and around the district, and functions with other community stakeholders.

Finally, wanting more power is another motivation for leaving the classroom. Principals and assistant principals not only fulfill their responsibilities to make the school building operate smoothly, and earn more while doing so, but the position creates opportunities to influence and lead the school. This influence occurs through developing faculty members, modifying school systems, creating school and community-wide programs, and impacting student activities. For those in this transition, the focus is more on administrator influence on the broad school systems in the building and less on individual students in the classroom. Pounder and Merrill (2001)

found that for potential candidates, the number one factor that attracted them to the high school principalship was due to a desire to achieve and influence or improve education. Administrators' responsibilities create safe and secure schools, as building-level principals and assistant principals lead people, develop teachers, and impact community stakeholders. As a result, wanting more power and realizing the administrative position provides that power is a motivation for leaving the classroom.

With the recognition that the pathway to administration and leading schools is now a possibility, the focus turns to the perceptions and expectations of the assistant principal role while still in the classroom. Sensing a need to develop personal leadership skills to help lead teachers and also manage a multi-million dollar facility, those in this process recognize that the entryway to administration occurs through the transformation from teacher into an assistant principal (Austin & Brown, 1970; Marshall, 1992; NASSP, 1991). By working with other administrators and creating new relationships, the administrator reference group forms, and with this formation the perceptions of the position and expectations of the assistant principal role come into focus. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found in her research that the key initial socialization experience was working directly with school administrators in real settings. This administrator reference group includes the principal and assistant principals at the school, as well as those from other schools, and any district personnel such as directors, associate superintendents, the superintendent, and members of the board of education. Spending time working alongside these administrators creates this new reference group to help understand the roles, responsibilities, and expectations at the building-level and across the district. While still in the classroom, those on this journey recognize administrative behavior in these relationships and begin to mimic, adapt, and avoid certain professional behavior (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). A socialization process in the

administrator-network occurs and naturally orients the candidate toward the new administrator reference group, referred to as a new community of practice, and away from the known teacher reference group (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003). The socialization process, or “learning how to do the work,” occurs in conversations with individuals in the administrative group and during administrative tasks and projects (Armstrong, 2004). Instead of departing work at the close of the school day, there are assistant principal tasks and responsibilities to learn and complete that require spending time beyond the typical teacher workday, creating inherent tensions for those transitioning between teaching and administrating (Michel, 1996). These events bring change to the routine of teachers and the typical family dynamic, creating the need to address the perceptions and expectations of the assistant principal role in the transition to be a new assistant principal. Further studying the socialization later during the administrative internship segment of the process helps to clarify and solidify the expectations of the assistant principal role.

However, for those preparing for this transition to assistant principal, clearer perceptions and expectations of assistant principals begin to form at the building-level while still in the classroom. Through vulnerability and reflection, while interacting with administrators and completing their tasks, especially those of the assistant principal, one gains clarity of the perceptions and expectations that come from being in this position. Obtaining this new growth requires initiative, confidence, skill, and the ability to build relationships with administrators. Therefore, with the confidence to embrace administrator responsibilities and the realization of the power that exists to create safe learning environments in schools, the transitional thinking process to become an assistant principal can continue.

Since the entryway to an administrative job is as an assistant principal in the building, the pathway for aspiring administrators is the preparation for the transition to assistant principal.

This manifests itself with a keen focus on taking classes to learn the technical knowledge and skills necessary to be a new assistant principal. Other manifestations of this include understanding the professional organizations, gaining licensure, and embracing the realities of socialization into the profession as an assistant principal. By understanding the perceptions, responsibilities, and expectations of the assistant principal role, the candidate fully understands the challenge to be an assistant principal. The job of assistant principal in a public school is a demanding position (Calabrese, 1991). It requires further investigation and research into understanding assistant principal responsibilities. Becoming an administrator is a personal and professional transition that requires a new perspective on schools and a new definition of one's role as an educator (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994). Perceptions and expectations of the assistant principal role become clear in two ways: they confirm the realities of the role from others and create a new personal reality based on first-hand knowledge, work-experiences, conversations, and the socialization that occurs through relationships with other administrators. With continued interest in public school administration, using these perceptions and expectations help navigate the preparation process for the transition to accepting a new assistant principal position.

Preparation for Transition to Assistant Principal

Preparing for the transition to a new assistant principal position requires technical training as well as participation in mentoring relationships and internship opportunities. Technical training provides the necessary academic knowledge and skills, the networking, and the state licensure required for the position. Mentoring relationships with current administrators and the internship offer socialization into the profession. Working intently in these areas

prepares the aspiring administrator to be a highly qualified candidate for the assistant principal position.

Technical training involves completing university coursework, participating in professional organizations, and gaining state licensure. To complete university coursework, candidates select an administrator preparation program at an accredited university and complete a sequence of courses regarding the various aspects of leading schools. Today, program courses are offered in one of three ways: the traditional face-to-face classroom setting on-site at the campus, a completely online program course structure, or a hybrid structure using some face-to-face and some online. The available university degrees are called a Master's, a Specialist, or a Doctorate in Educational Administration. The typical length of time necessary to complete one of these programs is two to three years for a Master's, two to three years for a Specialist, and three to five years for a Doctorate. The courses within these programs focus on issues that directly affect school leaders such as school leadership, educational law, equity in schools, finance, research in education, human resource management, and staff evaluation. An administrative internship is also a common part of the university program coursework and is arguably the most impactful component in preparing for the position. The state requires an individual to complete one of the administrative programs in order to become a building-level administrator. Preparation programs today are typically centered on a cohort of students taking the same series of courses who are all practicing educators with full-time teaching jobs or administrator positions. This cohort is a group of administrative candidates, as well as experienced school leaders, learning and working together, and is the most representative type of team building that is increasingly encouraged among school faculty (Davis, et. al., 2005)

Professional organizations also aid in the preparation for the transition to an assistant principal position by building a collaborative network with other administrators. Learning about and becoming involved in professional organizations creates additional relationships with others across the city, state, and country. This brings understanding to the local topics, national trends, and issues facing the school administrator profession. Participation expands the networking relationships beyond the cohort members of the university classes and reaches more school administrators who have experience and professional knowledge. Furthermore, this expands opportunities to push away from the teacher-reference group and instead access the professional administrator network. Connecting with professional organizations and associations expands relationships, provides a place to ask for advice, and allows individuals to gain further knowledge by reading articles and watching selected video series. An aspiring administrator can also attend conferences for further growth, for professional advocacy, and for searching for job opportunities. Lastly, membership in these professional organizations provides professional liability insurance and legal assistance.

There are several national school administrator organizations and associations that have helpful state and local branches. Some of the most prominent national organizations are: the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). States have their respective organizations affiliated with the national body, and this allow cities and school districts to localize their leadership communication and support. In Kansas there is the Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals (KASSP), which boasts being “rich in tradition, providing professional development in leadership, mentoring, workshops with timely topics, networking, and an avenue for your voice at the state and national level”

(KASSP). In Missouri there is the Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) which serves middle level and high school principals and also the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), which serves the needs of elementary and middle school principals, assistant principals and those educators with an interest in becoming principals. Kansas City boasts the Greater Kansas City Missouri Principals Association (GKCMPA), a group that helps localize the support and efforts of those administrators in and around the Kansas City metropolitan area. These professional organizations have large memberships boasting thousands of current members that help to identify needs, concerns, and problems; they provide support, expert counsel, insurance, research with proven solutions, and lobbying efforts that assist in long-range solutions affecting schools and the school administrator profession.

Preparation for a position as an assistant principal also requires state licensure. A candidate must have at least three years of teaching in most states, and there are several steps the state demands for completing the licensure process. For most states, licensure is granted by earning a passing score on the Praxis II exam. The official name of the exam is “School Leaders Licensure Assessment,” and the test number is 6011. The Education Testing Service (ETS) administers this exam several times each year, and the exam covers performance standards based on the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. This exam is commonly referred to by novice and experienced administrators as “the ISLLC Standards Test” or simply the “ISLLC Test.” The name is derived from the reference to the performance standards created by the ISLLC, which is composed of the group of school administration leaders who oversee the school leadership profession. This consortium is composed of current and experienced school administrators who want to improve the number of qualified school

administrators entering school leadership. Although this exam is designed and conducted by ETS, it is the respected ISLLC that creates it, using their combined experience and understanding of the necessary knowledge, skills, characteristics, and dispositions needed by aspiring administrators who desire to enter the profession.

For Kansas licensure, candidates must have five years of experience in a state-accredited school while holding a professional level teaching, specialist, or clinical license, or a vocational certificate. Furthermore, candidates must earn a Master's degree, complete an approved administrator program, earn a passing score of 165 on the Praxis II School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) 6011 exam, complete an online Form 1 application, and pay a US\$50 application fee for the Initial School Leadership license in Building Leadership PK-12. The candidate is then issued a two-year Initial School Leadership License in Kansas. The new assistant principal can renew that license at least twice. To upgrade to the five-year Professional School Leadership license the candidate must complete a one-year mentoring program in the district and this fulfills the "performance assessment" requirement. Then the candidate will download and print a Form 21 at www.ksde.org under Educator Licensure, Applications. The district will sign it and forward it to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE).

For Missouri, candidates must hold a current teaching license, and complete a Master's degree or higher in Educational Administration from a college or university having an Educational Administration degree program approved by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The candidate must also have a recommendation from the designated official for educational administration at the college or university where the program was completed. Prior to September 1, 2014, candidates also had to earn a passing score of 163 on the same Praxis II exam as in Kansas. However, beginning September 1, 2014, Missouri new

assistant principal candidates must pass the MEGA (Missouri Educator Gateway Assessment) Content Assessment Exam. They must pass the 058 Building-Level Administrator Exam with a score of 220 on the 100-to-300 scale. This replaces the Praxis II exam. They must have at least 2 years of teaching experience in Missouri. There is no alternative route to licensure. The first certificate a candidate for new assistant principal receives is an Initial Administrator Certificate and is issued for 4 years.

Those candidates that do understand the roles and duties of the assistant principal position from their technical training continue their trajectory with mentoring relationships and observations. The mentoring relationships and observations are the initial socialization (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) into the profession during the administrative internship and take clear forms. Van Gennep (1960) first introduced the rites of passage idea in his anthropological studies of various cultures and how an individual moves from one stage or event in life to another. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) also shed light on the transition based on their landmark work on organizational socialization, their theory that outlines six socialization tactics individuals face when moving into a new position or role within an organization. They referred to socialization as the process by which one is taught and learns “the ropes” of a particular organizational role (p 211). Anticipatory socialization was first identified by Merton (1966) as a process that allows individuals to take on values of the non-membership group to which they aspire. Greenfield (1985) included moral socialization where “teachers aspire to become school administrators and develop a positive orientation to that reference group, they begin to learn and internalize the values and orientations found in that group” (p 102). White and Crow (1993) found in their study of teachers making the transition to administration that these interns themselves experienced a changing perspective during the internship, one that requires others to be aware of

the psychological and sociological processes occurring in their lives and what kinds of experiences are likely to facilitate successful passage (p 32). Later, Crow (2006) defined socialization as “how they learn their jobs,” while Armstrong (2009) defined socialization as the process one undergoes to learn the values, norms, and beliefs required to fulfill organizational roles.

The socialization occurs between the current administrators and the one preparing to enter the profession, and particularly between the primary mentor and mentee during the transition. The primary role of the mentor is to guide the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost self-confidence, and to construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills (Davis, et. al., 2005, p. 11). Socialization exposes the learner to a variety of administrators, to the variety of tasks they complete on a daily basis, and how to do the job well as an assistant principal. During this process, candidates are novices who feel vulnerable in their new work but they learn to work through the feelings. Trust grows in the relationships, opening up conversations and reflections with the current mentor about the work. Ideally, strong internships provide candidates with that intense, extended opportunity to grapple with the day-to-day demands of school administration under the watchful eye of an experienced mentor, with reflection tied to theoretical insights through related coursework (Davis, et. al., 2005, p. 10).

During the mentoring relationships and internship observation hours, this socialization prepares for the transition to assistant principal in several important ways. New administrator candidates typically spend 50-250 internship observation hours as a training requirement to learn the role. During this time the candidate earns a grade, receives feedback, and completes this as part of their university degree. The socialization also allows for confidential conversations, and these lead to the realistic expectations of the position and an understanding of the issues

administrators actually face. But it is also a rite of passage in the profession. Socialization is very beneficial because it opens up the lines of communication and gives opportunities for those preparing for the transition to ask questions and gain answers.

White and Crow (1993) defined the internship as, “accompanying the mentor through the real world pressure cooker of day-to-day situations where trainees are effected in crucial and lasting ways.” The word internship originated from the field of medicine and originally referred to the hospital apprenticeships that medical doctors encountered before finishing their preparation programs (Skalski, et al, 1987). Internships have also been included in many other professional preparation programs, including law, journalism, and management (Ciofalo, 1992). The intent of the internship experience is to prepare novices to cope with the core technical operations and responsibilities that will be encountered when they move into the practitioner positions. Internships provide authentic experiences and foster real-life problem-solving skills (Leithwood, 1995). The university oversees the internship while it takes place on-site at the school building where the aspiring administrator is still teaching their full-time subject-area classes.

An area often overlooked in the literature, but very present during the socialization and internship period, is the disposition of the candidate who wants to be an assistant principal. “The development of principal knowledge, skills, and dispositions lacks a strong and coherent research base” (Davis, et al. 2005, p. 8). Although one might have the knowledge and skills needed, the qualified candidate shows his/her demeanor and disposition during the socialization period. Completing the administrative tasks requires the right disposition for the assistant principal position. Lauder (2000) referred to disposition as the applicant’s personal qualities for the position, the personality style aligned with the principalship, including such qualities as

flexibility, enthusiasm, sense of humor, compassion for children, courage, developed ego and drive, emotional maturity, and service-oriented (p. 24). While working with the aspiring administrator, current administrators know whether or not these new candidates have the appropriate disposition required to be a future administrator.

Socialization shows disposition and people skills in many ways: is the candidate honest and trustworthy, does he/she have integrity, learn quickly, and complete tasks. Also, how well does he/she lead, interact with other administrators on the building leadership team, and interact with the general public. A highly qualified candidate is one Browne-Ferrigno (2003) refers to as one who has undergone a role-identity transformation, and he/she is a valuable member of the school administrator profession. The growth occurred in the mind-set shift, having a sort of “new pair of glasses, a new perspective, and perceiving oneself as an educational leader while still teaching” (p 489). Trusting the candidate to complete the necessary tasks using the appropriate knowledge and skills, yet also to do so with the right disposition and nature, demonstrating positive human relations skills with others, is an essential component highly qualified candidates realize during the socialization into the assistant principal role.

Collegial networks are also an important developmental component of the preparation for transition to assistant principal. A collegial network is a group of people interconnected by an important matter that provides mutual help to one another in school leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Davis, et al, 2005, p 13). Creating this collegial network takes effort. It grows out of the relationships built with other administrators and university cohort members who also aspire to be administrators, and promotes networking and critical support over the long term over the member’s years as a new assistant principal (Milstein and Kruger, 1997). The network also forms out of the relationships created in the local, state, and national professional organizations.

The purpose of the collegial network is to aid in the preparation for transition to assistant principal and beyond, and this occurs in many ways.

The first way this occurs is in being a place of purposeful engagement (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). It is the place to continue growing in the administrator profession, by learning and connecting with others. Second, it creates a support group of people from all levels of the administrative profession that can share experiences and grow together. The support group is there when tough situations arise for school leaders and they need to share their problems, bounce ideas off of one another when making decisions, and/or simply provide a place of calm understanding. Third, it is a place of encouragement. The collegial network is a great place to share news via a quick text, email, and/or most notably today on social media with a tweet on Twitter or a post to Facebook. Blogging is another way to share great news and insights, as are giving presentations at conferences to share new changes in the profession. Fourth, and finally, a collegial network is the place to go for a new assistant principal job. What began as an administrator reference group at the beginning of the preparation process, has now grown into a trusted collegial network at this stage, composed of people most closely associated with the aspiring administrator and the school leadership field. This group is immersed in school leadership, they know the trends in the profession, and they know about job openings in different schools. Furthermore, they can determine if an assistant principal job opening is the right fit for a person. Continuing the relationships and maintaining the collegial network is especially helpful when preparing for the transition to assistant principal and encountering that first job opening. By creating and maintaining the collegial network during the technical university work and socialization period, the final step in the preparation for the transition to assistant principal will be to apply and land that first administrative position as a new assistant principal.

Gap in Literature

There is much research on principal preparation and building leadership preparation, but there is little to no assistant principal literature (Hausman, et. al., 2002). Despite its longevity, the assistant principal position in a public school is not a well-defined position and has received little attention in academic research (Armstrong, 2009; Greenfield, 1985; Marshall & Greenfield, 1985; Glanz, 1994; Marshall & Hooley, 2006, Norton, 2015). Greenfield (1985) asserted that the assistant principal is the link to the building principal for most teachers but little is known with regard to the work, conditions, substance, or impact of the position. It is argued that the position is crucial to the daily operations of a school but there is no agreed upon definition of the assistant principal's role (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Although there are typical responsibilities for the assistant principal, there are also unique and varying responsibilities delegated to the assistant principal depending on the context and setting of a particular school, the skill sets of an assistant principal, or to guide the assistant principal into a future principal position. The role of the assistant principal is the most common entry-level position for those pursuing the administrative careers in schools (NASSP, 1991), yet the role of the assistant principal is considered one of the least researched and least discussed topics in professional journals and books that focus on educational leadership (Weller & Weller, 2002). Brown-Ferrigno (2003) confirmed that "a teacher moving into an administrative position must relinquish a comfortable mindset, experience a modification of self-esteem as a novice, and learn new behaviors of an expert" (p.495). "The transition from teacher to assistant principal is a significant personal and professional turning point within the organizational landscape of schools that has largely been ignored in the field of educational administration...the end of the teaching career and the

beginning of a new professional trajectory” (Armstrong, 2012, p 398). Additional research is needed regarding the transitions experienced by an assistant principal (Armstrong, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of my study is to address the gap in the literature surrounding new assistant principals and in particular, the transition process from their interest to when they apply for their first job. The study will add knowledge regarding the professional growth during their transition, describe further support needed to move through multiple phases of career changing, and explore new insights about the preparation to be a new assistant principal. The framework we are going to use will include roles, and with that comes expectations, responsibilities, motivations, training, socialization, role-identity transformation, and purposeful engagement of aspiring assistant principals from the perspective of the new assistant principals. The study will examine the transition process experiences as they navigate to becoming new assistant principals.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study that should be acknowledged. One limitation is the scope of this study which included the responses of 31 participants reflecting on their preparation and transition to become an assistant principal. Although this is an adequate number to understand how they navigated this journey and tell their story, this small sample limits the generalizability of the results and implications.

Another limitation is asking participants to self-report their perceptions. As they reflect back over time from the transition to now, some things may have changed so they may not be as accurate.

Another limitation is the timing of the survey. The invitation email containing the recruitment text (see Appendix A), the consent form (see Appendix B), and the survey (see Appendix D) were all sent during the third week of the semester. For some, this may have been a potentially busy time of the year and limited the number of responses. As a result of this, I might have had different data as well as different findings and conclusions.

Definitions

Positions

Aspiring Administrator - one who is interested in, or undergoing, the transition process of becoming a school administrator; usually a teacher, who aspires to be an assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, curriculum coordinator, or other administrative leader, and who is currently learning about, and in the process of, seeking an entry-level administrative position, encountering socialization into the profession, and building a collegial network.

Assistant Principal (AP) - Title assigned to the administrator who is next in authority to the principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Also referred to as Vice Principal (VP) or Associate Principal.

Career Assistant Principal - one who has been an assistant principal for 7 or more years.

New Assistant Principal – Also referred to as a novice assistant principal, one who is within the first four (4) years in the role of assistant principal (Armstrong, 2012, p 403).

Principal - CEO of the school, instructional leader, the lead administrator who oversees the building, assistant principals, teachers, and students, and is the main decision-maker

for the school, who often reports to a district-level associate superintendent or the superintendent.

Role

Role Conception – understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the position (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Role-Identity Transformation – a mind-set shift, represented by risk-taking or seeking a new position as a new administrator, experience a modification of self-esteem as a novice, and learn new behaviors of an expert, usually highly personal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Socialization

Anticipatory Socialization – a change in perspective from teacher to administrator, which begins during one's teaching career (Armstrong, 2009; Greenfield, 1985; Marshall 1992).

Initial Socialization - growth measured through changes in professional behavior, as a result of field experiences, activities initiated by the learners, and/or through relationships with others in the profession (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Socialization – formal and informal processes through which administrators learn behaviors, technical knowledge, moral dispositions, and values required to perform their role (Greenfield, 1985). Generally conceptualized as a multistage process that includes three main stages of encounter, adjustment, and stabilization; also identified as a combination of individual, informal, random, variable, serial, investiture, and divestiture tactics (Greenfield, 1985).

Transitions and Socialization - involve the passage of newcomers through a variety of spatial and temporal organizational boundaries and workgroup cultures that preserve hierarchical roles and shape professional identities.

Transition Engagement

Internship - accompanying the mentor through the real world pressure cooker of day-to-day situations, a place and process by which trainees are effected in crucial and lasting ways (White and Crow, 1993).

Mentoring – the process where a mentor guides the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost self-confidence, and to construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills (Davis, et. al., 2005).

Purposeful Engagement – the influence of learner engagement and working toward a specific career goal, pursuing definitive career aspirations, clear thinking (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Chapter 3

Methods

Data Collection Method

In this study, I purposefully selected a sample of assistant principals in the Kansas City area to be surveyed. This convenience sample was appropriate because I wanted to understand the preparation and transition process of a new assistant principal with new roles, responsibilities, and how they navigated this process, especially in the Kansas City metropolitan area. My data collection method was the survey (see Appendix D), sent to publicly available email addresses, and I used Qualtrics to develop the survey instrument and gather these data.

Selecting Sources

I selected assistant principal email addresses from publicly available websites, starting with the Kansas State Department of Education (<http://www.ksde.org>) and the Missouri education website (<https://dese.mo.gov>). The 2016-2017 Kansas Educational Directory contains the entire listing of school districts, superintendents, enrollment numbers, and building principals, along with the specific information for my dissertation study of the names of assistant principals in the high schools and middle schools in the Kansas City metropolitan area. I then scrolled through the school district names that fit the criterion of being in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Each district displayed the principal and assistant principal(s) names, but only the email of the principal. Finally, I clicked the hot link which took me directly to the public school website, where I located the email address of the assistant principal(s). I used this same basic process to gather the assistant principal names and emails from the Missouri side of the border in Kansas City.

I sent the survey instrument to 90 possible participants, with a goal of at least 30 completed responses so that I could gather adequate data.

On Jan 10, 2017, I then sent the recruitment statement (Appendix A) to each of the assistant principals at their respective email addresses along with the Qualtrics link to fill-out the survey. To maintain anonymity, the assistant principal then clicked the link to open up the survey, containing the consent form and the questions.

As of Jan 26, 2017, I had 16 participants complete the survey and numerous participants who had started the survey but did not finish. Therefore, I sent out a reminder email later that same day through the Qualtrics program requesting the remaining assistant principals to take a few minutes out of their day to complete the survey, since their feedback was valuable to us. As a result of reminder emails, the final number of participants who completed the survey was 31 assistant principals, resulting in a response rate of 34.4 percent.

Analyzing the Data

The survey data was the primary data source. I reviewed the raw data as well as the reports sections within Qualtrics. Both were helpful in my analysis and limited problems with validity of my data. The raw data showed how participants responded to each survey question, while the reports displayed the data with charts, participant numbers, percentages, standard deviations, as well as the ability to configure the display of the data with any number of other options. I looked at the charts as they displayed the data from the responses as well as the number of participants who answered questions in a certain way. At this point I attempted to synthesize these data into a story. Trends and patterns in the survey responses began to appear. Since some survey questions allowed for participants to add extra information, I also looked at what assistant principals wrote, and where I could see categories and themes developing. An

example of a trend and pattern from the data was the vast majority of interviewees responded the internship was very beneficial, though there is still some on-the-job-training. I used the data and am telling the story of the navigation during the preparation and transition process of new assistant principals. So, I wrote the story while acknowledging any relationship between responses and the current literature.

Pilot Study and Any Missing Data

I completed a pilot study before sending out the final quantitative survey questionnaire to the assistant principals. Originally, this pilot study consisted of a qualitative set of interview questions. However, after creating the set of interview questions and conducting the pilot study of interviewing one assistant principal, I realized the data collected was enormous, and doing so multiple times with additional assistant principals would be a truly enormous task. Therefore, changing to a survey questionnaire was more reasonable for this dissertation. The benefits of a survey instrument over the interview saved significant amounts of time, provided basic numbers to develop and tell the story of the assistant principals, and required less interpretation of what someone said or meant because the survey quantified the results.

Expected Findings

The Browne-Ferrigno (2003) and Petzko (2008) studies added the voice of the new principal to further develop the knowledge base. The purpose of my study was to add unique knowledge by focusing upon the limited new assistant principal literature by giving voice to the perceptions of former teachers preparing and transitioning into their role as new assistant principals. I had new assistant principals articulating the priority components as well as what

motivated them to pursue this new role, and the knowledge or skills areas they suggested should be emphasized or dropped all together, or only offered to select groups.

In the current education environment, school administrators work long hours, in highly visible positions, with increasing public scrutiny and accountability for student safety and learning. For new assistant principals, more of a focus needs to be on human relations and personnel issues such as the ability to communicate, resolve conflicts, and motivate employees (NCPEA, 2007). New assistant principals need the knowledge, skills, and license to fulfill their general roles and duties as a new assistant principal, and also quickly understand and fulfill their unique roles and responsibilities as assigned by their principals at their school site. They also need to be better prepared to take the role of educational leader in the building than how they were trained. This specifically entails providing vision, creating effective schools, and using situational leadership. New assistant principals also need the knowledge and skills related to curriculum, including instructional process, online instruction, student evaluation, and curriculum change. Finally, the results of my study also link back to gaps in the literature from the perspective of the new assistant principal on the preparation for the transition to new assistant principal.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand the preparation and transition experience of assistant principals who moved from teaching to their current position.

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What were Assistant Principals' motivation(s) for leaving the classroom as teachers and becoming school administrators?
2. Prior to becoming assistant principals, how did these former teachers perceive the future role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?
3. As a classroom teacher, how did current assistant principals prepare for their future administrative position?
 - a) Technical Preparation (e.g. coursework, professional organizations, licensure)
 - b) Mentoring, Observations (i.e. socialization into the role, collegial networks)
4. How do assistant principals describe their current role and responsibilities compared to their pre-service expectations?

Results

I studied the transition process of 31 assistant principals who are within their first five or so years in the position. Of the 31 participants, 21 were male assistant principals and 10 were female assistant principals. Twenty-five assistant principals were from Kansas and 6 were from Missouri. Regarding degrees earned along the way to their assistant principal position, an overwhelming number of participants, 27 of the 31 participants (87 percent), earned their Master

of Science in Education Administration and six earned a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching (see Figure 1).

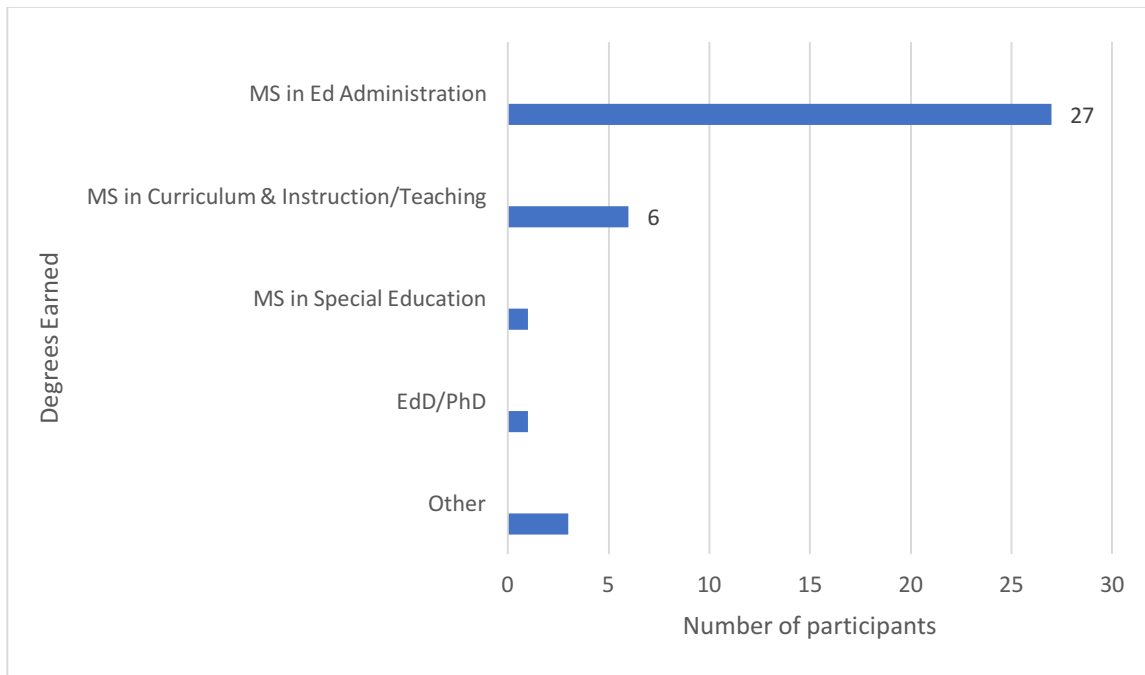


Figure 1. Degrees earned along the way by participants to their assistant principal position.

Twenty-seven out of the 31 have been working in the field of education for at least six years to 25 years. Of the assistant principals surveyed, 23 are within their first five years in the position (see Figure 2).

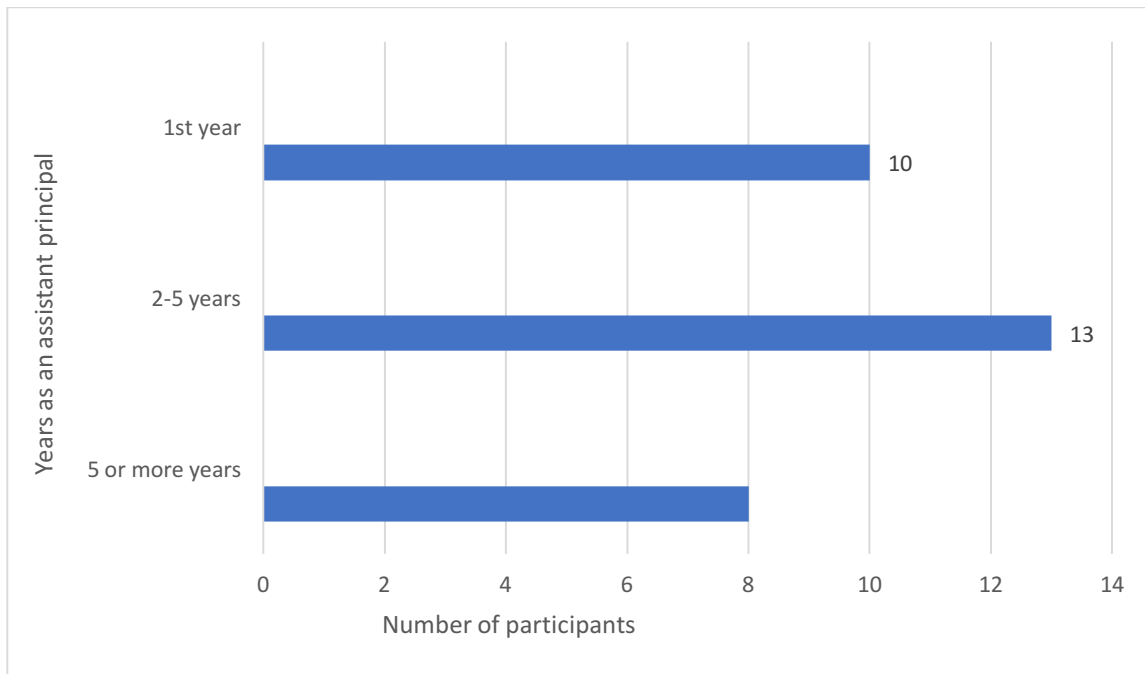


Figure 2. Number of years participants have been an assistant principal.

Finally, along the way to the assistant principal position, 29 or the 31 participants (94 percent) were teachers, six also were department chairs, three also were instructional coaches, and one also was a library media specialist.

Motivations to Pursue an Administrative Post

When assistant principals made the move from teacher to an administrative post, they were able to identify an “ah-ha” moment, a distinct moment where they decided to pursue an administrative post as an assistant principal. 33 percent (10 participants) of the assistant principals surveyed said, yes, while 67 percent (20 participants) said no. Then, participants rated the motivations that inspired them to pursue an administrative post, and selected responses ranging between “very influential, influential, somewhat influential, and not influential.” As shown in Table 1, assistant principals considered “very influential” as motivation to pursue an

administrative position the following: Help teachers grow (53 percent), Influence (50 percent), and Personal mission (42 percent).

Table 1.

Percentage of Motivations that Inspired Participants to Pursue Administrative Post

Motivations	Very influential	#	Influential	#	Somewhat influential	#	Not influential	#	Total
More money	20	6	36.7	11	33.3	10	10	3	30
Job Change	10	3	60	18	13.3	4	16.7	5	30
Influence	50	15	20	6	23.3	7	6.7	2	30
Personal mission	41.9	13	25.8	8	25.8	8	6.5	2	31
Help teachers grow	53.3	16	30	9	16.7	5	0	0	30
A position was available	10	3	23.3	7	20	6	46.7	14	30
Dissatisfaction with teaching	0	0	3.3	1	3.3	1	93.3	28	30
Think I can do a better job than other administrator(s)	3.3	1	23.3	7	6.7	2	66.7	20	30

Furthermore, participants rated Job change as “influential” to their motivation to pursue an administrative position. Regarding their salary, 37 percent of participants responded that More money was “influential” to their decision to pursue an administrative position, while another 33 percent said More money was “somewhat influential” in their decision. Interestingly noted in Table 1 was that Dissatisfaction with teaching was “not influential” (93 percent) as a motivation that inspired them to pursue an administrative post, as was Think I can do a better job than other administrators to those surveyed (67 percent). Lastly, from the time they initially decided to pursue an administrative position to the time they accepted an assistant principal position, results from this study showed that 68 percent accepted their first assistant principal position within four years, while 32 percent took five years or more to accept their first position (see Figure 3).

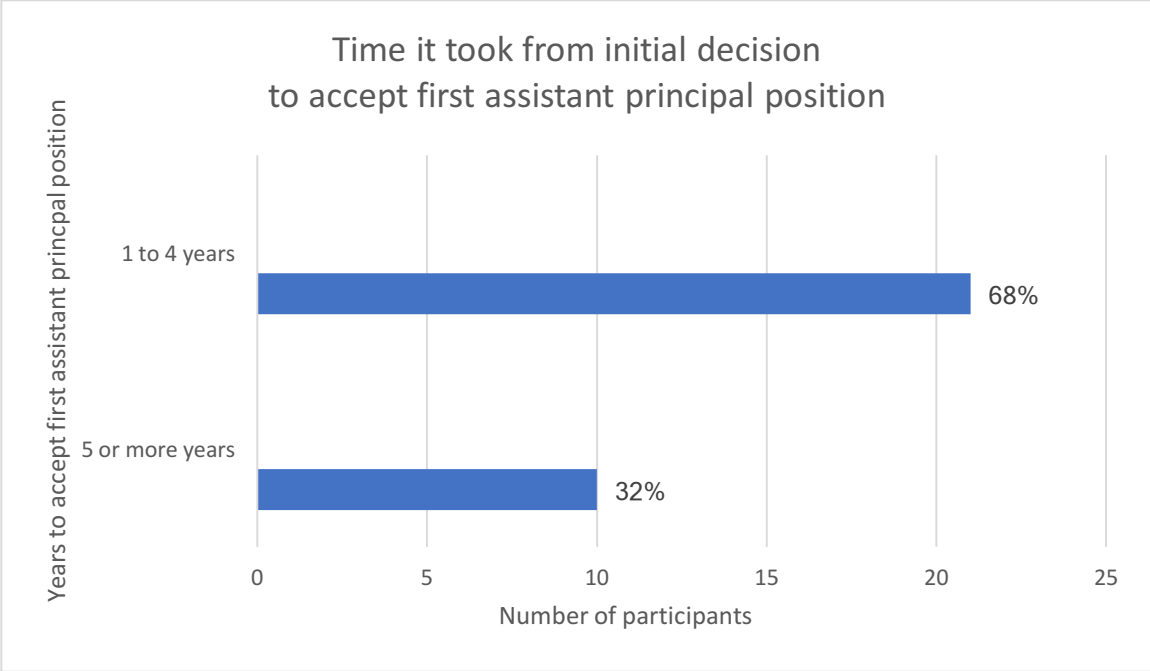


Figure 3. Years it took participants to accept first assistant principalship.

Thoughts About Assistant Principal Role and Responsibilities While Still A Teacher

Those surveyed were also asked to think back to when they were teaching. They were asked to respond about what they thought their assistant principal roles and responsibilities would be. Sixty-three percent (19 participants) responded that they thought they would have more flexibility as a future assistant principal. Thirty-three percent (10 participants) expected to spend about 1/3 of their time dealing with student discipline, and 43 percent (13 participants) expected to spend about 1/3 of their time evaluating teachers. Most assistant principal job descriptions include the phrase, “and other duties as assigned.” Participants responded to this open-ended question with what they thought these future duties might include. Trends in their answers included the following: supervision of students (lunchroom duty, after school activities such as sports, fine arts, student testing), supervision of staff (committees and programs assigned by the principal such as suicide prevention and Individual Educational Plans), and dealing with

parents. Many responded with the phrase “everything under the sun”, “anything and everything,” and “whatever duties the district felt necessary.”

How They Prepared For Their Future (Current) Assistant Principal Position

After making the decision to pursue the assistant principal position, data showed there are several common actions participants took to prepare and make the transition. Of the participants surveyed, 97 percent completed graduate coursework at the university and 94 percent met the requirement for state licensure (see Figure 4). As part of their coursework, 81 percent also participated in an internship, 74 percent had a mentor, and 68 percent visited

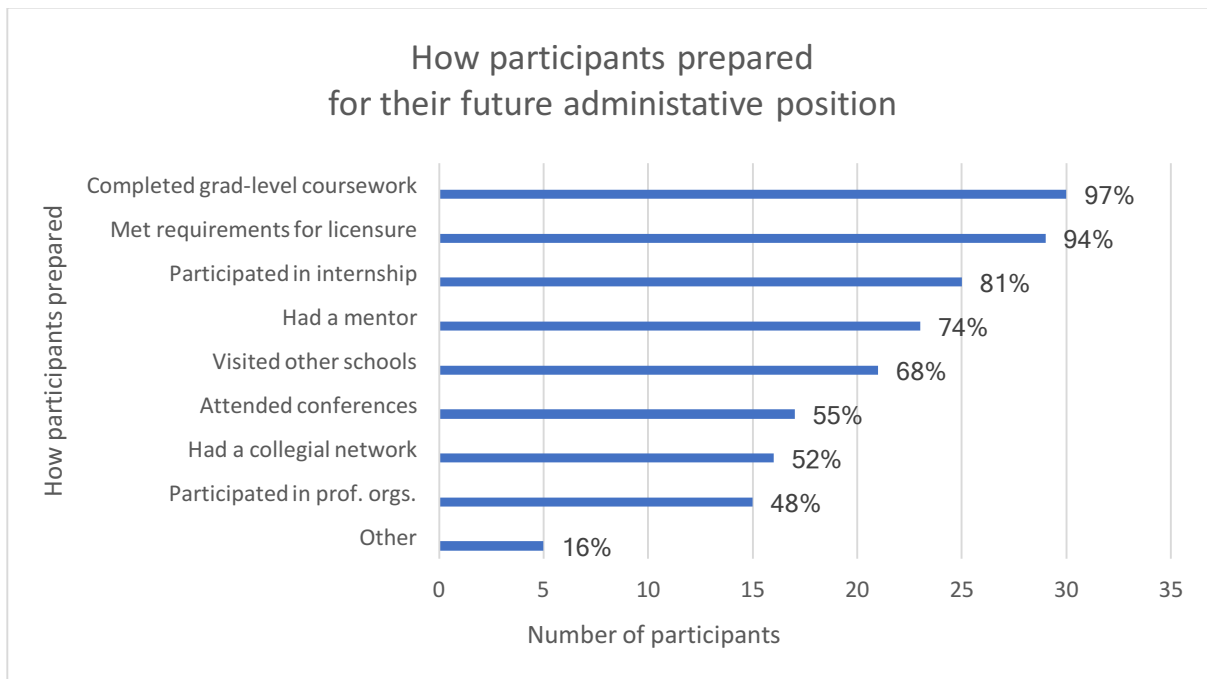


Figure 4. Common actions participants took to prepare for future administrative position.

other schools and spoke with administrators. These actions created developmental opportunities, where 52 percent responded they had a collegial network of administrators or aspiring administrators. Data showed other ways participants prepared, including they completed a

district leadership training (“grow-your-own”) program or took leadership roles within their school and district. As shown in Table 2, participants rated important aspects of their graduate coursework along a scale ranging from “Very important, Important, Slightly important, to Not important.” Ranked as “Very important” were the following: Colleagues, Internship, Mentor, and Case Studies. Ranked as “Important” were Readings and Professors, while “Slightly important” aspects were Team Projects and Assignments.

Table 2.

Percentage Identified as Important Aspects of Graduate Coursework

Aspect	Very important		Important		Slightly important		Not important		Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
Colleagues	54.8	17	32.3	10	9.7	3	3.2	1	31
Internship	51.6	16	45.2	14	3.2	1	0	0	31
Mentor	50	15	33.3	10	10	3	6.7	2	30
Case studies	43.3	13	46.7	14	6.7	2	3.3	1	30
Readings	3.2	1	48.4	15	35.5	11	12.9	4	31
Professors	19.4	6	45.2	14	25.8	8	9.7	3	31
Cohort	35.5	11	32.3	10	19.4	6	12.9	4	31
Team projects	6.5	2	19.4	6	64.5	20	9.7	3	31
Assignments	6.5	2	25.8	8	58.1	18	9.7	3	31

Most Helpful (and Least Helpful) Preparation Aspects of Graduate Coursework

Many participants added further information about the most or least helpful aspects of graduate coursework. Analysis of the data revealed the following areas. One was the internship and “doing,” which consisted of planning and executing building programs, handling “light” administrative duties, and being in the building more and shadowing and observing other

administrators. Another helpful aspect was they created a network of people (cohort, mentors, professors), where they initiated with other administrators (both veteran and those new to the position), learned from their experiences in their positions, interacted with classmates and professors, and met administrators within the district and surrounding districts. A final salient most helpful aspect of graduate coursework was discussing case studies, consisting of class discussion analyzing real-life examples. Participants responded, “Being able to take a current issue/need and work with a group of educators to provide for our current district,” “having conversations with current administrators about various situations and how they were handled, basically getting a ‘bag of tricks’ was very helpful,” “I learned the most from current administrators, they would often bring in scenarios that happened recently in the building and we would discuss how you would handle the situation.” Participants also responded with a wide list of the least helpful aspects of graduate coursework, including day-to-day assignments, assignments that were graded but didn’t receive any feedback, journaling, and giving presentations to the cohort and video recorded assessments.

How Graduate Program Prepared Them for Their Actual Job

Sixty-eight percent of participants (21 out of 31) responded their graduate program prepared them “Somewhat well” for their actual job responsibilities, while one participant responded, “Not well” (see Figure 5). Half the participants added further information, and they responded that the Internship (7) was the most important part and the Law and SPED classes (8) were the most useful. Participants responded in several ways about the importance. One said, “[The] Internship was most important part of what I did in my graduate program as it gave me opportunities to get involved and actually do part of my job.”

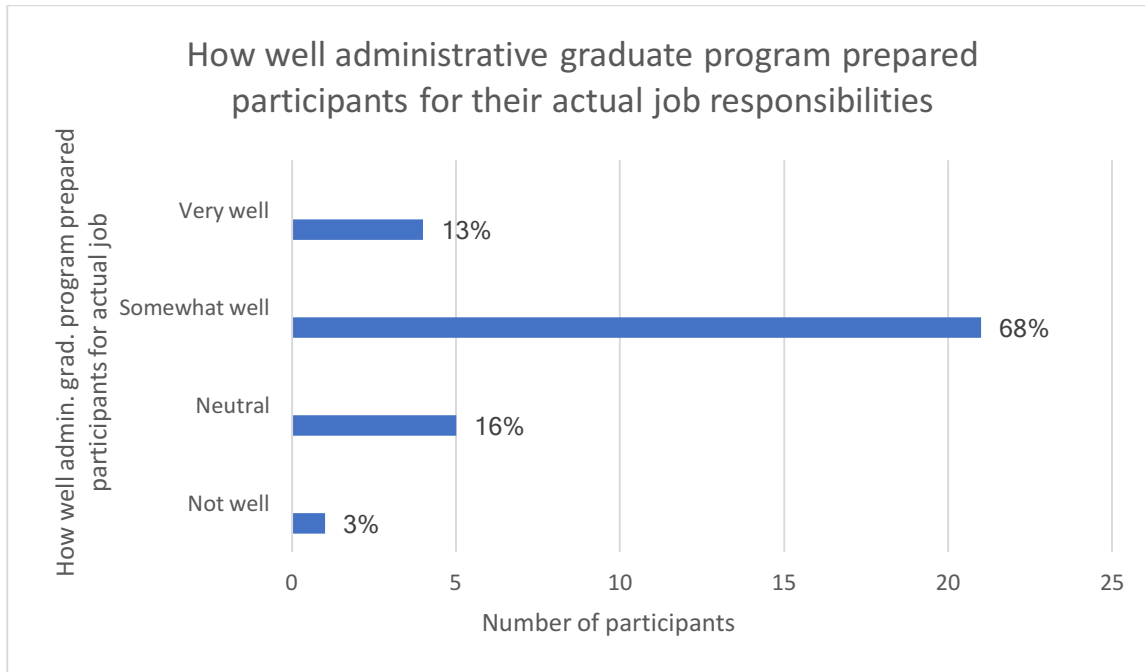


Figure 5. Administrative graduate program prepared them for actual job responsibilities.

Two other participants said, “there is nothing that takes the place of on the job training,” and “being realistic with day-to-day duties and responsibilities, [the] internship was most beneficial.” Regarding how useful Law and SPED classes were, participants responded, “Law class was most useful, provided a solid understanding of legal aspects,” and “Law and SPED classes gave me a much better grasp of areas I had little previous knowledge.” Others noted, “Taught me valuable information about SPED law,” and, “helped most with law and SPED info.”

Essential to Spend Time With a Mentor

During the internship, all participants but one spent time with a mentor. The mentor’s position was the assistant principal 48 percent of the time and the principal 45 percent of the time (see Figure 6).

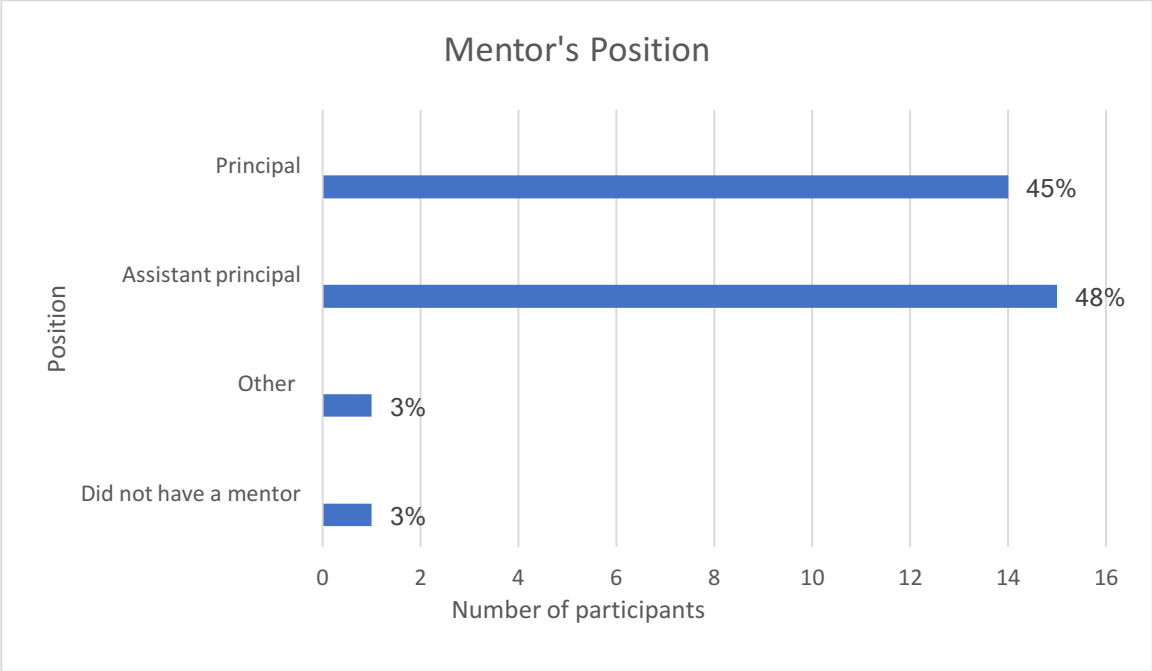


Figure 6. Mentor’s position during the internship.

One had another administrator, and one did not have a mentor. The amount of time spent with the mentor ranged among the participants. Thirty-seven percent of participants (11) spent 2-3 hours per week with their mentor, 27 percent of participants (8) spent 1 hour per week with their mentor, and 23 percent of participants (7) spent less than 1 hour per week with their mentor (see Figure 7). Very few, 10 percent of participants, spent 4-5 hours per week with their mentor and only one spent more than 5 hours per week. One participant did not spend time with a mentor. When asked what was important to participants, if anything, about spending time with their mentor as they prepared for their future administrative role,

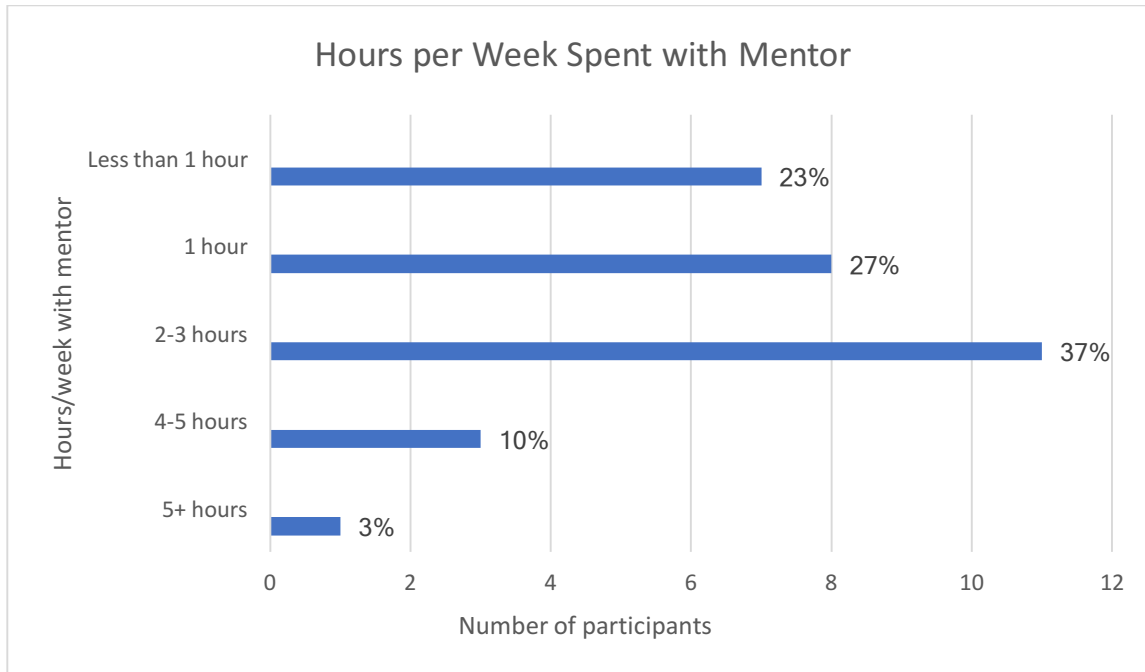


Figure 7. Number of hours per week spent by participants with their mentor.

there were several important things to the relationship. As shown in Table 3, 55 percent of participants responded that it was “absolutely essential” they “discussed ideas together” and had an “idea exchange,” while 47 percent responded that it was “absolutely essential” that they were a “resource person” and that time with the mentor “created a comfort level.” Participants regarded the following things as “very important.” Forty-eight percent said “shared experiences,” while 43 percent said “immediate feedback” and “learned the role and responsibilities.” Forty-one percent said they “learned to be part of administrative team.” An interesting item showed that 88 percent of participants found spending time with their mentor was helpful in their preparation and transition to their future administrative role. Participants shared further information about how they spent time with their mentor. These responses included “discussion of her day-to-day job responsibilities,” “mentor was able to provide

feedback, counsel, and support...able to bounce ‘what if’ situations,” “talking through situations,” and “having a person to share ideas with and discuss the real job and what it

Table 3.

Important Components with Mentor when Preparing for Future Administrative Role

Question	Absolutely essential	#	Very important	#	Slightly important	#	Not at all important	#	Total
Discussed ideas together	55.2	16	31	9	10.3	3	3.4	1	29
Idea exchange	55.2	16	31	9	10.3	3	3.4	1	29
Resource person	46.7	14	43.3	13	10	3	0	0	30
Created a comfort level	46.7	14	40	12	13.3	4	0	0	30
Shared experiences	41.4	12	48.3	14	10.3	3	0	0	29
Immediate feedback	36.7	11	43.3	13	16.7	5	3.3	1	30
Learned role and responsibilities	33.3	10	43.3	13	23.3	7	0	0	30
Learned to be part of administrative team	37.9	11	41.4	12	17.2	5	3.4	1	29
Did not find mentor helpful	4.2	1	0	0	8.3	2	87.5	21	24

entailed.” One shared, “They [the mentor] helped me develop a network of other administrators to develop my personal skills.” Surprisingly, one responded, “My mentor was not very helpful in my development as an administrator” while another admitted, “I didn’t spend much time with my mentor, but I found another mentor outside my building to discuss things.”

Personal Challenges Along the Way to Assistant Principal Position

There were several personal challenges participants experienced during their preparation and transition to become assistant principal. The analysis resulted in four salient areas that were hardest personally for participants: 1) Becoming an assistant principal in the same building, 2) Medical, 3) Family, and 4) Time Commitment. In the process of becoming an assistant principal in the same building in which they taught, participants sited having to “overcome some perceptions,” “the preparation was challenging in my changing relationships with colleagues,” it was “about reestablishing boundaries,” and one participant who taught in, graduated from, and became an assistant principal in the same building wrote, “the transition was interesting since I would now be evaluating teachers who taught me.” Participants who sited medical responded, “medical issues in the health ‘journey’,” one contracted “Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever from a tick bite,” and “gaining weight and loss of time for exercise” were the hardest part of the transition to the assistant principal position.

In terms of family, participants sited “moving my family,” “having our firstborn halfway through our program and definitely had to adjust my schedule,” “I had two small children and had to learn how to make our time together more quality and quantity,” and “I moved a few times (cities and houses), got married, had a daughter, and numerous other life events...however, my wife is a teacher and if anything that helped move me in this direction (towards administration)” as their toughest personal challenges. Realizing the time commitment necessary to make the transition to the assistant principal position, participants said, “it took time away from my family,” and another, “bad timing for starting out in a doc program, as I struggled with the coursework and the time management of becoming an administrator,” “I always want to do more, but I already work 10-11 hour days,” and “divorce causes a great strain on resources and

time...limiting my involvement.” Five participants responded they did not have challenges they experienced during their preparation and transition to become an assistant principal, but one added, “Need to have a very supportive family with the time commitment.”

Positive Attitude About Always Learning Facilitated the Transition

When participants were asked what actions facilitated their transition to the assistant principal position, the analysis revealed one strong common factor: a positive attitude about always learning. Participants responded, “a positive attitude,” “excited for the new challenge,” “My mind is a sponge and I want to learn as much as I can before I take on an administrative position,” “pushed my comfort level to learn new and different areas to strengthen my skill set,” and “read and listened to other administrators.” They were also open to the new work, as they responded, “tried to learn as much as possible in each situation,” “open and willing to absorb any new information from current administrators,” “being open-minded and listen to other administrator’s advice,” and “I was very open-minded and flexible.” One even responded, “Be the best AP and leave the place better than I found it.”

Personal and Professional Changes Affect Preparation and Transition to New Position

Participants were asked to rate the types of personal and professional changes that affected them during preparation and transition into the assistant principal position. The scale ranged from “Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, to Strongly disagree.” As shown in Table 4, 100 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed they learned “how to do the tasks of an administrator”, while 97 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed they “learned the expected values, norms, and beliefs of the administration.”

Table 4.

Personal and Professional Changes Affect Preparation and Transition

Question	Strongly agree	#	Agree	#	Disagree	#	Strongly disagree	#	Total
I learned how to do the tasks of administration	40	12	60	18	0	0	0	0	30
I learned expected values, norms, and beliefs of administration	36.7	11	60	18	3.3	1	0	0	30
My relationships with teacher colleagues changed	43.3	13	50	15	6.7	2	0	0	30
I learned how to balance the variety of personal challenges during the experience (e.g. depression, excitement, feeling overwhelmed, increased confidence, stress, isolation)	30	9	53.3	16	13.3	4	3.3	1	30
I learned to better manage my emotions	20	6	50	15	23.3	7	6.7	2	30
I learned how to manage my time better than I did as a teacher	10	3	43.3	13	43.3	13	3.3	1	30

Both of these responses indicate that participants experienced changes during the transition and learned the new behaviors required for the administrative position. Furthermore, the table shows 93 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed “My relationships with teacher colleagues changed” and 83 percent of participants said they agreed or strongly agreed they “learned how to balance the variety of personal changes during the experience (e.g. depression, excitement, feeling overwhelmed, increased confidence, stress, isolation).” Interestingly also shown, is that participants were split over “I learned how to manage my time better than I did as a teacher” where 43 percent agreed and 43 percent disagreed.

Compare Current Role and Responsibilities with What They Thought They Would Be

The assistant principals in the study were asked to compare the realities of their current role and responsibilities with what they thought they would be. Specifically, participants were asked how the realities of their current role and responsibilities compare with their experience in the role during preparation training. They answered questions across a range of responses: “Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.” As shown in Table 5, 58 percent of participants strongly agreed that “work days are longer,” and 55 percent agreed that their “role and responsibilities are more clearly defined by the principal.” Also, interestingly noted in the table, is that when asked whether “work day is more flexible than expected,” 52 percent disagreed and another 10 percent strongly disagreed, indicating that their work day is less flexible than they expected. Finally, 78 percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed (evenly distributed) that “administrative paperwork is more time consuming” than expected.

Table 5.

Realities of Current Role and Responsibilities Compared with Training Experiences

Question	Strongly				Strongly				Total
	agree	#	Agree	#	Disagree	#	disagree	#	
Workdays are longer	58.1	18	22.6	7	12.9	4	6.5	2	31
Role and responsibilities are more clearly defined by my principal	35.5	11	54.8	17	6.5	2	3.2	1	31
Workday is more flexible than expected	9.7	3	29	9	51.6	16	9.7	3	31
Administrative paperwork is more time-consuming than I expected	38.7	12	38.7	12	22.6	7	0	0	31

Distance in Relationship with Former Teacher Colleagues

When asked to what extent did the relationship with your former teacher colleagues change from when you were a teacher to now, participants were evenly split. 50 percent of the participants said they have better relationships, while the other 50 percent said they have worse relationships (see Figure 8). Interestingly shown in the figure is that no participants responded that they have any substantially better or substantially worse relationships with their former teacher colleagues, but simply that they have changed. This indicates that their relationship has changed, albeit not dramatically. When asked in what ways the relationship

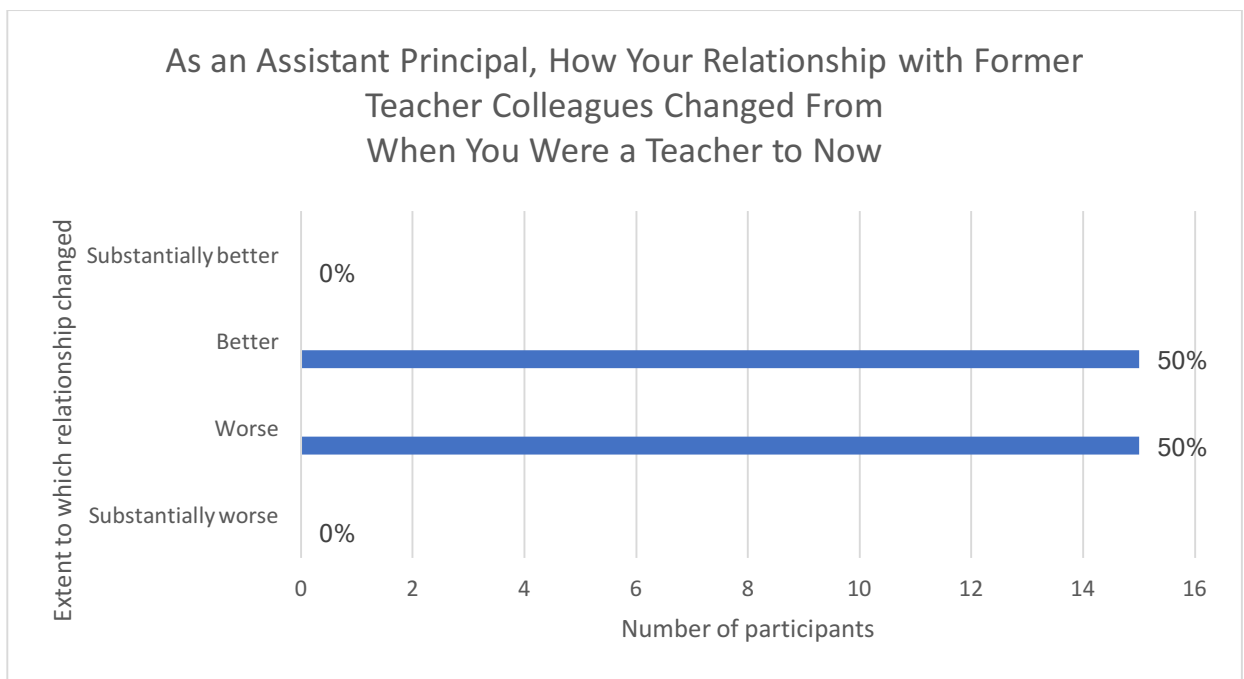


Figure 8. As assistant principal, how relationships with former teacher colleagues changed. has changed, assistant principal participants responded for better and for worse. Some indicated they are more distanced in their relationship with teacher colleagues. Their responses were, “I have kept them at a distance as work,” “I am now on the ‘dark side,’ you can feel the change of reaction,” and, another “I have positive relationships with teachers, but they were no longer

‘friends’ who could discuss everything, there is definitely a change in relationship, but it doesn’t have to be negative.” Further evidence of distance, one assistant principal responded, “teacher colleagues do not tell you everything they use[d] to talk about, hanging out after work has decreased, having no time to socialize during the work day.” Another assistant principal added, “I wouldn’t say they are worse, but they changed. I was no longer asked to hang out or join them for after school activities. On the other hand, I didn’t want to hang out with them for social activities because I believe there needed to be some distance.” Another responded, “The title...looms larger than the individual...teachers never forget they are talking with an administrator.” Finally, one made it clear, “I have found that I have distanced myself from my teaching team.”

However, some assistant principals found they were closer to their teachers. One responded, “I got along well with them as peers as a teacher, now I can provide resources, experience and understanding to them at a different level.” Another added, “I have remained friends,” while another said, “I was already a part of the administrative team so I don’t think it changed drastically.”

Stronger and More Confidential Relationship with Current Administrative Colleagues

I asked assistant principals how their current relationship with administrative colleagues changed from when they were a teacher. Participants gave open-ended responses, “I am now a peer,” “more collegial,” “became closer,” “greatly improved,” and “they became stronger.” Other participants responded, “I am closer to administrators in my district than with teachers,” “the trust and respect level rose,” “I felt like I belonged to the group,” with “more open dialogue and discussions,” and “more accepting.” Participants also noted, “I have stronger relationships

with other administrators and collaborate with many people from many different buildings,” creating, “better understanding of certain decisions that were made,” and “now we can share more confidential issues and brainstorm together where before I would not have been privy to that information.” Others responded, “They became much stronger,” and “I am much more included in personal/social events,” and “have gotten to know them much better and you can share more openly with them.” Three participants responded with no change, “I can’t say they have changed much,” “it stayed about the same,” and “same.”

The Most Important Role or Responsibility in Your Current Job

When I asked current assistant principals what is the most important role or responsibility they have in their current job, their responses focused around three areas: 1)Ensure and maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all students, 2)Student Discipline, and 3)Professional development of teachers. Regarding safety and security, participants responded, “student safety,” “safety of our students,” “student safety and learning occurs in every classroom,” “creating an environment where all kids feel safe and able to learn,” and “Maintaining a positive and safe atmosphere for all students to learn.” One participant responded this way, “Fostering a positive environment for our students. Goal is that all students feel safe, welcomed, happy, and accepted in my school so that they can be successful and have a meaningful connection to school.” Another responded, “an advocate for student success.”

Others responded that student discipline in the most important role or responsibility as the assistant principal. Participants in this group responded, “Student discipline and supervision, as this is what take up most time and has biggest impact on students every day.” Another responded, “I am in charge of all discipline for the 8th grade class, which is absolutely essential.”

Another viewed it as “Building relationships with students and especially with those being seen for discipline.” Still another added, “Most important is disciplinarian and professional development for our staff.”

Others viewed the professional development of teachers as the most important role or responsibility in their current job as assistant principal. One responded, “I believe my most important role is teacher development through observations and follow-up, although majority of my time is dedicated to discipline. Since I oversee discipline in my high school, I struggle to find time for observations.” Another said, “Creating authentic professional development.” Another responded, “Working with teachers and coaches. They have the direct impact on kids so making sure what they do is best for students.” Another assistant principal noted, “Teacher evals and retention, (as the C&I assistant principal) this is primarily my role.” Another responded, “Helping teachers grow and be more effective. Create a school environment where teaching/learning is a priority.”

Still other assistant principals expressed surprising views of other varying roles and responsibilities as the most important to their current position. One said, “Student assessment and Leadership with respect to Curriculum. I oversee the vast majority of State and District Assessment. This feeds into my role on district and building leadership teams focused on school improvement.” Another responded, “Having a vision for how to move and enhance student achievement systematically.” Two others responded about relationships with other administrators when they said, “Good relationship with other administrators to help with decision-making” and “Aligning your goals and beliefs to the head principal. He or she determines if you are being effective regardless of your perception or others. To succeed you must build them up.”

Biggest Challenge Faced and Addressed as an Administrator

Current assistant principals listed a variety of responses for their biggest challenge faced and addressed in their position. This created three common headings: 1) Challenging student discipline situations, while remaining calm with parents and in SPED, 2) Balancing work and family time, and 3) Disagreement with administrators and other teachers. In the first challenge, one responded, “My biggest challenge was developing consistent discipline for students. I created a discipline matrix which laid out a progressive discipline plan for minor misdeeds and more severe consequences for major offenses.” Another responded, “Challenging disciplinary decisions to make both with students and teachers,” while another stated, “Challenging parents who believe blindly their student is never wrong, and then learning how to work through that with my building principal.” Others cited, “Remaining calm under pressure, especially from parents,” “Working with the emotional challenges of many kids’ broken lives. I get pulled into many legal and emotional battles with kids and their families” and “Discipline and especially so with student on IEP/504.” Others added, “Irate parents,” “Certainly being in the hot seat with parents takes a little get[ting] used to,” and “Understanding appropriate 504 accommodations given medical documentation and classroom observation of student performance” along with “SPED issues. [The] expectations of parents often clash with what we are able to provide.”

Balancing work and family time was another big challenge faced and addressed by current assistant principals. One female responded, “Balancing motherhood with the responsibilities and time commitment of the position,” while another assistant principal responded, “The ability to leave my emotions at school. If I have a bad day at school, I typically bring that with me when I go home.” Another noted, “Balancing work/family time. I would go

to work at 6:30 and get home around 5:30 or 6 every day. On sport nights, music, etc....it was 9pm. Saturday I would attend athletic events.”

The third challenge area faced and addressed by assistant principal is the disagreement with administrators and other teachers. One responded regarding the origin of the problem, “Philosophical disagreements with supervisors on staff relations – I believe in treating staff/including staff one way and my supervisor believes in a different philosophy.” Another responded regarding the disagreement, “Moving the ball forward against entrenched building administrators and district bosses.” Regarding conflict with teachers, an assistant principal responded, “Teachers not doing what is best for students. Teachers not being on board with the goals and vision of the school,” while another assistant principal added, “When you don’t believe a teacher did the right thing.” Still another revealed the disagreement, “Having critical conversations with teachers who have more education experience than I do.”

Transition the Same Way Again to an Assistant Principal Position?

Studying data from the current assistant principals in my study about repeating their transition the same way again, and what, if anything, they would do differently, revealed three different groupings of answers: 1) Need for additional focused learning, 2) Modify the transition route, and 3) Nothing different. This third group, *Nothing different*, had the strongest response, with participants responding that they would do nothing different than what they had done in their transition to their current assistant principal position. Data revealed nine current assistant principals would do nothing different, seven of whom responded, “Nothing,” one who responded, “No. I feel like I have taken every step possible to gain the knowledge and

experience it takes to be an administrator,” and one who responded, “I would take the same path.”

Other data revealed assistant principals would have transitioned by gaining additional focused learning. The transition-focused learning responses included, “Would get an additional masters,” “Read more and talk to more principals in how to best manage the stresses of the job,” “Fill in down in the front office more and learn more about the day to day activities of an AP,” and “Be more prepared for the time need[ed] to organize and complete tasks.” Two others responded, “Spend more time with SPED teachers/administrators. Just to get a more functional grasp on the law and daily practice,” and “learn more about the disciplinary process and some special education procedures (i.e. development of 504’s, SIT team process, etc.)” One said, “I would have been more polished and prepared for my initial interviews.”

The remaining group underscored a modified transition route to the assistant principal position. One recommended, “Transition to the district office first,” another, “Transition in a different building,” while another transitioned from classroom, then “to LMS (Library Media Services), and then to assistant principal.” Other data revealed, “I would not be an administrator intern within my own building... If I could do it over again, I would intern at a different high school so teachers wouldn’t see me as a teacher trying to be an administrator.” Still others revealed, “I would not have distanced myself as much from former teammates,” and “I’d do it sooner. I taught for 15 years before moving to administration.”

A Destination Position or Plans to Advance as an Administrator

Although my study looked at the preparation and transition process of assistant principals to their current position, I wanted to close my study by asking if this was their destination

position or if they had plans to continue their advancement as an administrator in educational leadership. Such positions might include, but not limited to, principal, superintendent, or other district-level administrator. With this question, I wanted to know their plans and their ultimate goal. The open-ended responses came in three distinct buckets: 1) Remain as Assistant Principal, 2) Become Principal, and 3) Become a District-level administrator. From the first group, data revealed six assistant principals had no plans to advance, four of whom responded with “No,” one with, “Not at this time,” and one responded, “I currently enjoy my position as an assistant principal because I get to work closely with students.” The second, and largest group, consisted of eleven assistant principals who have plans to become a principal at some time later in their career. Finally, in the third group, five responded they want to become a district level administrator. Other interesting data revealed that another three are simply “not sure” of their plans to stay or continue their advancement and one is “always willing to take on anything the district feels would be a good fit for me.”

Summary of Findings

The findings here show what it is like for a typical person going through the preparation and transition process to become a new assistant principal. The typical person was motivated by three main things: help teachers, influence others, and they are on a personal mission. Money was also a factor, although not as big as the other three. The typical person made a decision for a new career, however, many did not realize an “ah-ah” defining moment that they were doing so. There are perceptions of the future role and responsibilities of the assistant principal position, from dealing with student discipline and evaluating teachers, to fulfilling the “other duties as assigned” which can vary among schools and principals. Along the way, the typical person

undergoes the necessary preparation and completed university graduate coursework in educational administration, gained state licensure as an administrator, and experienced an extensive internship. The internship was the most important aspect of the preparation, where the typical person spent valuable time with a mentor (typically an assistant principal or principal) and built a special relationship with the person. Through this relationship and the experiences, the typical person learned the role and responsibilities of the position, as well as the values of those on an administrative team, in order to lead schools. Furthermore, the typical person built a network of other administrators and aspiring administrators to help manage the transition into a new career, one that challenged and produced new learning opportunities and connections, as well as various hardships both professionally and personally. The findings also compared current role and responsibilities with their pre-service expectations. Finally, the findings showed that by navigating the transition, one reached the milestone of landing the assistant principal job, and thereby started the first school administration position. Ultimately the findings showed the process; how assistant principals prepared and transitioned from being a classroom teacher to leading as an assistant principal in a new role as school-wide leader, a move that opens up the possibility to advance as an administrator in educational leadership.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Practical Implications

Becoming a new assistant principal involves navigating a process of preparation and transition into a new administrative position. The purpose of this study was to better understand the preparation and transition experience of those who became assistant principals. But what does the typical person look like who is going through this transition process from the teacher ranks? What motivates the typical person to make this change? How do they perceive the future role and responsibilities? How do they prepare in the graduate coursework for the new leadership position? Finally, how do they describe their current role and responsibilities as an assistant principal compared to their pre-service expectations? This study aimed to add knowledge to the limited work on assistant principals, especially in the area regarding the transitions experienced by an assistant principal (Armstrong, 2009). To add value to the field of educational leadership, I surveyed 31 assistant principals in the Kansas City area, to better understand the preparation and transition process of a new assistant principal with new roles, responsibilities, and how they navigate this process. The story that follows shows the key findings of what the typical person looks like who is in the transition process, a person who initiates a move from teaching in a classroom to leading in the front office as an assistant principal in a new administrative position.

Key findings of this study of the typical person going through this process:

- Earns/Holds a Master's degree in Educational Administration.
- Motivations are to help teachers grow, to influence others, and for a personal mission.
- Has perceptions about more flexibility as an administrator, administrative roles in student discipline and evaluating teachers, as well as unique roles.

- Prepares by completing graduate work, gains state licensure, participates in and realizes internship as most valuable, builds relationship with mentor and collegial network of administrators as socialization into new assistant principal role.
- Takes on a positive learning attitude to overcome personal and professional challenges.
- Learns the job of an administrator and the values of an administrative team.
- Compares current role and responsibilities (as assistant principal) to pre-service expectations, learns that workdays are longer, more rigid, and experiences changed relationships with teachers but improved relationships with administrators.
- Realizes most important roles and responsibilities are to ensure and maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all students, student discipline, and professional development of teachers, as well as a variety of minor roles and responsibilities unique to the position based on needs of the school or principal preference.

The typical person going through this process to become an assistant principal is a teacher who has made an important decision about a new career. They are motivated to make a change. This study showed that 94 percent of the participants were teachers before they became an assistant principal, agreeing with the current literature that shows that 99 percent of principals have some teaching experience (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003, p. 24). The typical person has a Master's degree in Educational Administration and worked in the field of education for at least six years.

Motivations for Leaving the Classroom

Motivation is an important part that begins the process to pursue the assistant principal position. It also helps carry them through the process. The typical person going through this process does not recognize an “ah-ha” moment to pursue the assistant principal position. I initially thought more people would identify an “ah-ha” moment, but only 33 percent of the participants surveyed indicated so. However, the typical person is motivated by three things: help teachers grow, influence others, and has a personal mission in their work as an administrator. These factors are very influential to driving the decision to pursue an administrative post for the typical person. This key finding supports the previous work of Pounder and Merrill (2001) who found that for potential candidates, the number one factor that attracted them to the high school principalship was due to a desire to influence and improve education. Another motivation is job change, and it was listed as “influential.” Interestingly, a salary increase with more money was surprisingly only “somewhat influential” to the typical person, a finding that indicates money is only a portion of the motivation to pursue an administrative post. One reason for this might suggest that since the increase in pay as an assistant principal is only 15-40 percent greater than that of a teacher (Brewer, 1996; Norton, 2015), money by itself is not a big enough factor to make the transition, but that there is more to making the transition. Also surprising, the study showed dissatisfaction with teaching was not a motivating factor for the typical person en route to becoming an assistant principal. This indicates that they are not dissatisfied with teaching, but rather they are motivated by other factors to be an assistant principal. Ultimately, with the inner motivation influences driving them, the typical person accepts their first assistant principal position within four years.

Perceptions of the Future Role and Responsibilities of an Assistant Principal

The typical person in the process also has perceptions of the future role and responsibilities about the assistant principal position while still teaching. One perception is flexibility. The typical person thinks there will be more flexibility in their schedule as an administrator, instead of remaining in a classroom as a teacher does on a daily basis. This would mean more time to walk through the building, meet and strategize with other administrators, engage with students in the learning process during classroom walk-throughs, and conduct other activities to increase their leadership. In fact, this study showed that 63 percent of participants thought that they would have more flexibility as an assistant principal. However, the schedule of an assistant principal is not as flexible, as those in the transition start to realize this and begin to act more like administrators as they actually start working in the position on a daily basis with the other administrators. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found that while still in the classroom, those on this journey recognize administrative behavior in the relationships and begin to mimic, adapt, and avoid certain professional behaviors.

Another perception is the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal. Data showed the typical person understands they will spend about 1/3 of the time dealing with discipline and about 1/3 of the time evaluating teachers. Other perceptions included the remainder of time will be spent on “and other duties as assigned.” Data showed the range of duties include student supervision in the building or at events, supervision of staff in committees and programs, and dealing with parents. These support Armstrong (2004), who found that the “learning how to do the work” occurs in the conversations with individuals in the administrative group and during administrative tasks and projects.

How Current Assistant Principals Prepared for Their Future Administrative Position

Understanding how the typical person prepares for the new assistant principal position sheds further light on the process to the position. Data showed the typical person completed several important requirements. These requirements were part of the general transition process to orient the typical person more toward school administration and away from classroom teaching. The typical person completed graduate coursework and earned the Master's degree in Educational Administration. They also met state licensure requirements when they passed their school administrator state exam. Data showed that 96 percent completed graduate coursework in educational administration and 94 percent met the state licensure requirements for the administrative position. Throughout the coursework, the typical person realizes the importance of analyzing case studies of real-life administrative issues with others and how useful the Law and SPED classes are to the preparation. The readings and professors were also "important" to the typical person, but team projects and graded assignments with no feedback were only "slightly important." Throughout this technical training, reflection, and networking, the typical person begins to adapt to the new administrator perspective involving a team of administrators. This supports the previous work of Davis, et. al., (2005), who learned that the experienced school leaders are those learning and working together, and is the most representative type of team building that is increasingly encouraged among school faculty. Overall, the administrative graduate program prepared the typical person "somewhat well" for their actual job responsibilities.

A critical part of the graduate coursework to facilitate the process is where the typical person also participates in the internship. The findings showed that 81 percent participated in an internship. It is during the internship that the typical person realizes the internship is one of the

most helpful preparation aspects of the graduate work because of the administrative work. It is where they experienced the role and responsibilities by actually doing the work on a daily basis and felt the weight of their administrative decisions. The administrative work consisted of planning and executing building programs, light administrative duties, and being in the building shadowing and observing other administrators.

The typical person also has the mentor, and creates a valuable relationship by initiating conversations with the mentor and builds a collegial network of administrators or aspiring administrators from within the same school or from visiting other schools. Data showed that 74 percent had a mentor and that 52 percent had a collegial network of administrators or aspiring administrators. In terms of the relationship with the mentor, the typical person finds it essential to spend time with a mentor during the internship. The typical person has the assistant principal or the principal as the mentor, and can expect to spend about 2 hours per week with the mentor. Close to 90 percent (87 percent actual) of participants reported they spent a maximum of three hours per week with their mentor. Furthermore, when asked what was important about spending time with the mentor, the typical person focused on initiating discussion on school administration ideas together, sharing experiences with the mentor, and having the mentor become a resource person by building a comfort level between the two. This supports how White and Crow (1993) referred to the internship as, “accompanying the mentor through the real world pressure cooker of day-to-day situations where trainees are effected in crucial and lasting ways.” The typical person can expect the mentor to provide immediate feedback, and through these dialogues learns the role and responsibilities needed to be part of an administrative team. These data support the work of Davis, et. al., (2005) who found that the primary role of the mentor is to guide the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost confidence, and to

construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills. Sixty-eight percent reported they visited other schools and spoke with administrators.

At this stage in the process with confidence building, the typical person initiated conversations with administrators, asked questions, and gained insights into the day-to-day administrator work. It was here that the typical person felt part of the administrator group and became privy to the confidential information that occurs in the administrative meetings. Through these experiences, they typically came away with a “bag of tricks” on how to handle various administrative situations. Some in the process even participate in district administrator leadership training (grow-your-own) programs or take additional leadership roles within their school or district. Furthermore, it is through this socialization with the mentor relationship and collegial network that the typical person finds out about job openings and which administrative positions are the best fit for them in the future. By understanding the very important aspects of their administrative graduate school and maximizing the internship and relationships with the mentor and others in administration, the typical person prepares for the future position while still in the classroom.

The typical person engages to overcome personal challenges along the way to the assistant principal position. Even with the right people supporting the typical person, and while still showing initiative during this time of growth, the typical person shows purposeful engagement during this process and overcomes some form of one or more of the four personal challenges. They balance the relationship stress of becoming an assistant principal in the same building. They deal with medical issues. They balance family time with work time, and in particular the combination of the teacher workload, graduate coursework, and administrative tasks associated with the internship. Lastly, they recognize the large time commitment it takes to

complete the preparation. These data add knowledge to the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003) and confirm that “a teacher moving into an administrative position must relinquish a comfortable mindset, experience a modification of self-esteem as a novice, and learn new behaviors of an expert.” By understanding these four personal challenges, and having a supportive family and a collegial network, the typical person overcomes the challenges throughout the transition.

The typical person also overcomes the professional challenges that affect the preparation and transition to the new position. The main challenge is how to do the job. This study found that the typical person learned how to do the tasks of an administrator. One hundred percent of participants strongly agree or agree they learned “how to do the tasks of an administrator.” Even though they are a novice at this stage, the typical person shows confidence that now they can hold the administrative position. The typical person also learns the expected values, norms, and beliefs of the administration. Almost all of the participants (97 percent) strongly agree or agree they learned enough to be part of an administrative school leadership team. These data support the work of Crow (2006) who showed that this socialization is “how they learn their jobs,” and Armstrong (2009) who showed the socialization as the process one undergoes to learn the values, norms, and beliefs required to fulfill organizational roles. Interestingly, the relationships with other teacher colleagues changed slightly. Data showed that 93 percent of participants strongly agree or agree that during their preparation and transition process “their relationships with teacher colleagues changed.” This finding supports the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003) who found that the administrator network occurs and naturally orients the candidate toward the new administrator reference group, referred to as the new community of practice, and away from the known teacher reference group.

Furthermore, an interesting discovery showed that during preparation the typical person takes on a positive attitude about always learning. Participants expressed the positive attitude, as they were excited for the new challenge, their mind was a sponge to learn as much as they could, and they pushed their comfort level to learn new and different areas to strengthen their skill set. Data showed they also initiated, read, listened to other administrators, asked questions, and were flexible to learn new things on their way to a new administrative position. These findings support the role-identity transformation. These data are the disposition of the candidate who wants to be an assistant principal. This confirms previous findings in the work of Lauder (2000), who referred to disposition as flexibility, enthusiasm, sense of humor, compassion for children, courage, developed ego and drive, emotional maturity, and service-oriented. They also add to the work of Davis, et. al (2005), who found that the development of the principal knowledge, skills, and dispositions lacks a strong and coherent research base.

Assistant Principals Describe Their Current Role and Responsibilities Compared to Their Pre-Service Expectations

Once the typical person navigates the preparation and transition process and lands the position as an assistant principal, looking back on the experience provides powerful insight for others. Therefore, when comparing the current role and responsibilities with what they thought they would be, the typical person realizes several things. First, workdays are longer in the assistant principal position than they thought they would be. Almost 60 percent of those surveyed strongly agree with this fact. Second, work days are also less flexible than expected. Third, data showed that 55 percent agree that their role and responsibilities are more clearly

defined by the principal. Lastly, close to 80 percent strongly agree or agree that administrative paperwork is also more time consuming than expected.

The typical person might also experience changes in the relationships with others. First, these data suggest they might experience distance in the relationships with former teacher colleagues. Half of those in the study said they experienced better relationships with teacher colleagues, while the other half said they experienced worse relationships with teacher colleagues. Those going through this process become aware that there could be some awkward distance, where former teacher colleagues are not as open as in the past in their conversations or they may not be invited as often to socialize with the teachers anymore. The data indicate the typical person (now in their current assistant principal position) might express, I am now on the “dark side” or they are no longer “friends” who could discuss everything, while the reverse might be true and expressed along the lines of “I can now provide resources, experience, and understanding to them as a different level.” However, there will be a stronger and more confident relationship with current administrative colleagues. Data showed other administrators are more collegial, they are now peers, and they develop stronger relationships of trust and respect demonstrated in more open dialogue regarding their administrative decisions. These data support purposeful engagement for a new assistant principal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), the place to continue growing in the administrator profession by learning and connecting with others.

Looking back, the typical person realizes there are three important roles or responsibilities for the current assistant principal in their position. Data showed the first is to ensure and maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all students. The second is to deal with student discipline. These add knowledge to the brief literature base of the role and responsibilities of assistant principals, where Hausman et al (2002) and Marshall & Hooley

(2006) found “typical day-to-day responsibilities delegated to assistant principals include such duties as student management and discipline, attendance, student activities, staff support, and building supervision.” The third is the professional development of teachers. This finding supports the recent work of Norton (2015) who found that current assistant principals are expected to perform as a leader of the school, maintain effective community relations, and be an instructional leader to plan and participate in professional growth activities. There is also a surprising variety of other roles and responsibilities unique to the position that the typical assistant principal encounters. Findings showed these are unique, based on the needs of the school, students, community involvement, or by principal preference and they come in the form of general building or district initiatives, or specific responsibilities the principal wants for the school to succeed. These data support the work of Crow (1993), who found that assistant principals recognize the responsibilities delegated to them, based on the context and setting of the school, referred to as custodial (continue the tradition, no change) or innovative (create new ways of doing things) work as they complete these unique responsibilities. The assistant principal must know whether the school needs custodial or innovative leadership. All of these determine the success or failure of the typical person in the new assistant principal position, supporting what Lauder (2000) referred to as the disposition, the applicant’s personal qualities for the position, the personality style aligned with the principalship.

The typical assistant principal undoubtedly faces problems in their new administrative position and these are the top three. Data showed the biggest challenge faced and addressed as a typical new assistant principal in the position is challenging student discipline situations, especially while remaining calm with parents. Extra care needs to be shown when the student discipline situations involve Special Education. The second biggest challenge faced and

addressed as an administrator is balancing work and family time. The time commitment necessary, as shown earlier in the findings, involves the school day work, followed by supervision of student activities that extend into the evenings several days of the week or weekend. Finally, the third biggest challenge faced and addressed is disagreement with administrators and other teachers. This disagreement takes form in a variety of ways, such as disagreement in the way the principal leads the school and staff, or disagreement with other teachers who are not fulfilling their obligations in the classroom causing students to suffer.

At this stage when the preparation is complete and the transition to the new assistant principal position is imminent, the typical person would not change anything about their preparation and transition to the position. Essentially, they would change nothing, and they would prepare and transition the same way again if they were to redo it. However, others would add slightly more focused-learning on Law and Special Education for the school administrator or modify the transition route slightly to include a position at the district office.

Therefore, for the typical person going through this process and preparing to transition to their first assistant principal job, this position serves many purposes in the educational leadership career pathway. This can be a destination position for some, or for others they have plans to advance as an administrator. These positions might later include principal, superintendent or other district-level administrator as the ultimate goal. Data showed that many are just learning their new assistant principal position, they enjoy working in the position, and they desire to remain as the assistant principal. Others, a smaller group, hope to become a district-level administrator. But, the typical person, appears eager to learn the assistant principal position and move on to becoming a principal later in their career. These data support the work of the NASSP (1991) who found that the assistant principal is the most common entry-level position

for those pursuing the administrative careers in schools. These data also support the work of Armstrong (2012) that this transition from teacher to assistant principal is a significant personal and professional turning point within the organizational landscape of schools that has largely been ignored in the field of educational administration... the end of the teaching career and the beginning of a new professional trajectory.

Policy Implications

There are several policy implications as a result of this new knowledge. Those in the transition can know more clearly the pathway and expectations. Education leaders can know what to expect of those going through the transition. Furthermore, when education leaders are looking for new leadership, or talking with teachers showing leadership in schools, they know what to look for in their motivations (they help other teachers, influence, and mission). In terms of advising those interested in school leadership, they should direct them to earn their Master's in Educational Leadership and that the internship is the most valuable to their growth – “doing the administrative work,” having conversations with their mentor and other administrators, and having the right disposition for the position. By making the most of the new knowledge and transition process with the mentor and the collegial network, they can better learn how to handle school leadership situations, build professional support, and find the right fit at a school in a new assistant principal position.

Future Research Implications

The findings of this study not only present a better understanding of the preparation and transition process of those who became assistant principals, but also provide opportunities for

future research. There should be future research regarding the people who transition into the assistant principal position, and in particular how they navigate the pathway and their transition experiences. Future research should focus on the motivations for making the move, uncovering why they made the transition from teacher to assistant principal as well as their perceptions of the role versus their current realities in the assistant principal position. Future research should also be on the internship, especially in terms of the relationship with the mentor and collegial network, socialization, grow-your-own district leadership programs, and disposition of the aspiring candidate. Lastly, another future research area should be on the assistant principal role as it relates to the professional development of teachers, an increasing expectation of those who transition into this position.

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APPENDIX A
Recruitment Message

Recruitment Text, Participant Consent Form, IRB Approval, and Survey Questions

Hello, my name is Chris Carey and I am a University of Kansas doctoral candidate who is conducting a survey of assistant principals in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Using online resources to locate assistant principals, I believe you fit the criteria for participation in my research (i.e., assistant, associate, or deputy principal).

The focus of this survey is to learn about your experience when transitioning from classroom teacher to assistant principal, and it should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete (34 questions).

Some of the questions are based on specific situations (e.g., think back to when you were in the classroom), and these situations will be described at the top of the relevant screens. Finally, your responses will not be shared with anyone beyond the requirements for my dissertation. Thank you in advance for your participation in my data collection process.

Please click the link below to review the consent form and begin the survey.

APPENDIX B

Request for Consent Document

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand the preparation and transition to a new assistant principal position. This will entail your completion of a survey. Your participation is expected to take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The content of the survey should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life.

Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of the preparation and transition process to a new assistant principal position. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission. Your responses will not be shared beyond the requirements for my dissertation and all records will be kept confidential and password protected.

It is possible, however, with internet communications, that through intent or accident someone other than the intended recipient may see your response.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to take part in this study and that you are at least 18 years old. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429 or write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email irb@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX C

APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

December 19, 2016

Christopher Carey chriscarey@ku.edu

Dear Christopher Carey:

On 12/19/2016, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	From Classroom to Front Office: Preparation and Transition to a New Assistant Principal Position
Investigator:	Christopher Carey
IRB ID:	STUDY00140338
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Christopher Carey, • Christopher Carey, • Christopher Carey, • Christopher Carey

The IRB approved the study on 12/19/2016.

1. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training.
2. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported immediately.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

Continuing review is not required for this project, however you are required to report any significant changes to the protocol prior to altering the project.

Please note university data security and handling requirements for your project:
<https://documents.ku.edu/policies/IT/DataClassificationandHandlingProceduresGuide.htm>

You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab in eCompliance.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dyson Elms, MPA
IRB Administrator, KU Lawrence Campus

APPENDIX D
Survey Instrument

Survey Questions

The purpose of this survey is to learn about your transition experience from classroom teacher to assistant principal. Please read each statement and choose the response that most closely matches your situation or perception. Your responses will not be shared beyond the requirements for my dissertation and should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation.

Demographic Questions:

1. **Gender**

Male Female

2. **State in which you work**

Missouri Kansas

3. **Degrees earned (select all that apply)**

MS in Ed Administration	MS in Curriculum & Instruction/Teaching	MS in Special Education
EdD/PhD	Other	

4. **How many years have you been working in education?**

3-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20-25 26-30 30+

5. **Including this current school year, how many years have you been in your current position as an assistant principal?**

<1 1 2 3 4 5 >5

6. **Before accepting your current position as an assistant principal, what other educational positions did you hold? (select all that apply)**

Classroom Teacher	Department Chair	Instructional Coach (Building-level)
Instructional Coach (District-level)	Central Office Administrator	Other [text box]

Thinking back to when you were a teacher:

7. Can you identify an “ah-ha” moment when you told yourself, “I want to become an administrator”?

Yes No

[text box - If yes, what was that ah-ha moment?]

8. Please rate the following motivations to pursue an administrative post.

	very influential	influential	somewhat influential	not influential
More money				
Job change				
Influence				
Personal mission				
Help teachers grow				
A position was available				
Dissatisfaction with teaching				
Think I can do a better job than other administrator(s)				
Other [text box]				

9. Describe your main motivation for pursuing an administrative position?

[text box]

10. Ultimately, how important were each of the following in your decision to leave teaching to become an assistant principal?

	very important	important	somewhat important	not important at all
More money				
Job change				
Influence				
Personal mission				
Help teachers grow				
A position was available				
Dissatisfaction with teaching				
Think I can do a better job than other administrator(s)				
Other [text box]				

11. How long did it take from the time you *initially* decided to pursue an administrative position before you *accepted* your first assistant principalship?

1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years >5 years

Thinking back to when you were a teacher, what did you think the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal would be.

12. I thought about the future role and specific responsibilities of an assistant principal?

Yes No

13. I thought I would have...

More flexibility Less flexibility No difference in my scheduling flexibility

14. Approximately what proportion of your time did you expect to spend dealing with student discipline issues?

0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

15. [Approximately what proportion of your time did you expect to spend evaluating teachers?](#)
 0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

16. Most assistant principal job descriptions include the phrase, “and other duties as assigned.”
 What did you think these other duties might be?
 [essay text box]

In this section, the following questions will ask *how you prepared* for your future (your current position) **administrative position.**

17. [How did you prepare for your future administrative position? \(Select all that apply\).](#)

Completed graduate-level coursework	Participated in an internship
Participated in professional organizations	Met requirements for licensure
Had a mentor	Had a collegial network of administrators or aspiring administrators
Attended conference(s)	Visited other schools and spoke with other administrators
Other [text box here]	

18. As you prepared for your future administrative position, what was important to you about the following aspects of your graduate coursework?

	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
Assignments				
Case Studies				
Cohort				
Colleagues				
Internship				
Mentor				
Professors				
Readings				
Team Projects				
Other [text box here]				

19. In preparing for your assistant principal position, what other aspects of your graduate coursework were most or least helpful to you?

[text box]

20. How well did your administrative graduate program prepare you for your actual job responsibilities? Please explain in text box.

Very well	Somewhat well	Neutral
Not well	Not at all	

Please explain. [text box here]

21. As part of your preparation, approximately how many administrative internship hours per week were you required to complete?

[text box]

22. What was your mentor's position during your preparation?

Principal	Assistant Principal	Other Administrator	Did not have a mentor
-----------	---------------------	---------------------	-----------------------

23. How many hours per week did you spend with your mentor?
 Less than 1 hour 1 hour 2-3 hours 4-5 hours > 5

24. What was important to you, if anything, about spending time with your mentor as you prepared for your future administrative role?

	Absolutely essential	Very important	Slightly important	Not important at all
Discussed ideas together				
Immediate Feedback				
Created a comfort level				
Resource person				
Learned the role and responsibilities				
Shared experiences				
Idea exchange				
Learned to be part of administrative team				
Did not find mentor helpful				
Other [text box here]				

Please explain. [text box here]

25. Describe any personal challenges you may have experienced during your preparation and transition to become an assistant principal (e.g., moving, family obligations, health issues)?
 [text box]

26. What things facilitated your transition?

27. To what extent did the following types of personal and professional changes affect your preparation and ultimate transition into your current assistant principal position?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I experienced a variety of personal changes during the experience (e.g., depression, excitement, feeling overwhelmed, increased confidence, stress, isolation).				
I experienced family changes.				
I learned how to better manage my emotions.				
I learned how to do the tasks of the administration				
I learned how to manage my time better than I did as a teacher				
My relationships with teacher colleagues changed				
I learned the expected values, norms, and beliefs of the administration				
Other [text box here]				

In this section, the following questions ask you to *compare* your current role and responsibilities as an assistant principal with what you thought they would be.

28. How do the realities of your current role and responsibilities compare to your experience of the role during preparation training?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Role and responsibilities are more clearly defined by principal				
Work day is more flexible than I expected				
Administrative paperwork is more time-consuming than I expected				
Work days are longer				
Other [text box]				

29. As an assistant principal, to what extent did your relationship with your former teacher colleagues change from when you were a teacher to now?

Substantially better	Better	Worse	Substantially worse
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In what ways? [text box]

30. As an assistant principal, how did your relationship with administrative colleagues change from when you were a teacher?

[text box]

31. What is the most important role or responsibility you have in your current job?

Please explain. [text box]

32. What is the biggest challenge you have faced and had to address as an administrator?

Please explain. [text box]

33. Looking back, if you were to transition from a classroom teacher to an assistant principal again, what, if anything, would you do differently?

Please explain. [text box]

34. Do you have plans to continue your advancement as an administrator (e.g., principal, superintendent, district-level administrator)? If yes, what is your ultimate goal? [text box]

APPENDIX E
List of Responsibilities by Position

Position	Level/Responsibility	Primary Responsibilities
Board of Education	District	Elected by public Provide governance Set school district expectations and goals
Superintendent	District	Hired by Board of Education Set district strategic plan Achieve goals in strategic plan Use Assistant Superintendents and Principals to achieve goals Report to Board of Education
Assistant Superintendents and District-Level Support Services	District	Academic Services, Administrative, Student Services, CFO, Communications Report to Superintendent
Principal	Building	Establish vision of the school Clarify school-wide mission Set goals that align with district strategic plan Create a school-wide culture Support safe learning environments Enlist community stakeholders Provide effective instructional leadership Lead teachers to teach students Conduct teacher evaluation Delegate responsibilities to Assistant Principals Report to Assistant Superintendent
Assistant Principal	Building	Assist Principal in duties as assigned Assist in supervision of students Propose schedule of classes and extracurricular activities Oversee curriculum Assist in requisitioning supplies Maintain attendance records Maintain student discipline Assist in safety and transportation Conduct Teacher Evaluation Assist in instructional leadership Report to Principal
Teacher	Classroom	Teach district-approved curriculum Teach students; Assess student learning Use classroom management skills to maintain order and learning environment Maintain student discipline Engage students in subject material Report to Principal or Assistant Principal