


2015

# An Evaluation Study of a Principal Preparation Program at a Southeastern University

Heather A. Benfield  
*Gardner-Webb University*

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An Evaluation Study of a Principal Preparation Program at a Southeastern University

By  
Heather A. Benfield

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2015

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Heather A. Benfield under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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C. Steven Bingham, Ed.D.  
Committee Chair

---

Date

---

Jeffrey Hamilton, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

Bruce Boyles, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

Jeffrey Rogers, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Gayle Bolt Price School  
of Graduate Studies

---

Date

## **Acknowledgements**

Dr. C. Steven Bingham

Dr. Jeffrey Hamilton

Dr. Bruce Boyles

Dr. A. Douglas Eury

Dr. David Shellman

Dr. Sydney Brown

My Family

2012 Doctoral Cohort

## **Abstract**

An Evaluation Study of a Principal-Preparation Program at a Southeastern University.  
Benfield, Heather A., 2015: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Executive  
Leader/Principal Preparation/Implementation Fidelity/School Leadership  
Standards/Master of School Administration

The historical principal-teacher role has expanded and evolved to the modern-day comprehensive, executive leader. Institutions of higher education ideally respond by matriculating leaders who meet the demands of schools and the complex role of the administrator. The purpose of this study was three fold: to explore the degree of alignment with programmatic processes in a redesigned Master of School Administration (MSA) to the current North Carolina Standards for School Executives (NCSSE), to evaluate the degree of implementation fidelity of programmatic processes, and to explore the extent to which differences surface in cohort member experiences of programmatic components.

The study addressed whether or not the study site's program leaders delivered their overarching goals within the redesigned MSA. The theoretical framework was that principal preparation programs aligned to NCSSE produce ready-to-lead candidates for school administration positions. Archival, survey, and interview data were used for document analysis and grounded theory methodologies.

Results for each research question are provided. Results include the principal preparation program aligns to NCSSE at the study site, the programmatic processes are implemented with fidelity, and the extent to which differences surface in cohort member experiences of programmatic components is related to fidelity of program actors and district partnerships. Recommendations include focusing on improved alignment with standards, enhancing faculty professional development, and strengthening partnerships between the School of Education and districts.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Among experts in educational-leader reform, the time is at hand to implement what we know about ready-to-lead programs. In the business, engineering, and architecture professions, aspiring students are taught in their profession's preparation to analyze and solve problems as a matter of daily practice, while educators are not (Wagner, 2007). Wagner (2007) made the case that education professionals need such problem-solving training and practice prior to entering the field and that aspiring principals and superintendents learn much more about management than how to deal with problems or make organizational changes. Learning about management is conceptually about complexity, whereas learning about leadership is conceptually about change (Kotter, 1999). Wagner contended that we need to start teaching aspiring principals and superintendents to problem solve and also stimulate and sustain change in schools and school systems.

Today, principals are not simply building managers and administrative decision makers but executives (North Carolina State Board of Education [NCSBE], 2013). Principals are now collaborators, community partners, instructional leaders, strategic planners, and human resource directors. Similar to their colleagues in business, they must be able to create organizations that progress and change quickly to continuously improve performance.

In addition to the school leader role, student enrollment and school demographics in North Carolina have evolved over the years. Growth in numbers of teachers and support staff, which include guidance counselors, office staff, and custodians, are led by the principal (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2013). In addition to growth in direct reports, historic minorities and those often associated with



economic challenges increasingly account for the student population in North Carolina schools.

### **Background of the Study**

In the early 1990s, according to William Harrison, former Chair of the NCSBE, the North Carolina General Assembly was involved in closing down educational leadership programs at Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) due to lack of program results once the graduates secured jobs as leaders within a school (Bingham & Benfield, 2013). Harrison explained that there were too many self-selected principal candidates in the university pipeline and too many principals in the schools who could not successfully do their jobs. The General Assembly held the schools of education (SOEs) responsible for their graduates' performances as administrators.

In fact, Public Agenda (2008) said that principals reported that their preparation program was irrelevant to their actual job of leading a school. Supporting this theme, Gill et al. (2012) wrote that preparation programs had common flaws that include curricula plans that failed to differentiate for student diversity or district needs, weak connections between theory and practice, faculty with shallow school leadership experience, and poorly designed and loosely connected internships with few opportunities to experience real leadership development. Levine (2005) called the counterproductive preparation by university-based programs designed to educate the next generation of educational leaders a "race to the bottom" because they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework, and offering faster and less demanding degrees (p. 34).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Leadership preparation programs must meet the developmental needs of aspiring

school leaders who can then successfully meet the demands of their roles. The Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) argued that the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to lead the schools of tomorrow are quite different from those that professional development programs typically offer aspiring principals today. As principal preparation programs find themselves antiquated for the new and comprehensive role of their graduates, many have found new ways to get preservice administrators ready to lead. Many universities with leadership training programs have incorporated coaching, mentorships, residencies, and internships to ensure real-world experiences and the complex nature of the principalship (Gill et al., 2012; Guilfoyle, 2013).

Primary and secondary public schools in North Carolina have a recent, guiding mission from the NCSBE that every public school student graduate from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and also prepared for life in the 21st century (NCSBE, 2013). This mission calls for a principal's role that is defined as an executive rather than an administrator. The philosophical shift is from school leaders maintaining and managing the operations of the school to leading organizational transformation.

All IHEs who offer a program for credentialing school leaders are mandated by state law and the state's board of education (SBE) to have their coursework reflect the newly approved 21st century standards (Brown, 2012). In summary, all North Carolina IHEs and any credentialing organization must redesign their program to align to the new executive leader standards of the state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to review the processes in place and implementation of the Master of School Administration (MSA) at Sample Southeastern University

(pseudonym). The review was a program examination focused on process. The examination considered the extent to which the processes are aligned to the state's requirements, the program is implemented as designed, and the differences in cohort experiences and component experiences. To do this, the researcher analyzed the theoretical and conceptual framework in the school executive preparation program at Sample Southeastern University. The theoretical framework for the MSA program is that ready-to-lead principals will graduate from a program that is aligned with the administrator standards and experiential descriptors. The conceptual framework for this study includes variables within programmatic fidelity as found throughout review. The study contributes to the Sample Southeastern University's knowledge of its MSA program. The study also adds to the existing knowledge about redesigned IHE programs that offer school administration degrees.

### **Conceptual Base**

In 1999, the NCSBE and NCDPI comprehensively looked at the skills and abilities needed by public school children to be successful citizens and workers in an emerging global economy by putting forth Statewide Accountability Standards and attributes needed by leaders and educators to create those student outcomes (NCSBE, 1999). John Tate, former member of the NCSBE, chaired the committee tasked with rewriting principal leadership standards (Bingham & Benfield, 2013). Joseph Peel, former executive director of Triangle Leadership Academy, explained that the state department of public instruction (DPI) used the Triangle Leadership Academy's Seven Critical Functions of School Leadership as starting points (Bingham & Benfield, 2013). The committee nationally researched and reviewed studies before putting forth their final draft which borrows language from a Wallace Foundation report (NCSBE, 2013).

Since that time, a new set of standards for 21st century educators, principals, and superintendents emerged and was adopted by the State of North Carolina. In addition to the new set of standards, the 1997 Leandro decision wherein each child has the right to a sound and basic education created what would result in an impact on evaluation of educators. By 2004, Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning required the State of North Carolina, through its Executive Branch, SBE, and DPI to provide each child a competent teacher and principal with the necessary resources in the district (Leandro vs. State of North Carolina, 2004).

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act sparked policymakers to reexamine the role of school leader quality and the contribution of school leaders to raising student achievement (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003). Superville (2014) cited the work of Ellen Goldring, department chairwoman at Vanderbilt University, who researched principal evaluation legislation passed between 2009 and 2013. Superville discussed principal evaluations and that Goldring found limited information about how the policies are used, a lack of clarity on the consequences for principals, a lack of clarity on how feedback is presented, and a lack of alignment with principals' evolving roles. Superville also wrote that Goldring noted a contrast between the large body of research on teacher quality and lack of such for principal quality, thus calling principal evaluation the stepchild of teacher evaluation.

Since many principal performance assessments were developed more than 10-20 years ago, few research-based measurements currently exist for principal effectiveness in their new role, and the evaluations are often conducted infrequently with disconnected feedback that therefore is not useful (Condon & Clifford, 2012). Zubrzycki (2012) said that principal evaluations are generally inconsistent, unaligned with standards for good

practice, not relevant to the main goals and responsibilities of a principal, and generally not valid or rigorous.

Between 2009 and the 2012 publication *State Policies on Principal Evaluation*, 33 states and the District of Columbia passed legislation requiring district adoption of new evaluation systems for principals (Jacques, Clifford, & Hornung, 2012). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) called for multiple measures to provide an effective and comprehensive evaluation system (NAESP & NASSP, 2012).

Revamping principal evaluation tools is championed by several federal education policies and initiatives: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers, School Improvement Grants, and Race to the Top (Guilfoyle, 2013). New performance evaluation tools are more closely aligned with the holistic role of the school administrator in some states according to the research of 22 partner states of the Southern Regional Education Board (Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms, 2006).

Revamped performance assessments include student achievement data as a significant component of each principal's evaluation (Jacques et al., 2012). Effective evaluation has significance as leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors that influence student achievement, and principals are vital to school-wide success (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition to student achievement, and because the influence on student achievement is indirect and not easily measured, principals are measured on school climate as it is linked to staff morale, student achievement, lower absenteeism, fewer discipline problems, and lower school dropout rates (Clifford, Menon, Gangi, Condon, & Hornung, 2012; Guilfoyle, 2013). Adoption of new performance evaluations more accurately measure the role that the

principals now fill in schools.

New standards and evaluations for principals are the predominant driving forces of change discussions at the credentialing level. The North Carolina General Assembly enacted House Bill 536 which requires that IHEs preparing public school teachers and principals in North Carolina meet specific requirements as signed into law in 2007. It states that the NCSBE will adopt new standards for school administration preparation programs. The new standards shall (a) align with the revised standards for the evaluation of school executives and address the use of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey results in multiple courses and evidenced in one or more artifacts; (b) require high level commitment of institutions including dedicated resources for administrator preparation program improvements, redesign, and newly identified needs specifically in the area of technology support evidenced by a strategic plan presented to the Provost; (c) require the use of cross-functional work teams made of school-based personnel, faculty, and state agencies, to determine a common curriculum framework that is designed to align with the defined standards, including rigorous core courses, and will produce administrators who meet the defined standards; (d) require written agreements between the institution of higher education and the local school administrative body to govern shared responsibility for requirement and preparation of school administrators with specific concern for clinical experiences and a new administrator's success once employed; (e) require authentic partnerships between adjunct faculty and full-time faculty to fully address the practical, field-based experience and academic, theory-based experience; (f) require all candidates to complete an internship that is dispersed across the life of the program in 1-hour increments; and (g) require the development of portfolios that provide evidence of their application of training to actual school needs and challenges.

Preparing the aspiring principal is a thorough and comprehensive process for IHEs hoping to provide the necessary components of the position and supply the preparatory credentials. According to NCDPI (2014), the principal and assistant principal must complete an approved school administration program at the master's level or above. Programs for principal preparation are master-level programs and conclude with a master's degree and a possible school administration license. The NCSBE challenged SOEs that offer degrees and licensure to graduate ready-to-lead principals for 21st century schools (Brown, 2012).

With careful analysis of the NCSBE mission, purpose, and standards for school executives and of the North Carolina House Bill 536, the graduate faculty of the Sample Southeastern University SOE redesigned their former MSA to establish a new MSA. The new program minimizes challenges of academic freedom to a more collaborative and common environment. As a major shift, the curriculum transformation for school leader preparation went from a theory-based classroom experience to an application- and demonstration-based experience.

Sample Southeastern University's MSA Program Blueprint demonstrates the philosophical and structural changes as the response to the state-level challenge. Philosophically, the MSA is codesigned with local education agency (LEA) professionals to provide evidence of effectiveness on tasks associated with adopted leadership standards and competencies. Structurally, the curriculum emphasizes theory-to-practice; instruction uses web-based tools and authentic student learning; and assessment utilizes electronic evidences uploaded by candidates and rubric scored by SOE and SBE professionals. In addition to SOE and adjunct instructors, LEA site supervisors, SOE internship supervisors, and SOE reviewers, evaluators, and portfolio managers assist

candidates throughout the program of study. This is a dramatic shift from the theory-based classroom experience to an application of theory-based experience with emphasis on demonstrating practice in an authentic setting. The following paragraphs explain the programmatic processes within the redesigned MSA.

The internship transformation became totally clinical with supervision becoming a partnership between the agreed-upon school leader (site supervisor) and faculty member (internship supervisor) of the SOE. Scheduled seminars for students became reoccurring for students, i.e., each semester for discussion and reflection. The internship was also embedded throughout the program.

The partnership transformation included opportunities for public school partners to assess the program and also have extended partnership agreements with the Sample Southeastern University's Center for Innovative Leadership Development. Revised instructional delivery methods included online delivery, site-based distance learning, and blended delivery evidenced by WebEx and other webinar productions. For the candidate portfolio, TaskStream, digital portfolio software that is aligned with the standards and competencies, became the house for collecting and analyzing data/artifacts. The candidate must defend the internship experience throughout the portfolio so the evidences demonstrate proficiency to three assigned faculty members. The activities recommended by candidate LEAs drive the artifacts, and reflections submitted to TaskStream for the electronic portfolio to demonstrate the evidences that are based on the standards for school executives.

To assess Executive Leader Competencies, feedback from candidate site supervisors and internship supervisors is used from an initial assessment, mid-year review, and summative evaluation as the transformation of the program included



adoption of the Certification of Competencies document that guides candidate growth as a school executive. As contributors to the revisioning process, the Sample Southeastern University Leadership Council represents 43 school systems partnered in the Center for Innovative Leadership forming the most practical, relevant, and rigorous program of study.

The North Carolina Standards for School Executives (NCSSE) require a high level of institutional commitment to engage candidates in preservice experiences that prepare them for school leadership (NCSBE, 2013). Courses were designed in cohorts around the 21st century learning model, emphasizing collaboration, consensus, on-site delivery of instruction, and partnership opportunities. The courses in the Program Blueprint for the MSA program are described and integrated to meet multiple standards per course and incorporate internship experiences. Each of the six required evidences is described with descriptors and standards aligned in the blueprint document. Candidates experience a clinical internship throughout the MSA program where the standards are embedded throughout the six evidences, 37 indicators, and 21 competencies that bridge the gap between theory and practice to give authentic learning opportunities. Proficient demonstration for all evidences must be confirmed by three assigned graduate faculty members, and growth in the competencies must be shown to complete the portfolio and finish the program.

The Program Blueprint explains the process of the redesigned MSA program and its implementation. Each course is described along with the internship, partnership agreements, use of technology, methodology for instructional delivery, the collection and evaluation process for the artifacts and evidences, and the adoption of the Certificate of Competencies. Site supervisors and internship supervisors work with the instructor to

ensure the candidate has experiences necessary to display six portfolio showcases of the required evidences. Additionally described is the expectation of adjunct and full-time faculty with trainings and orientations. The courses and evidences reflect a common practice for coursework, syllabi, and overview of the program components.

To implement the program, human, facility, financial, and resource costs are involved. The first cost is time of revisioning. Since full-time and adjunct faculty collaborated in the revisioning process, there were adjustments to the number of meetings required for adjunct faculty and the stipend for those collaborative meetings. The team spent time revamping the curriculum and designing all aspects of the program. The alignment and redesign of each course took time and comprehensive thought. The internship became embedded into the first course and runs throughout the coursework of the entire program. Internship supervisors had to be trained, assigned, and compensated for the new role. Site supervisors also had to be trained and assigned. Partnerships with districts had to be developed and deepened. Instructional delivery methods were part of the curriculum redesign. This also created a demand for training and compensation.

Additionally, the instructional delivery methods took consideration and resources, i.e., online, distance, and blended. A partnership between the university and the TaskStream online software company was a new cost that came with the redesigned principal preparation program. Not only was there a financial cost of the partnership, but the faculty and students needed training and practice with the tool. The Certification of Competencies process of evaluation needed common understanding across stakeholders and training for analyses. Also, transitioning from the former school administration program to the new executive leadership program incurred dedicated additional human resources.

The implementation timeline began in the fall of 2010 for all new and enrolled students in the program. The previous MSA program and new MSA program went through a transition period that overcame accommodating students who needed to complete the old program and implementing the new program at the same time, and all affected students were notified of the transition. Computer systems and databases were updated and adjusted to transition the candidates. Additionally, signed written statements were requested from candidates for graduation requirement commitments.

### **Rationale for Proposing a Process Evaluation**

The redesigned MSA program is new at Sample Southeastern University. The researcher conducted the first published study of the program. This move from theory-based learning to authentic experiences is also new within the new school administrator standards in North Carolina. The researcher, who is a graduate of the program, met with the Dean of the SOE and an associate professor of the SOE to discuss the program. During the conversation, the questions of ready-to-lead principals and fidelity of implementation surfaced. The researcher was interested in finding out the answers and studying the process. A process evaluation was discussed and agreed upon.

The researcher gained permission from Sample Southeastern University SOE faculty to collect and review data that were previously collected and from previously conducted interviews. The researcher hosted new interviews with different subjects. All evaluation results were shared with stakeholders. The researcher's recommendations to improve the process are indicated by the results of the study.

### **Rationale for Using the Stufflebeam Model**

After reviewing various program evaluation models, the researcher proposed Stufflebeam's (2003) context, input, process, and product (CIPP) model as appropriate to

guide this work. The “process” of implementation is at the heart of the evaluation for this study. The model was designed for use in internal evaluations conducted by an organization’s evaluator, self-evaluations carried out by project teams of individual services providers, and contracted or mandated external evaluations.

Stufflebeam (2003) defined the CIPP model as a systematic, comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programs, personnel, products, institutions, and systems. The CIPP model and its reviewing system are used in various disciplines and service areas including education, housing and community development, transportation safety, and military personnel.

The model’s core concepts are context, input, process, and product which give the acronym CIPP (Stufflebeam, 2003). Context evaluations ask what it is that needs to be done. Input evaluations ask the question of how it should be done. Process evaluations ask about what was said and is it actually being done. Product evaluations ask if what is being done is succeeding. According to Stufflebeam (2003), the CIPP model could be presented as a formative and/or summative report. In the formative report, evaluation helps guide the effort, which includes context, input, process, and product evaluations. The evaluator would submit interim reports addressing these questions to keep stakeholders informed about findings, help guide decision making, and strengthen staff work.

When presenting a summative report, the evaluator refers to the accumulation of CIPP information and obtains additionally needed information (Stufflebeam, 2003). A summative evaluation thus produces a synthesis of all the findings to inform the full range of audiences about what was attempted, done, and accomplished; the bottom line assessment of the program; and what lessons were learned.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are organized around the CIPP model and the four evaluation types in the model: (1) context, to consider the background and foundation for the redesigned MSA program; (2) input, to analyze the Program Blueprint prior to implementation; (3) process, to determine the process alignment and process outcomes; and (4) product, to determine the program's impact, effectiveness, sustainability, and transportability (Stufflebeam, 2003). The focus was primarily on the processes within the program; therefore, the research questions that guided the study were

1. To what extent are the redesigned principal preparation program processes aligned with the NCSSE?
2. To what extent is the approved MSA program implemented with fidelity?
3. What differences in component experiences surfaced among cohort members exposed to the redesigned MSA?

## **Professional Significance of the Problem**

Much more than building managers, school and district leaders can leverage improvement of the school as an organization, develop and operationalize structures that support high quality teaching and learning, grow and develop the capacity of faculty to truly meet the needs of students, and implement reform strategies that lead to improved student outcomes according to Stanford Educational Leadership Institute research (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Principal preparation programs have the task of preparing such leaders. This task also is an opportunity in that ready-to-lead principals and district leaders can graduate with the power, authority, knowledge, and skills to highly impact their students, teachers, school districts, and

stakeholders. Paramount significance of this study and findings include recommendations for the program at Sample Southeastern University, considerations for faculties and similar programs nationally, and school leadership programmatic outcomes.

### **Overview of Methodology**

In this study, the researcher assessed implementation and component experiences of the redesigned MSA program at Sample Southeastern University. Data and artifacts were reviewed from documents, collected surveys, and interviews that program leaders and faculty members previously created and conducted. New interviews were conducted. The students in this study were graduates of the program. The CIPP model design allowed the researcher to look at the process and ask if it was being done with fidelity. This study was based on a qualitative research model. Research was the collection and analysis of qualitative data through the use content analysis and grounded theory from surveys and documents used in order to answer the above research questions.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**School executives.** Principals/assistant principals licensed to work in North Carolina.

**Master of School Administration (MSA).** Redesigned program at Sample Southeastern University for aspiring principals and school leaders.

**Program Blueprint.** Requested documentation by the NCSBE that shows the background, planning, redesigned curriculum, and transition to the new school administration program that aligns to the NCSSE.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher acknowledges assumptions of the study. One is that the Sample Southeastern University MSA can apply to all applicants equally. In the scenario

described in the Program Blueprint, each candidate experiences an internship that allows practice of real-life scenarios. The assumption of equality is that the site-based supervisor grants permission and there is a school culture that gives rise to the practices or a willingness to practice with the candidate. A second assumption is that the Program Blueprint is written in such a way that courses are the same for cohorts. As such, instructors would not have typical sovereignty with literature, course syllabus, course outcomes, or course assignments. The assumption is that adjunct and full-time faculty surrender this typical sovereignty.

### **Limitations**

The researcher acknowledges limitations of the study. One limitation is that not all students answered the postgraduation survey. The only data are from those who answered the survey; others chose to not answer their email or opened the email but did not respond to the survey. The only cohort surveyed was the fall cohort from 2011. There is no survey data for other cohorts; therefore, there were only 104 students used in the survey data analysis. Additionally, only enrolled students in the last course of the program were sent the survey, i.e., still enrolled at the end of the semester. The fall 2010 cohort enrolled 100 students; the fall 2011 cohort enrolled 367 students; and the fall 2012 cohort enrolled 560 students. Data do not exist for the number of students still enrolled by their last course for each cohort.

The second limitation is that all graduates are marked proficient by the time they graduate from the program. Proficiency, if marked below at any point, is gained through feedback and edits until three instructors are satisfied; therefore, all completing students are proficient.

A third limitation of the study is evolution and iterations of the handbook put

forth since MSA implementation started. Program leaders used feedback from students and instructors to make slight adjustments to programmatic processes and the handbook as rollout and transition occurred.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 presents a nationally scaled problem of the school principal's current role, the leadership standards, and evaluations that now challenge IHEs to respond. This introduction includes the research questions that guided the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of corresponding literature to the themes within the three research questions. Methodology for this study is discussed in Chapter 3. The data, findings, results, and analysis are presented in Chapter 4. A full summary of the research study and recommendations for consideration are in Chapter 5.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study of school leader preparation programs, implementation fidelity of redesigned programs, and cohort member experiences. This chapter is organized around the themes represented in the research questions which include (a) a brief history of school leadership, (b) the role of the principal, (c) methods of principal preparation, (d) redesign process, (e) evaluation standards, (f) evaluation tools, (g) private universities in North Carolina that offer school administration preparation programs, (h) cohort experiences, (i) implementation of school administration preparation programs, and (j) school administration program implementation self-studies. The review of literature began with a look at the history of school leadership and led to the continuum of evolved preparation programmatic features.

### **A Brief History of School Leadership**

In the 1700s, education was not considered a profession or field of study as early towns in the United States turned to existing influential structures, such as local government and the clergy, to hire teachers and make judgments about their practice (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Clergy were considered logical choices for this role because of their extensive education and presumed ability to guide religious instruction in schools (Tracy, 1995). The teacher was considered a servant of the community where individual supervisors or supervisory committees were charged with monitoring the quality of instruction, and additionally, these supervisors had nearly unlimited power to establish criteria for effective instruction and to hire and fire teachers (Burke & Krey, 2005).

From there, in the 1800s, as discussed by Marzano et al. (2011), there was a rising industrial base in urban areas and a common schooling movement in social systems that

drove the creation of more complex school systems. Marzano et al. discussed that in larger schools and districts, a demand grew for teachers who held expertise in specific disciplines and for administrators who could assume increasingly complex roles. One teacher leader within a building was often selected to assume administrative duties and this “head teacher” or “principal teacher” ultimately grew into the role of building principal (Marzano et al., 2011; Rousmaniere, 2013).

The building principal in the 1900s saw many changes. Administrative duties, lead policymaker, community liaison, classroom teacher, and predominately male, the school principal filled similar roles to, but typically suffered from low salaries compared to, their professional colleagues in the business world at the time (Rousmaniere, 2013). The transition throughout the century to a principal’s office location for the school leader, a supervisory role over the teachers, and a credentialing process through universities and state agencies came with professional improvement and a modern school system.

### **Role of the Principal**

The role of the principal has evolved greatly since the first school houses in the late 1700s and early 1800s in America. Rousmaniere (2013) wrote that before principals were in their own office, school leaders were basically head teachers who worked under limited organizational structures that had minimal guidelines and few expectations. School leaders were free to create their own visions and initiatives. This developed in the early 1900s to supervision over teachers, responsibilities that were mostly administrative, the confines of an office, and credentialing from higher education institutions. Also marking the contrasting role from earlier days is the modern school system with multiple schools in the same county, each with their own principal.

Since the mid-1900s, education reform sought instructional leadership,

improvement of curriculum, and accountability for student learning in the form of testing. According to Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2004), principals are accountable for the academic progress of all students as well as facilitating their social and emotional development. Ubben et al. wrote that the principal is the catalyst for what happens in the school. With the changing demographic of students, a menu of options for curriculum and type of school and new state and federal programs, principals are pivotal in adapting to their complex work and complex organization (Rousmaniere, 2013). Today, principals are expected to be educational visionaries; instructional leaders; assessment experts; disciplinarians; community builders; public relations experts; and keen implementers of budget, legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).

The NCSBE identified and clarified the role of the principal in 2006 by releasing a new vision for school leadership. This vision defined principals as executive leaders like their colleagues in business as those who must create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance (NCSBE, 2013). Further, the vision explained that schools need leaders who are adept at creating systems for change and building relationships with and across staff to then draw from collective knowledge and stir passion for working with children. From this can come a shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school, its values that direct its action, commitment, and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus decision making.

The NCSBE vision for school executive leaders articulated in 2006 included seeking and building powerful partnerships with students, parents, and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to increase student achievement (NCSBE, 2013). These powerful partnerships create the opportunity for trust and transparency as

school leaders address the challenges of transformational change. The vision is that there is a culture in which leadership is distributed among all members of the school community and consists of open, honest communication which is focused on the use of data, teamwork, and researched-based practices that then drives ethical and goal-oriented action.

### **Methods of Principal Preparation**

Methods of preparation for school leaders surfaced in the early 1900s. The hope was to create competition for the field of school administration and to prepare aspiring school leaders in a common body of knowledge and skills similar to other professions that saw improved practice and professional status (Rousmaniere, 2013). Stanford University opened a SOE in 1902 with specific coursework for educators and growth into coursework in empirical studies of school finance, organization, and leadership. In 1920, Harvard University opened a SOE that offered degree programs for teachers and then later offered advanced courses for aspiring school administrators. State credentials became part of the professional endorsement; however, between the early 1900s and 1950, school administrators still lacked knowledge and skills with hiring practices favoring teaching experience over degrees or credentials. The last half of the 20th century saw more requirements for school administrators in the form of degrees from IHEs and state endorsements, e.g., preparation institutions and preparation endorsements.

Hess and Kelly's (2005) study of 31 principal preparation programs across the nation found skill deficiencies in candidates where mastery would be required for success as 21st century school leaders. These deficiencies included the lack of attention to management and to topics like data usage, research, technology, personnel issues, and performance evaluation. The study found the instructional focus instead was almost 30%

on technical law or finance problems, 11% addressed curriculum and pedagogy, and course teachings about staffing focused more on faculty oversight than on using managerial tools to improve school results.

Supporting this call for school executive preparation redesign is Levine's (2005) study. Levine concluded from extensive study of the quality of educational leadership programs that they lack purpose, curricular coherence, adequate clinical instruction, appropriate faculty, and high admission standards. Levine also claimed within the study's analysis as evidence that the educational leadership programs have become little more than "graduate credit dispensers" and a way to drive raises for teachers instead of a meaningful education experience (p. 24).

Fry et al. (2006) found that weaknesses in graduate educational leadership program redesign efforts included lack of collaboration between universities and school districts; failure to create a curriculum that develops the leadership skills necessary to increase student achievement; poor planning, supervision, and evaluation of field experiences; and a lack of rigorous evaluation strategies monitoring and measuring program quality and effectiveness. Additionally, Fry et al. found that leadership faculties were more concerned about which existing courses can be used to meet new standards rather than creating new courses aligned with adopted state standards. This concern came from a long-standing tradition of faculty members' rights and assumptions to choose course content rather than conform to content alignment or common content for courses. Fry et al. also noted the faculty concern over the number of hours of internship rather than the quality of the field experience and the potential loss of enrollment and decreases in revenue with true program redesign as a weakness to redesign efforts.

To show the needed paradigm shift, Wagner (2007) articulated how we still teach

aspiring school leaders more about management than how to lead through challenges and make change. One way to create this practice in preparation programs is through case studies. Wagner asserted that case study methods are rare and that graduates lack exposure to and practice in the analytical skills needed for problem solving.

IHEs have enjoyed increased numbers of aspiring candidates who apply and find acceptance with minimal screening and adhere to processes and standards that are ill-defined, irregularly applied, and lack in rigor (Davis et al., 2005). The authors wrote that although the aspiring candidates are certified and graduate from their programs, they may not be adequately prepared for the shifting role of the school administrator from manager to effective instructional leader. Since traditional methods of preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by modern schools and current administrators are in the midst of their changing role, Davis et al. (2005) pointed out that district leadership often is then left to create intense support systems for their school administrators.

According to Davis et al. (2005), there are seven key features of effective leadership preparation programs. These features are to have (1) a clear focus and clear values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized; (2) standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management; (3) field-based internships with skilled supervision; (4) cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations; (5) active instructional strategies that link theory and practice; (6) rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty; and (7) and strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field-based learning.

Despite the research that gives universities key features of effective leadership

preparation programs, there is difficulty in making progress toward inclusion of these features and redesigning current programs. Fry et al. (2006) cited insufficient resources for programs, lack of administrative priority and support at the university level, departmental resistance inside the program's department, institutional hurdles, and policies that turn principal preparation programs into systems for raising teacher pay as difficulties which stifle progress.

### **Program Redesign Process**

Leithwood et al. (2004) presented evidence suggesting that there are differences in the administrative competencies needed to lead different kinds of schools. This evidence is tied to selection procedures matching candidate characteristics and qualifications with the context in which they will be working, including the type of school, the school-community demographic, cultural context, and economic stability. With the notion that context matters to leadership development, new approaches are replacing former ones in which generic leadership dominated preparation programs (Davis et al., 2005).

Davis et al. (2005) wrote about programmatic approaches in which some reformers emphasize leadership and management skills over academic proficiency, and others support the cultivation of teachers who show deep instructional understanding and demonstrate leadership potential. The report showed how structurally most preparation programs fall into four categories: university-based programs, district-initiated programs, third-party organizations like nonprofit organizations and state-wide leadership academies, and partnership programs.

Universities that are revisioning their administration preparation program, for example, are moving from courses framed around discrete subjects like school law,

budget management, and personnel management to interdisciplinary themes and courses that are tied to state credentialing, standards, and evaluation requirements (Davis et al., 2005). Further evidence of revisioning might include higher admission standards that target committed and aspiring school leaders and consider specific populations and school-community settings. School districts that can take advantage of recent policy developments and certification requirements in some states, like Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, can create partnership programs with IHEs and offer leadership programs for aspiring principals as well as professional development opportunities for current principals. Third-party organizations like New Leaders for New Schools and North Carolina's former Principal Executive Program can also partner with IHEs to offer coursework, mentorships, and fulfillment of state certification requirements. Partnership programs are typically between stakeholders, districts, and local universities to offer principal preparation and development of professional experiences.

Fry et al. (2006) asserted that states have power that can leverage change. Fry et al. wrote that states can direct program change needed by educational leadership programs and preparation in universities and local districts with policy mandates. Fry et al. also asserted that states can require universities to form authentic partnerships with districts to design new programs and meet conditions of quality for preparing principals. In the same manner, states can also ask school districts to take on roles and responsibilities in selecting and preparing the next generation of principals.

Also included are telling indicators in Fry et al.'s (2006) report of how states will know that educational leadership programs are substantially redesigned to prepare principals. Fry et al. wrote that there are indicators linked to prepared principals that can



lead schools to higher levels of student achievement. One indicator is that universities have developed partnerships with local school districts that ensure aspiring principals master the knowledge and skills needed to lead changes in school and classroom practices in a district context. This means that state standards, research-based leadership practices, and real-world problems are translated into specified course content, practical assignments, and performance assessments that ensure development of leadership competencies. A second indicator is well-planned and well-supported field experiences throughout the educational leadership program that progressively engages candidates in more responsible leadership activities focusing on solving school problems, improving curriculum, and instructional practices and closing achievement gaps. The last indicator of substantial redesign in the report is a systemically implemented evaluation strategy that provides reliable evidence of quality program design, participant mastery of essential leadership competencies, and program impact on schools and student achievement, including graduates' on-the-job performances.

Fry et al. (2006) conveyed a support system for universities and districts that is working to redesign educational leadership programs. The report gives a system of support which includes

strategies to ensure university presidents, provosts, and deans of education give high priority to principal preparation programs and support redesign efforts with additional funding, staffing and other resources and incentives for change; well-planned workshops to orient teams of university and district stakeholders to the redesign initiative; training on course development and exemplary curriculum materials that provide examples of how the state standards can be translated into new courses and professional development; planned opportunities for design

teams that represent all universities to discuss issues, share new information, and benchmark progress on redesign; access to on-site consultation and assistance from external experts; additional resources to support release time for faculty teamwork, new faculty positions, curriculum materials, quality internships, and travel expenses for network meetings with other university design teams; and cross-institutional study teams to develop viable solutions to high-priority redesign issues. (Fry et al., 2006, p. 21)

### **Evaluation Standards**

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration issued Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards in 1996 that continued until 2008 (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008). The consortium steering committee and research panel worked for 2 years to update the 1996 standards because they were thought of as too restrictive and unintentionally limiting in their list of examples. Also, the 1996 standards were considered to have paralyzed leadership preparation programs because of their lack of flexibility and lack of background research. The 2008 standards fundamentally are policy standards, rather than being confused with practice standards or program standards, and are to be used to influence leadership practice, professional development, licensure, selection, preparation, and policy through discussion at the policy-making level and programmatic design level, i.e., used to set policy and vision.

For the 2008 ISLLC Standards, guiding principles were used to set their direction and priorities during development (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008). The guiding principles highlight the centrality of student learning; acknowledge the changing role of the school leader; recognize the collaborative

nature of school leadership; set out to improve the quality of the profession; inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation; demonstrate integration and coherence; and advance access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community.

There are six standards in the 2008 ISLLC Standards that support the goal of promoting the success of every student. The six standards call for (1) setting a widely shared vision for learning; (2) developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth of staff members; (3) effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (4) collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (5) acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and (6) understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts. These represent the broad, high-priority themes for educational leaders.

In North Carolina, the Executive Leadership Standards were released in 2006 by the NCSBE after study of relevant national reports and research in the field that focused on identifying the practices of leadership that impact student achievement (NCSBE, 2013). Table 1 below shows the organization of the executive leadership standards and examples. The eight standards call for (1) strategic leadership, (2) instructional leadership, (3) cultural leadership, (4) human resource leadership, (5) managerial leadership, (6) micropolitical leadership, (7) external development leadership, and (8) student achievement.

Table 1

*Organization of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives*

Heading	Explanation	Example
Standard	Broad category of the executive's knowledge and skills	Strategic Leadership
Summary	More fully describes the content and rationale for each Standard	School executives will create conditions that result in strategically reimagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century.
Practices	Statements of what one would see an effective executive doing in each Standard. The lists of practices are not meant to be exhaustive.	Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes.
Artifacts	Evidence of the quality of the executive's work or places where evidence can be found in each Standard. Collectively they could be the components of a performance portfolio. The lists of artifacts are not meant to be exhaustive.	Degree to which school improvement plan strategies are implemented, assessed and modified.
Competency	Competencies inherent in the practices of each critical leadership function.	Communication

*Note.* NCSBE (2006).

The SBE found the following helpful and guiding in their study and considerations of the NCSSE for 2006: the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework and work by the Wallace Foundation, the Mid-continental Regional Education Laboratory, Charlotte Advocates for Education, and the Southern Regional Education Board. Work by the National Staff Development Council, the NASSP, the NAESP, the National Middle School Association, the Interstate School Leader Licensure

Consortium, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration Education Leadership Constituent Council were also considered in the development of these standards. In addition, input was solicited from stakeholders and leaders in the field. The seven standards used as the framework for the NCSSE are borrowed from a Wallace Foundation study (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003).

### **Evaluation Tools**

Stronge (2013) wrote that flaws in principal evaluation include an absence in meaningful and timely feedback, the lack of consequences, and an absence of clearly communicated criteria and standard protocols. Stronge also said that flaws include inflated evaluations and lack of alignment with the evaluation instruments and professional standards. In a comprehensive study of principal evaluation practices, Goldring et al. (2009) found that although states and districts focus on a variety of performance indicators, they often are weak in evaluating leadership behaviors such as creating a culture of learning and professional behavior.

To measure the school executive performance toward the mission of the public school against the state-adopted standards in North Carolina today, the evaluation process comprehensively acts a continuum for growth and a tool for performance assessment. Effective with the 2010-2011 school year in North Carolina, principals and assistant principals are evaluated annually using the North Carolina School Executive; Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process (NCSBE, 2010). As part of the annual evaluation, a mid-year review is conducted.

In order to understand the evaluation tool, the rubric was created. The rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Principals/Assistant Principals was developed as an alignment tool and to exemplify the NCSSE approved by the NCSBE in December 2006 and should

be used in conjunction with the standards (North Carolina School Executive: Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process Manual, 2012).

The rubric shows the standards in performance levels and are noted as follows: Developing: principal/assistant principal demonstrated adequate growth toward achieving standard(s) during the period of performance, but did not demonstrate competence on standard(s) of performance; Proficient: principal/assistant principal demonstrated basic competence on standard(s) of performance; Accomplished: principal/assistant principal exceeded basic competence on standard(s) of performance most of the time; Distinguished: principal/assistant principal consistently and significantly exceeded basic competence on standard(s) of performance; Not Demonstrated: principal/assistant principal did not demonstrate competence on or adequate growth toward achieving standard(s) of performance (North Carolina School Executive: Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process Manual, 2012).

To align to actual experience in the field, the NCSSE are interrelated and connected to authentic practice. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices; therefore, executive leaders' abilities in each standard will impact their abilities to perform effectively in other standards.

### **Private Universities in North Carolina with School Administration Preparation Programs**

North Carolina is home to both public and private universities that offer a master's degree in school administration and potential licensure for aspiring principals. There are 16 public universities that are part of the North Carolina University system (University of North Carolina, 2014). There are 36 North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) which are private institutions of higher education (NCICU,

2012). Campbell University, Gardner-Webb University, High Point University, Queens University, and Wingate University are the private institutions that offer master degree programs for students seeking administration credentials in the state.

Campbell University offers a MSA degree that potentially includes graduating with a school administration license (Campbell University, 2013). Students develop and demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge, disposition, and performance necessary to become successful school administrators. Students, upon graduation, show competency in problem solving, leadership, collaborative decision making, management and supervision, school law, school finance, educational technology, special education, student growth and development, curriculum, research, and school safety. Students also learn to value diversity, collaborative leadership, professional ethics, individual differences, and reflective practice. Graduates have two 300-hour internships in their program that allow practice of new skills and competencies as they intern in different public school settings.

The newly revised Campbell University MSA and add-on licensure program stress field experiences in every course, offer internship modules which address specific behaviors and competencies, and engage candidates in standards-based, real-world application of skills (North Carolina Institution of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Card, 2012-2013). The program is also noted for the personal attention given to candidates where candidates and professors maintain close contact by visits, phone or email, and seminars and workshops. The program has a coordinator who communicates regularly with the entire cohort of candidates, shares professional information, and provides a supportive and positive dialogue with candidates. The program is also unique in its efforts to maintain relationships with graduates as they are

given opportunities to network, attend seminars and workshops, and engage in collaborative dialogue regarding educational practice and program quality.

All program completers are invited to join an Advisory Council at Campbell University. Venues are provided at these meetings for participants to interact, share concerns about practice in the profession, and gain assistance from their colleagues and former professors. Advisory committee meetings also provide opportunities for graduates to share valuable input regarding the quality of the degree program and to help future directions for the programs.

High Point University offers a Master of Education in Educational Leadership to prepare future school leaders (High Point University, 2013). The program requires 36 semester hours and three internship experiences with both public and private schools. The program's focus is foundations in principles of school executive leadership, organizational management, strategies for improving school culture, and using data for improvement.

Both the master degree program and add-on programs in Educational Leadership are offered as traditional on-campus programs as well as cohort models that are now delivered in several school districts (North Carolina Institution of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Card, 2012-2013). This program of study includes a blend of on-campus and online core coursework as well as on-site delivery of specialty coursework in educational leadership. Unique to the High Point University cohort model is clustering of interns at specific schools to form professional learning communities with school principals and graduate faculty. Also unique to this program is a reduction in tuition and fees based on the total number of participants who enroll. With the flexibility of a cohort model, the SOE plans customized content presented in courses to the local



district's actual strategic goals and objectives. Executive leaders within the represented district in the cohort also may serve as graduate adjunct faculty and assist in the delivery of the program. The university reports that this model has been quite successful and expanded in 2012-2013 to include additional cohorts in additional districts.

The innovative MSA program at Queens University of Charlotte places an emphasis on the development of practical leadership skills (North Carolina Institution of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Card, 2012-2013). As such, the McColl School of Business leadership and organizational development model is a critical part of their approach to developing school leaders. The school administration program was developed based on the vision of the 21st century school leader which involves the use of simulations, clinical practice of defined skill sets, and the use of coaches and mentors. The university places emphasis on the needs of suburban and urban school districts.

Curriculum in the Queens University MSA program includes a cohort model approach, training in conflict and crisis management, and the development of the future leader as a school executive with decision-making skills that are responsive to communities' needs (North Carolina Institution of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Card, 2012-2013). The university carefully selects faculty to provide strength in those areas that are critical for a well-rounded education program and has low student-to-faculty ratio to assure individual attention for all students.

Wingate University offered a Master of Arts in Education in Educational Leadership program until 2006 and its revised program was approved by NCDPI in October 2010 (Wingate University Graduate School of Education, 2013). Points of emphasis in the revised program are defined as the following six evidences from the

executive leader standards: positive impact on student learning, teacher empowerment and leadership, community involvement and engagement, organizational management, school culture and safety, and school improvement. These evidences are integrated into the coursework requirements and are threaded throughout the course of study. There is a Standards-Based Project that reflects understanding of the new NCSSE.

At Wingate University, all assignments in every class and all internships experiences are based on the NCSSE adopted by the NCSBE (North Carolina Institution of Higher Education Educator Preparation Program Report Card, 2012-2013). The internships (fall, spring, and summer) allow students to apply their knowledge and practice the skills necessary for a successful educational leadership career. Emphasis on the development of a comprehensive portfolio is an essential element of the program in educational leadership. Each student develops a program portfolio that is composed of six specific portfolio projects related to the NCSSE, reflective in nature, and judged on a rubric created by the university.

### **Cohort Experiences**

Research about cohort grouping strategies exists and is mostly positive. Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, and Norris (2000) wrote that adult learning is best accomplished when it is shared in a socially cohesive structure. This structure then emphasizes shared authority of the learning, opportunities for collaboration, and teamwork in practice-like situations. Positive outcomes of cohort learning experiences and structures include enhanced feelings of group belonging and support, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning, and assistance (Davis et al., 2005).

### **Implementation of Programs**

Fowler (2013) discussed policy implementation and the major actors of

implementation. As organizational activities and operations directed toward carrying out an adopted policy, implementation begins with formal actors who have the authority to put the new policy into effect. Formal actors delegate to intermediaries for help with the responsibilities of implementation, i.e., the people between the formal actors and the target population of implementation. Fowler contended that successful implementation depends on developing and sustaining the will and capacity of the intermediaries.

In January 2008, the NCSBE approved in concept a new program approval process for higher education institutions. The new program approval process for the state is separate from the national accreditation process, with national accreditation being voluntary (NCDPI, 2014).

The North Carolina remodeling process focused on outcomes, rather than inputs, and eliminated barriers and obstacles that do not ensure quality. It also allowed greater institutional flexibility based on increased rigor and accountability (NCDPI, 2014). The remodeling process requires educator preparation programs leading to a school administrator and principal license to align with the State Board adopted NCSSE and the current evaluation instrument. Institutions were required to submit to the SBE by July 1, 2009, “blueprints” of their proposed programs that have been revisioned to meet the new standards for school executives adopted by the Board in December 2006. The blueprints, or program proposals, were to include the following components: description of how the proposed program has been revisioned to reflect 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions and the rationale for the changes, i.e., how the new program is different from the current program, how it reflects 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and why specific revisions are being made; how required competencies are met; how public school partners were involved in the revisioning of the program and how they will be

involved in the delivery and evaluation of the program; six to eight electronic evidences the institution will use to demonstrate candidates meet the standards and each element and all the proficient-level descriptors included in it MUST be addressed in the evidences; the timeline for implementation; and copies of the written agreements and other requirements specified in North Carolina House Bill 536.

Once the representatives of the State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education, public school practitioners, individuals who were involved in the development of the standards, and DPI staff met with institutional representatives to discuss their proposed programs, recommendations for program approval were submitted to the SBE for final approval of the revisioned programs. In the new process, there is an annual review of candidate evidence that shows how they meet the standards for school executives based on a rubric that is aligned with the in-service school executive evaluation instrument. Annual reviews are coordinated by the SBE and utilize trained in-service school executives and teacher educators. Random samples from each institution will be reviewed each year. Each specialty area program will be reviewed on a systematic basis when a critical mass of program completers is reached, but at least once every 7 years. Additionally, graduate on-the-job performance, institutional involvement with local school systems, and institutional service to the public schools will be considered in continuing program approval from DPI.

### **Fidelity of Implementation Self-Studies**

Developed by the Education Development Center, the Principal Preparation Program Self-Assessment Toolkit was designed to guide and support collaborative self-assessment of principal preparation programs by school districts and IHEs (King, 2013). The author credits research for the rubric's indicators in the toolkit from a review of

*Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The tool is intentionally focused on principal preparation programs and several key areas. The key areas include content and pedagogy, supervised clinical practice, candidate recruitment and selection, market demand for graduates, performance as principals postgraduation, and program graduate outcomes that are related to knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with a look at a brief history of school leadership and moved into a review of the principal's role and methods of preparation. The literature review's scope included aspirant school leader programs redesign, evaluation standards, evaluation tools, a look at private universities in North Carolina offering programs for future school leaders, cohort experiences, implementation of such programs, and self-studies. The next chapter presents the methodology used in the study.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

North Carolina IHEs that offer credentials in school administration were mandated to redesign and align with the current NCSSE (Brown, 2012). Sample Southeastern University overhauled its MSA program to align and meet the new requirements. The first graduating class from the redesigned MSA program was in 2012. The researcher conducted a process evaluation following Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP model. The underlying theme of the CIPP model of evaluation and its most important purpose is not to prove but to improve. This chapter includes a review of the methodology in the study. The chapter describes the methods, type of study, data collection processes, data analysis processes, and any helpful information so that the study's replication is possible. The researcher's subjectivity is also disclosed.

#### **Methodology**

Philosophies that frame the research questions and research methods are disclosed in this section. Careful consideration and collaboration with peers occurred prior to the researcher's final decisions about methodology. This section describes the philosophical framework of the research questions and the research that took place in the study.

To create the research questions, implementation of the redesigned MSA was considered a starting point. The five elements that are measured in the concept of implementation are adherence, exposure, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation (Dane & Schneider, 1998). The research questions came from these five elements. The first research question about process stems from careful consideration of adherence and exposure. The second research question looking at implementation comes from the element quality of delivery. The third research question addresses participant responsiveness and program differentiation. Intended by the

researcher is a look at integrity, i.e., fidelity, of implementation as the degree to which the processes in the program are implemented as intended by the developers.

Argued by Dane and Schneider (1998), all five elements are part of a comprehensive or more complete picture of the process. Adherence refers to delivery as it was designed or written (Mihalic, 2004). Dosage or exposure refers to the amount received by the participants and if it is as prescribed by the designers. Quality of delivery deals with the way in which a teacher, volunteer, or staff member delivers a program. Participant responsiveness or participant engagement measures how far the participants are engaged by or respond to the program or process. Program differentiation refers to the unique features of the program that are essential for success. Thus, implementation fidelity acts as a guide or calibration tool for programmatic and process intentions.

The three research questions serving as the foci of the study were

1. To what extent are the redesigned principal preparation program processes aligned with the NCSSE?
2. To what extent is the approved MSA program implemented with fidelity?
3. What differences in component experiences surfaced among cohort members exposed to MSA?

For this study to answer the research questions, the researcher used content analysis and grounded theory. Content analysis provides replicable and valid inferences where the researcher's personal authority is not connectable to the results (Krippendorff, 2003). Content analysis also yields new insights, recognizes textual meanings, and offers sustainable results. Grounded theory offers a qualitative research method through a series of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This theory is then articulated through a descriptive narrative

that explains the central phenomenon in the study, in this case to answer the research questions. Both contextual analysis and grounded theory were used by the researcher.

### **Data Collection Process**

One research site was selected from the North Carolina IHEs offering MSAs, Sample Southeastern University, and the program was its redesigned MSA. Consideration was first given to multiple sites or sites where the researcher was never enrolled. Ultimately, after deliberation with peers and university faculty members, Sample Southeastern University was selected because of proximity, access, faculty willingness for feedback, and faculty interest in results.

Sample Southeastern University, a private, Christian liberal arts university, provides undergraduate and graduate education. The site is located in the Piedmont area of Western North Carolina and stretches 200 acres with over 4,300 students. The university is comprised of 63% female and 37% male from 37 states and 21 foreign countries. There are 147 full-time faculty members, 79% with Ph.D. or equivalent, and an average class size of 25. The university has a total of five professional schools, two academic schools, and 11 academic departments offering nearly 60 undergraduate and graduate major fields of study. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The SOE at Sample Southeastern University has 16 full-time faculty members and 160 adjunct professors. The education programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and are approved by NCDPI. Classes for the MSA meet face-to-face and online. Students select from locations across the state or online for their program experience. The university partnered with the K-12 Teachers Alliance for MSA recruitment. Students are admitted to a cohort consisting of



colleagues with whom they will experience a common course of study for the duration of the program. For consideration as a student for the MSA program, the applicant should hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited IHE with a minimum GPA of 2.5, have successfully completed 3 years of teaching, hold a current teaching license, and submit his/her Praxis score or GRE score.

Archival, survey, and interview data were analyzed to determine the degree to which program implementation supports program design. Informed by Bowen's (2009) Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method, advantages of document analysis include efficiency, availability, cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity, stability, exactness, and coverage. To review the redesigned MSA program's processes as implemented and to consider the three research questions, the researcher needed artifacts from the SOE. The researcher gained permission from Sample Southeastern University's SOE to use previously collected surveys and previously collected results. These items are housed with the director of the program and with the SOE. The director of the MSA previously collected survey data from graduates which were disclosed, housed all previous and current versions of the program's handbook which were provided, and kept all historical documents from the SOE and DPI which were studied as part of the research. The researcher also asked the SOE faculty members and program director for all documents, approved forms, and any other artifacts that provide information tied to the research questions.

The data include graduate surveys from the 2011 entering cohort of the redesigned program. Students were surveyed in their last semester. The survey was created by program leaders and covered each of the processes in the MSA.

Upon IRB approval, the researcher conducted interviews to inform the study.

The interview respondents were the Dean of the SOE, the MSA program director, and the two quality control officers of the newly implemented program. The interview protocol emerged from examination of the artifacts given to the researcher from the university (Appendix A). Interview question creation occurred after the content analysis of SOE artifacts. These specifically selected respondents provide trustworthiness to the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

### **Data Analysis Process**

Document analysis and content analysis processes by Krippendorff (2003) were used to examine program documents, program manuals, program survey results, and program artifacts. Code generation materialized from the Program Blueprint and handbook iterations. Once the codes emerged, code analysis of the survey data collected by program leaders took place. This coding and categorizing led to developing interview questions by the researcher and memos by the researcher during observations, i.e., at one faculty training session (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviews were then transcribed for analysis and interpretation. Intermediate coding produced linkages and increased the level of conceptualizing the emerging grounded theory.

### **Subjectivity Disclosure**

The study of principal preparation interested the researcher specifically as a school principal who recently matriculated through a principal preparation program. In fact, the examined Sample Southeastern University MSA program is the one from which the researcher graduated, resulting in principal licensure. Thus, subjectivity is considered in this section (Peshkin, 1988). Experiences of the researcher in the program include enrollment in the first year of program implementation, successful completion of all the programmatic components, and observation of cohort peer experiences.

Both then and now, the researcher experienced the program differently from cohort peers. For example, upon enrollment in the program, the researcher was already an assistant principal. Accordingly, the researcher was formally exposed to many leadership opportunities during her internship. In contrast, the cohort peers were practicing classroom teachers with varying degrees of experience and more contrived opportunities to lead. By the second year of the 2-year program, the researcher moved into the role of principal, further creating distance from peers. As a student, the researcher wondered, “what comparative difference might my formal leadership role during my preparation program have made in how I experienced the curriculum?”

On a broader level, the researcher sought to understand leadership preparation whatever the job ultimately attained by program graduates. The researcher noticed from daily practice that the principalship routinely used skills of business, church, and school leaders. For example, the job requires budget analysis as in the business field, counselor care as in the pastoral field, and instructional leadership as in the education field. The researcher wondered, “what comprises effective preparation for leadership across fields of practice?” From that broad curiosity, the researcher narrowed the scope to school principal leadership preparation.

As a principal preparation program graduate, the researcher was motivated to assist students preparing for school leadership by providing feedback and recommendations to the principal preparation program director and faculty of the SOE. From a macro perspective, this study, then, examined program processes, fidelity of implementation, and possible differences in cohort member experiences. From a micro perspective, the researcher looked forward to the results of the study to see if the observations were shared or idiosyncratic, perceptual, or actual.

**Summary**

The methods described in this chapter explore the MSA according to the three research questions. Document analysis and grounded theory findings are presented next in Chapter 4 and interpretations are provided in Chapter 5. The results from this study will inform the SOE at Sample Southeastern University and set the stage for future studies of program implementation of MSA.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate the program implementation of the MSA processes at Sample Southeastern University. As an evaluation study, the researcher specifically focused on the extent to which the processes are aligned to the state's requirements for an MSA, the extent to which the program is implemented as designed, and the differences in cohort member experiences. To do this, the researcher collected data and analyzed the theoretical and conceptual framework in the school leader preparation program at Sample Southeastern University using document analysis and grounded theory. A look at the findings from data collected, SOE surveys, artifacts, program handbooks, and researcher interviews are considered in this chapter.

Each research question is aligned to data sources for the study. Table 2 shows the crosswalk between the research questions of this study and the data source for analysis.

Table 2

### *Data Sources by Research Question*

Data Source	SOE Survey	Researcher Interview	SOE Publication	DPI Publication
Research Question 1: To what extent are the redesigned principal preparation program processes aligned with the NCSSE?		X	X	X
Research Question 2: To what extent is the approved MSA program implemented with fidelity?	X	X	X	
Research Question 3: What differences in component experiences have surfaced among cohort members exposed to MSA?	X	X		

## **Findings Presented by Research Question**

**Research Question 1.** The first research question asked to what extent are the redesigned principal preparation program processes aligned with the NCSSE. The findings include data from three sources: the Program Blueprint, each program handbook since inception, and researcher interviews.

The Program Blueprint, as the approved explanation of the MSA program at Sample Southeastern University, describes how the program meets all of the requirements of DPI and NC House Bill 536. Analytically speaking, the blueprint responds to each point in the expected redesign. Code-word origin came from the Program Blueprint because it was the original document of the program and is the ruler to which processes, implementation, and cohort experiences are measured.

The Program Blueprint and each handbook were analyzed and cross-referenced. The blueprint explains the programmatic processes; the handbooks explain how the processes are carried out in the program and act as a field guide. Each cohort was given a revised handbook upon entering the program and recurring each fall.

Table 3 shows the evolution of the handbooks since the creation of the blueprint. The section titles, as shown in Table 3, are not the same throughout the years of delivery, and the section existence is not the same in each handbook. One additional difference is that explanation of alignment to House Bill 536 is only in the Program Blueprint. As for similarities, the program description, course descriptions, evidences, descriptors, evaluation requirements, and explanation of the Certificate of Competency are sections in the Program Blueprint and each handbook. The displayed sections in Table 3 show processes in the principal preparation program that support implementation; the alignment of the program processes to the ready-to-lead standards in the approved

blueprint are consistent in each handbook as redundant sections. Therefore, the ready-to-lead standard, Program Blueprint, and handbooks are aligned with each other.

Table 3

*Evolution of Program Blueprint and Handbook Iterations*

Section Titles	MELS Blueprint Sections	Cohort 1 2010 Handbook	Cohort 2 2011 Handbook	Cohort 3 2012 Handbook	Cohort 4 2013 Handbook
Traditional program		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cohort program		✓	✓	✓	✓
Online program		✓	✓	✓	✓
Add-on license		✓	✓	✓	✓
Technology			✓	✓	✓
Dispositions			✓	✓	✓
Internship process/Clinical experience			✓	✓	✓
Clinical Experience Committee description					✓
Artifact and standards alignment chart			✓	✓	✓
Timeline for artifact completion			✓	✓	✓
Formative phase and summative phase chart			✓	✓	✓
Internship/Clinical experience checklist and evaluation process		✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional growth statements		✓	✓		
TaskStream documents		✓	✓	✓	
Transition elements to MELS	✓				
District partnerships	✓				

Interview respondents, in regard to the interview question which probed about implementing program processes from the blueprint, gave answers that are congruent to Research Question 1. All four respondents spoke to implementation of the blueprint as it was approved. Respondent 1 said,

Around 2007/2008 the State Board of Education said that IHEs were not doing a good job with preparations for teachers, principals, superintendents. In addition, schools of education were not collaborating with districts. The State Board of Education asked DPI who then required IHEs to revise their programs. Teacher education was first, then principal preparation, followed by superintendent preparation. To get your blueprint approved, it had to be a revision of your program. It went through a peer view process, it went through editing processes, and then to the state board for review and approval. Our first cohort was in the fall of 2010 as the implementation of the blueprint and approved program. The blueprints were required to be aligned to prominent national programs. They gave us House Bill requirements but not how to implement them. Our scope and sequence is different. We have five semesters. We have a full program internship, and we have a disposition building and skill building process over five semesters. We are now doing what the State Board of Education said we were not doing originally. (Appendix B)

Respondent 2 said,

Since I've been around, I've seen great evolution. Everyone was doing their own thing and now there is a standard course of study through 130 adjunct faculty and 14 satellite campuses. Adjunct faculty members bring knowledge from their jobs and this is a huge asset; courses are exactly what students need to be leaders in



schools. The biggest difference comes from the two trainings per year. Plus feedback from the field, this has created evolution as well. I think that the internship area still needs continuous improvement. (Appendix C)

Respondent 3 said,

The state doesn't tell you how to implement it. When we created the blueprint, we redefined the courses and curriculum. We melded traditional courses together where themes were congruent. Implementation-wise we tried to standardize courses for instructors and keep them within a window without stifling academic freedom while simultaneously satisfying the artifacts and evidences. Handbook has this laid out. BlackBoard has assignments in there for each class. Individual instructors must do the components of the artifacts but can do more in their courses. We have standardized texts. We have standard syllabi but professors can adjust timelines in their courses. We've created shells in BlackBoard for each professor.

Since use of technology in the classroom has been a point of emphasis for the last few years, we have had trainings from our BlackBoard lead and completed book studies around online education. It's one of those things that we consider a necessity. We struggle sometimes with the network at GW but we try to do more than just PowerPoints. We do have WebEx that we can use. One of the competencies is technology.

The internship used to be in the last 2 semesters. The blueprint says that we will have an internship the entire time. They have things to do when they are in each semester. They have a committee. We keep up with their internship tasks. They have 400 hours of tasks plus items from the portfolio of artifacts.

They need to know how to run a school not just observe and get hours watching buses come and go. There is a committee for the internship now (for extra pay) that integrates the coursework, site, and internship because the instructor, site super and internship super are on the committee.

Program implementation was a massive process and mostly the changes haven't been in the content. We made adjustments in process to eliminate problems. We were open to making things better and had reasons for each change. (Appendix D)

Respondent 4 said,

All programs had to be revised, rethought, and revisioned. All of the faculty were part of that revisioning process. It was about thinking futuristically about how to best prepare school leaders. This was two pronged – knew we had to look at the school admin program. We did this with all of the undergraduate programs first. We knew internally that we needed to do it because of continuous improvement and viability; plus external need to redesign. We never said that we needed to redesign because of SBOE. We knew there was a lag between what we were doing and what principals needed in schools. We ended up running two programs at the same time. Old program was a cluster program, not a cohort program. Cluster program was at a site and folks were entering and completing at different times. Students started with whatever course was being offered at that time. This was problematic with the new program because we wanted the research course to be at the beginning. The cohort program was more cohesive. Implementation took a little while because of ending the cluster program and moving to a cohort design. The cohort program came immediately after revisioning and then took a

while in some cases because of the cluster program. We had to use a lot of adjunct instructors for a while. (Appendix E)

Code genesis from this first level includes program description, course professor, handbook, cohort experience and cohort program, online program, course descriptions, evidences, artifacts, descriptors, internship, e.g., embedded internship, clinical internship; TaskStream, competencies, e.g., dispositions; evaluation requirements, district partnerships, clinical experience team, e.g., leadership team, site supervisor, internship supervisor, and evaluators; and transition elements, e.g., planning, faculty training sessions, course-credit transition, cluster to cohort transition, standardization of and/or common coursework. These words are repeatedly used throughout the Program Blueprint. For this question, the researcher looked at interview question alignment and then conducted intermediate coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to link the codes and make connections. Table 4 displays the findings.

Table 4

*Research Question 1 Code Frequency*

Code	Interview respondents
Program description	
Course professor	6
Handbook	1
Cohort experience	
Cohort program	
Online program	
Course description	1
Evidences	1
Artifacts	2
Descriptors	
Internship	7
TaskStream/Technology	6
Competencies/dispositions	2
Evaluation Requirements	
District Partnerships	
Clinical Experience Team	1
Transition elements	7

**Research Question 2.** The second research question examined to what extent the approved MSA program processes are implemented with fidelity. Findings include survey data collected by program leaders and interview respondents from the researcher's interviews. N is 104 unless noted. Implementation fidelity is measured against the Program Blueprint as the approved document from the university and DPI. The questions in the survey collected data about implementation of the handbook and, therefore, implementation of the Program Blueprint, as each aspect of the handbook was examined.

The survey included a prompt about overall handbook, i.e., its accuracy, its ease with access, and its clearness as it describes expectations for successful completion of the program. Students who answered the survey conveyed, except for 22.11% who marked

“very little” or “not at all,” that the handbook is accurate, easy to access, and clearly describes the expectations of the program. The results are in Table 5.

Table 5

*Survey Results of the Program Handbook*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
The information in the handbook is accurate.	45.19%	50.96%	3.85%	0
The information in the handbook is easy to access.	44.23%	46.12%	8.65%	0
The information in the handbook clearly describes the expectations for successful completion of the program.	34.62%	55.77%	6.73%	2.88%

The survey also looked at how the program requirements were communicated to students. For the prompt exploring this question, the choices were advisor, course professor, webinar, handbook, other students, and university supervisor. Table 6 shows these data. The highest respondent choice was their course professor followed closely by the program handbook.

Table 6

*Survey Results about Communication of Program Requirements*

	Advisor	Course professor	Webinar	Handbook	Other students	University supervisor
How have the requirements for the program been communicated to you?	40.38%	89.42%	11.54%	82.69%	56.73%	47.12%

Students were asked about who they would contact or what they would do if they had questions about program requirements in the survey. Their choices were contact my advisor, consult a peer in the program, consult the handbook, contact my course professor, contact the SOE, and contact the Graduate School. Students indicated if they had questions about program requirements, they would consult a peer in the program or contact their course professor. This finding indicates who students are seeking with their questions about the requirements of the program. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7

*Survey Results about Programmatic Requirement Questions*

	Contact my advisor	Consult a peer in the program	Consult the handbook	Contact my course professor	Contact the SOE	Contact the Graduate School
If I had questions about program requirements, I would...	50.96%	71.15%	56.73%	82.69%	13.46%	9.62%

To explore technology use, program leaders gave students three prompts in the survey. Although the majority of students, 93.27%, indicated that course professors used technology effectively, 14.43% of students said that instructors were not using technology as an instructional methodology tool. Additionally, 15.54% of students surveyed conveyed that their course professor could not help them with technology questions. Table 8 displays these findings.

Table 8

*Survey Results about Technology Use*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My course professors utilized technology effectively.	48.08%	45.19%	0.96%	5.77%	0
My course professors utilized technology to facilitate learning.	45.19%	40.38%	3.85%	10.58%	0
If I had question about technology required for a course, my professor could assist me.	41.75%	42.72%	8.74%	6.80%	0

Program leaders explored assigned readings and textbooks in the survey. This survey question was one of the few with a wide margin of undecided, disagreement, and strong disagreement. Thirty-eight percent of students did not agree that the assigned readings and textbooks were helpful when trying to understand the material. See Table 9.

Table 9

*Survey Results about the Helpfulness of Assigned Readings and Textbooks*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Assigned readings and textbooks were helpful in helping me understand the material.	13.59%	47.57%	18.45%	14.56%	5.83%

The overall experience on TaskStream, the online portfolio interface for the SOE, was surveyed. Students were given five prompts; Table 10 shows the findings. The outlier in the five prompts is where students were asked about feedback on their portfolio items. Forty percent of students did not agree that feedback in TaskStream was given in a timely manner on their portfolio items. Along that line of exploration, 37.25% of students conveyed that they were not clear about who reviewed their work in TaskStream, and 30% of students did not find the feedback helpful once received.



Table 10

*Survey Results about the TaskStream Experience*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understood navigation directions provided in the handbook.	25.24%	52.43%	13.62%	8.74%	0.97%
I understood submitting work for review and submitting work for evaluation.	52.88%	39.42%	1.92%	4.81%	0.96%
It was clear to me who reviewed my work in TaskStream.	31.37%	31.37%	11.76%	19.61%	5.88%
My work has been reviewed in a timely manner.	14.56%	44.66%	10.68%	19.42%	10.68%
Feedback I've received in TaskStream has been helpful.	28.16%	41.75%	14.56%	9.71%	5.83%

Students were asked about their overall experience with their course professors using three prompts. The findings show that students' experiences with their course professors were mostly in agreement with regard to availability, conveying program requirements, and helpfulness. Table 11 shows these data.

Table 11

*Survey Results about the Course Professor Experience*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My professor was available for questions and concerns.	72.12%	25.96%	0.96%	0	0.96%
My professor conveyed program requirements clearly.	53.85%	30.77%	9.62%	4.81%	0.96%
My professor was helpful with relation to program requirements.	56.31%	31.07%	7.77%	3.88%	0.97%

Students were asked in the survey about their internship supervisor. Findings show that 20.2% of students were either undecided or disagreed that internship supervisors were available. Similarly, 2.33% of students surveyed were either undecided or disagreed that they had conversations about program requirements with their internship supervisor. Students, 32.7%, conveyed that they were either undecided or disagreed that internship supervisors conveyed program requirements clearly. When asked if their internship supervisor was helpful, 33.1% of students were undecided or disagreed. Table 12 displays these data.

Table 12

*Survey Results about the Internship Supervisor*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My internship supervisor was available for questions and concerns.	37.50%	42.31%	9.62%	6.73%	3.85%
My internship supervisor conducted conversations with me regarding program requirements.	35.92%	41.75%	12.62%	6.80%	2.91%
My internship supervisor conveyed program requirements clearly.	32.69%	34.62%	18.27%	9.62%	4.81%
My internship supervisor was helpful with relation to program requirements.	33.98%	33.01%	17.48%	11.65%	3.88%

Program leaders explored the overall experience of students with their site supervisor in the survey. Although findings show that students conversed with their site supervisor, 19.23% of students did not meet with their site supervisor regularly. Additionally, 29.8% of students conveyed that their site supervisor did not understand how to complete tasks in TaskStream.

Table 13 shows these data.

Table 13

*Survey Results about the Site Supervisor*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I met regularly with my site supervisor.	49.04%	31.73%	6.73%	9.62%	2.88%
I have conducted conversations with my site supervisor regarding program requirements.	47.12%	48.08%	1.92%	1.92%	0.96%
My site supervisor knows and understands how to complete required tasks within TaskStream.	35.58%	34.62%	12.50%	15.38%	1.92%
My site supervisor was helpful with relation to program requirements.	42.72%	33.98%	10.68%	10.68%	1.94%

In the survey by program leaders, students were asked about the six required artifacts. This finding shows the degree of understanding that students have for the six artifacts in the portfolio and their relationship to the executive leadership standards. All students conveyed that they were in agreement with the prompt. Table 14 reflects these data.

Table 14

*Survey Results about the Artifacts and Their Relationship to NCSSE*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand how the six artifacts required for graduation and licensure relate to the NCSSE.	54.81%	45.19%	0	0	0

The survey explored the degree to which students understood the 21 competencies and their central role in effectiveness as a school leader. Findings show that nearly all students understand the relationship. Table 15 reflects this question and student answers.

Table 15

*Survey Results about the 21 Competencies and Their Role*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand the 21 competencies and their central role in my effectiveness as a school leader.	56.31%	40.78%	0.97%	0.97%	0.97%

Interview question three was written to collect information regarding this research question. Interviewees talked about implementation fidelity with program processes and their understanding. Respondent 1 said,

There is more training involved than normal. Fidelity is impacted based on what

the professors know and understand, so they have to be better prepared to implement the program. They have common syllabi, textbooks, and assessments. Training included scope and sequence, assessment, academic freedom, collaborating, and technical requirements. (Appendix B)

Respondent 2 said,

That's an important question. The handbook gives instructors a clear roadmap. The quality assurance coordinators have helped tremendously with fidelity because the standard set of questions asks about the internship, artifacts, technology. Originally there was disconnection with professors not knowing how to make sure that the artifacts are linked to the classwork. Now when I visit the rooms they all mostly sound the same and are talking about the artifacts.

(Appendix C)

Respondent 3 said,

Standardization is one thing that helps with fidelity. When we have sessions like the retreat to look at and discuss how people interpret what is written. If there is vagueness in the directions or components, people will interpret it differently. There is a fine balance between creativity and a template. Internship supervisors differ greatly which decreases fidelity. Rater reliability is a fidelity issue. We are working on it to strengthen this. We started with the OMA because it has the lowest scores and teachers are least familiar with in terms of the artifacts. Students struggle with the big picture and how it fits together. (Appendix D)

Respondent 4 said,

You achieve fidelity by following the Blueprint. This transition happened while I was transitioning out; I wasn't part of implementing the Blueprint. Traveling

around as the quality control coordinator, I saw fidelity. Candidates knew their courses; they knew which site; they knew books from the beginning. The only unknown was who was going to teach the course. Students knew from the start what was expected from them. In terms of the instructor sticking with what they were supposed to do, I did not see issues with them not implementing. Once I was told that the instructor “should have told us more” from a student. In terms of following the syllabi and doing what they were supposed to do, I did see an issue. There were more questions about the portfolio and TaskStream. Some instructors were more attuned to TaskStream than others. Those who were not attuned would bring people in to help with those questions. I would see Dave Shellman often travel to sites to bring classes up to speed with TaskStream.

(Appendix E)

Coding for the second research question is below in Table 16. The number of marks shows the number of times the word or keywords were said in the interview for this question.

Table 16

*Research Question 2 Code Frequency*

Code	Interview respondents
Program description	
Course professor	8
Handbook	1
Cohort experience	
Cohort program	
Online program	
Course description	
Evidences	
Artifacts	3
Descriptors	
Internship	1
TaskStream/Technology	3
Competencies/dispositions	
Evaluation Requirements	
District Partnerships	
Clinical Experience Team	1
Transition elements	5

**Research Question 3.** The third research question considered what differences in component experiences have surfaced among cohort members exposed to MSA. For this research question, findings include the program’s survey data and the researcher’s interview.

In the survey by program leaders, students were asked to rate the degree of their collaboration with their site supervisor and leadership team at their work site. Findings show a wide range of cohort member experiences. Table 17 shows these data.



Table 17

*Survey Results for Degree of Collaboration between Key Members*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
Now that you have completed your program, rate the degree of your collaboration with your site supervisor and leadership team at your work site.	54.81%	24.04%	19.23%	1.92%

Students were asked in the survey about the embedded internship. Findings show that only 36.5% responded that they felt the embedded internship prepared them for executive leadership. Table 18 shows the findings.

Table 18

*Survey Results for the Embedded Internship*

	To a great extent	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
How well do you feel that the embedded internship has prepared you for executive leadership?	36.54%	46.15%	12.5%	4.81%

Program leaders explored the scope and sequence of successfully completing the program requirements. When asked if the scope and sequence of the artifact assignments assisted them in understanding the program and successfully completing the program, 37.5% of students conveyed undecided or disagreement. Table 19 displays these results.

Table 19

*Survey Results for the Scope and Sequence of Artifacts*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The scope and sequence of the artifacts assignments assisted me in understanding and successfully completing the program.	25.00%	37.50%	5.77%	21.15%	10.58%

Students were surveyed about the connections between the artifacts and the competencies. The prompt said that there is a clear connection between the artifact assignments and the executive leadership competencies demonstrated for licensure as an executive leader. Only 103 students answered this question, unlike 104 in the rest of the survey. Findings show that students mostly agree, 81.5%, that there is a clear connection between the artifacts and leadership competencies. See Table 20.

Table 20

*Survey Results for the Connection between the Artifacts and Competencies*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There is a clear connection between the artifact assignments and the executive leadership competencies demonstrated for licensure as an executive leader.	40.78%	40.78%	11.65%	5.83%	0.97%

Interview questions four and five, by the researcher, targeted this research

question about cohort member experience. The following responses are for interview question four that probed about cohort member experiences with the programmatic processes.

Respondent 1 said for interview question four,

The district is the biggest difference between cohort groups. If students are from districts that are supportive then they have more flexibility and access. Whereas if the student is from a district that doesn't provide access to data, for example, for an artifact, then they have less to work with when completing the assignments. Also I've noticed social issues in different areas and second language complexities in different areas. One way that we have discussed compensating for differences in programmatic experiences is simulations. Simulations are missing for areas that have low quality or inexistence for some students.

(Appendix B)

Respondent 2 said for interview question four,

Internship – varies from district to district – urban are more restrictive; principals also differ. For example, when students need to do research and interview district office folks. Also, nondistrict employees have a hard time with placement. For the most part, teachers have principals that work with them to learn and grow administratively; teachers in the program mostly end up being teacher leaders at their site. Also it makes a difference with the level of principal that you have – veteran or new. Classwork and artifacts are pretty consistent across the board.

(Appendix C)

Respondent 3 said for interview question four,

Students that have come later get benefit of the changes. We don't have the same

complaints. We've learned a lot as we've progressed. We've made changes that made sense and kept the rigor. Had students leave; had internship supervisors leave. I've tried to be an advocate for a student and taken on the faculty and university.

There are no major differences in the courses since they were implemented. There are variances from one instructor to another. Some are better than others because of life experiences. The ones with rich life experiences bring a special quality to the curriculum. (Appendix D)

Respondent 4 for interview question four said,

The big issue with TaskStream was really manipulation and maneuvering. Cohort members would help each other learn the platform. A lot of the folks in a cohort were in the same school so they could help each other. They became a cohesive unit and supportive unit – didn't matter if there was a celebration or issue – they were cohesive and helped one another. There were various levels but they helped each other level-out. I was really impressed when I would talk to the candidates about how they supported and helped one another. The cohort is a strong part of the revision. (Appendix E)

Following are the responses for interview question five that examined the differences in cohort member outcomes and proficiencies. Respondent 1 for interview question five said, "We need to address admission standards since outcomes are driven by ability and what they bring to the table" (Appendix B). Respondent 2 for interview question five said, "Higher fidelity – seeing the campuses, listening in classes, talking with students in classes makes me realize it's higher over the last three years" (Appendix C). Respondent 3 for interview question five said,

They are growth outcomes. They all reach a level proficiency to graduate and proficiency on the 37 descriptors and 21 competencies to be recommended for a license. We have had plenty of people not continue or graduate. However, most of our people grow and continue to work on the artifacts and evidences until they reach proficiency. Handbook clarification and directions hasn't shown measureable change. For the student, the communication is higher and the comprehension is higher. We would need to clarify each and conduct rater reliability for each artifact to see significant higher scores and less "developing" work to achieve closer to first-time proficiency. (Appendix D)

Respondent 4 for interview question five said,

I only went once per semester and talked with the candidates. My focus mainly was on goals. Differences in proficiency with respect to graduation outcomes weren't part of my visit. During the last visit, I used an open ended question which was "what do you need to tell me with respect to the program (holistically) or what do I need to know that I can take back to the SOE?" They were pretty confident by the end; the stress came at the beginning in the first two semesters. They were stressed to complete at the end, but they were able to look back and see how they had grown and wish they had caught on earlier. There will always be difference in proficiencies – you can see it and hear it – but they would talk about how they met the proficiency level and goals of the program. They would talk about how they were going to translate their learning and implement it in to their classroom or future job of lead teacher or assistant principal. (Appendix E)

Table 21 displays the code frequency found with Research Question 3. The numbers correspond to the number of times the codes were mentioned in the interviews.

Table 21

*Research Question 3 Code Frequency*

Code	Interview respondents
Program description	1
Course professor	3
Handbook	1
Cohort experience	2
Cohort program	1
Online program	
Course description	1
Evidences	1
Artifacts	5
Descriptors	
Internship	1
TaskStream/Technology	2
Competencies/dispositions	
Evaluation Requirements	
District Partnerships	6
Clinical Experience Team	1
Transition elements	

**Summary**

A summary of code frequency suggests trends and themes that emerged for each research question. For Research Question 1, the extent to which program processes are aligned to the North Carolina standards for principal preparation, the four most frequent codes were course professors, the internship, TaskStream, and the transition elements. For Research Question 2, the extent of programmatic implementation fidelity, the four most frequent codes were the course professors, the artifacts, TaskStream, and the transition elements. For the last research question of the study which looked at the differences in cohort member component experiences, the most frequent codes were course professors, artifacts, and district partnerships. Table 22 displays the findings.

Table 22

*Summary of Code Frequencies for All Research Questions*

Code	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
Program description			
Course professor Handbook	6	8	3
Cohort experience			
Cohort program			
Online program			
Course description			
Evidences			
Artifacts		3	5
Descriptors			
Internship	7		
TaskStream/Technology	6	3	
Competencies/dispositions			
Evaluation Requirements			
District Partnerships			6
Clinical Experience Team			
Transition elements	7	5	

Beginning with a look at data sources and interviews conducted by the researcher, this chapter then explored findings for each research question. Document analysis and code frequency was presented. The chapter concluded by showing summary code frequency. Grounded theory processes suggest the most frequent codes are patterns for consideration and recommendations. The next chapter presents and expands on both.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Today, the school executive leader is expected to be an educational visionary, instructional leader, assessment expert, disciplinarian, community builder, public relations expert, and operations manager (Davis et al., 2005). Literature reviewed for this study demonstrates that the role of the school leader has evolved considerably since the time of the principal teacher, resulting in a current gap between expected job performance and preparation for the job. One voice of many, Wagner (2007) made the case that educational leaders are ill prepared to solve real-world problems. Wagner further suggested that aspiring school leaders would benefit from case study simulations prior to entering the field. Wagner contended that aspiring principals and superintendents need to learn more about how to deal with problems and forward-thinking momentum for improved achievement.

This study examined the MSA program's processes at Sample Southeastern University. Three research questions were examined through a series of analytical processes. Literature review surfaced a plethora of extant research about the contextual framework and themes existing in the study. Document analysis and grounded theory were used to answer the research questions. In the sections that follow, the researcher proffers conclusions and interpretations commensurate with findings of and literature reviewed for this study. Furthermore, the researcher recommends action for policymakers, principal preparation program planners, and researchers.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

**Research Question 1: To what extent are the redesigned principal preparation program processes aligned with the NCSSE?** This research question explored the extent of alignment with programmatic processes and the ready-to-lead



NCSSE. Findings suggest that the program generally comports with the NCSSE framework. This is evidenced by comparison of the content of the Program Blueprint with that of each handbook from program leadership. The sections and explanations embed all elements and practices stipulated in the North Carolina Principal Evaluation Instrument based on the NCSSE. Evolution in handbooks and implementation explanations is evident. Interpreting the code frequency suggests that the course instructor, the clinical experience, TaskStream, and transition elements, e.g., faculty training, play roles in alignment of programmatic processes to the NCSSE.

According to Davis et al. (2005), there are seven key features of effective leadership preparation programs. These features are (1) a clear focus and clearly defined values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized; (2) standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management; (3) field-based internships with skilled supervision; (4) cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations; (5) active instructional strategies that link theory and practice; (6) rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty; and (7) strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field-based learning.

The Program Blueprint and all program handbook iterations examined in this study show evidence of each of these noted features by Davis et al. (2005). However, analyses of interview responses suggest that two features supported by the literature may be ripe for improvement: (1) rigorous recruitment and selection of candidates and faculty, and (2) strong partnerships with schools and districts.

The following recommendations are suggested for consideration for the MSA program leaders at Sample Southeastern University around the theme of process

alignment. Findings showed the redesigned MSA aligned with the NCSSE; therefore, these offered recommendations are to increase understanding of the overall program and further execute the Program Blueprint's components.

- Focus on alignment in regular and routine discussions with instructors.  
Survey data show that students most often ask their course professor when they have questions about programmatic requirements. Instructors, i.e., intermediaries of program delivery according to Fowler (2013), need increased internalization of the MSA program and alignment of programmatic requirements to the NCSSE.
- Design instructor training outcomes strictly around more integrated alignment; consider mandatory workshops. Code frequency data for Research Question 1 show that course instructors and transitional elements, specifically faculty training, are related to alignment. Creating the described professional development promises to increase instructor knowledge and skills resulting in improved program alignment and execution of components.
- In addition to Taskstream serving as a repository where student artifacts are assessed, the platform may also serve as a vehicle for increasing knowledge of program alignment and sense making with NCSSE. Accordingly, a TaskStream button that links students to pertinent documents would create an avenue where students may explore how all program components fit together. Code frequency data support the described modification to TaskStream as it relates to alignment.
- Conduct an analysis of when to create a new iteration of the handbook.  
Findings show that there are at least four iterations of the program's handbook

with each showing alignment to the Program Blueprint in varying degrees of differences with each other. Findings also show that survey respondents are likely to use the handbook after consulting their course professor and their peers. Conducting an analysis, even informally, allows thoughtful consideration to when to implement changes in the program and how to communicate those changes to all stakeholders effectively.

- Conduct rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty. Rigorous recruitment and selection is therefore two-fold: faculty who know and understand the requirements of the programmatic processes and candidates who are enrolled as aspiring leaders rather than those simply wanting an increased salary. Code frequency data show that the instructor is pivotal in increasing alignment, second only to instructor training. Consistent with interview respondents and Davis et al. (2005), high standards for faculty and candidates are key features of effective leadership preparation programs.
- Focus on strong partnerships with schools and districts to increase support of field-based learning so district leadership and site leaders open the way for the clinical experience. Survey data and interview respondent findings show that site and district cooperation was inconsistent. Congruent with Davis et al. (2005), this is a key feature to effective leadership preparation programs.

**Research Question 2: To what extent is the approved MSA program implemented with fidelity?** The second research question explored the extent to which the MSA program processes were implemented with fidelity. Findings suggest that process implementation is delivered with integrity by formal actors with different levels of fidelity occurring with intermediaries. Program processes include the clinical

experience, use of TaskStream and technology through which students archive artifacts and faculty reviewers and evaluators assess artifact quality, course fidelity to the Program Blueprint, dispositions and competencies, district partnerships, and creation and evaluation of evidences and artifacts to meet the executive leadership descriptors.

First, students consult course instructors and their peers as their major source of information. Data show that the handbook is consulted less than faculty members or peers; however, survey data show that the handbook is equal to course professors when asked how the program requirements were communicated. Programmatic implementation and candidates' understanding of the program requirements came mostly from instructors, peers, and the handbook. These three sources of input, therefore, were where students attained information about the program, details of the programmatic processes, and how to meet graduation requirements.

Second, each program process is implemented fully in the MSA program as evidenced by each process's findings from this study. Regarding the clinical experience, every student has an internship and clinical experience committee. Evidence in the student survey, however, suggested a possible breakdown in process between the committee and members. Lack of understanding, helpfulness, and availability of internship committee members underscore the possible breakdown. In regard to implementation of TaskStream and technology, every student has an account and uses it to complete program requirements. Process breakdowns, however, include slow feedback loops, low use of technology in the classroom, and misunderstandings in platform navigation. For the processes in course implementation, high fidelity is noticed with standard texts, assignments, and syllabi. Interviews suggested that this current level of fidelity is part of continuous improvement as some instructors originally taught with

autonomy and disregard for programmatic requirements. With regard to dispositions and competencies, findings suggest alignment in student understanding of the school administration standards and how the dispositions and competencies tie together. For the processes of creating and evaluating evidences and artifacts to show that students meet the school administration descriptors, the survey suggested that they understand the connection between the portfolio of evidences and artifacts and the school administration standards.

As found in the literature review, implementation is carried out by formal and informal actors. The implementers in the MSA program are the program director and program faculty. Intermediaries in this case are the course instructors, the clinical experience committee, and quality control coordinators. According to Fowler (2013), successful implementation depends on developing and maintaining both the will and the capacity of the intermediaries. The research suggests that the implementers are carrying out the MSA program and empowering the intermediaries. At the intermediary level, data from this study suggest that some are willing and capable, while others are not. This creates the remarkable variation in degree of fidelity.

Code frequency suggests that to attain higher fidelity, focus may be optimally directed on the artifacts, the course instructor, and the transition elements, e.g., faculty training and standardization of courses. Below, recommendations are offered to program leaders looking to increase fidelity of programmatic process implementation.

- Create mandatory virtual training modules for clinical experience committee members as part of their contract to leverage understanding, helpfulness, and set standards for their role, feedback expectations, and availability. Survey data convey remarkable variance in committee members' helpfulness,

understanding of program requirements, feedback expectations, and availability. A virtual module serving as mandatory professional development can clearly articulate each expectation and responsibility.

- Create a virtual training module for TaskStream that facilitates the acquisition of candidate knowledge and skill in the use of Taskstream. Survey data and interview transcripts show that students did not clearly understand the platform's directions that were provided in the first handbook regarding navigation in TaskStream nor had a professor who could help them in the platform. A virtual module serving as professional development for students and faculty members could teach the platform and practical application; therefore, both students and faculty have the skills and knowledge they need to maneuver inside the platform as they meet requirements of the artifacts and portfolio. A companion TaskStream handbook can serve as a resource throughout the program since the last two program handbooks, according to findings, did not have a TaskStream section with navigation documents.
- Use training workshops for faculty to enhance use of web tools and technology in the classroom; as a matter of faculty evaluation, create a trajectory of mastery with enculturation of technology as instructional methodology. Survey data convey a notable variance in cohort member experience with instructor use of technology to facilitate learning. The Program Blueprint describes a technology-rich environment within instructional methodologies; therefore, training sessions and evaluation expectations are recommended.
- Focus on intermediaries for higher fidelity of implementation; increase

contact frequency with instructors and clinical experience committee to tighten fidelity of programmatic processes. Consistent with the discussion of implementation fidelity (Fowler, 2013), intermediaries play a key role in successful implementation and fidelity levels.

- Conduct the Education Development Center's Principal Preparation Program Self-Assessment Toolkit (King, 2013) within a professional learning community of faculty members for regular calibration and internal review. Consistent with the literature review, data findings, and code frequency findings, this toolkit includes the evaluative key areas of content and pedagogy, clinical practice, candidate recruitment, and graduate outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

**Research Question 3: What differences in component experiences have surfaced among cohort members exposed to the redesigned MSA?** The third research question explored the extent to which differences in component experiences exist and surface among cohort members. Survey data show that cohort members experience small differences in their clinical experience committee collaboration and the clinical experience as preparation for leadership. These small differences seen in the numbers actually are remarkable problems for students attempting to complete program requirements.

The most remarkable outlier noted in the survey is the perception students have of the scope and sequence of the artifacts. Students in the survey conveyed that the scope and sequence of the artifacts did not help them complete program requirements. Survey data also show that the embedded internship did not overwhelmingly prepare students for school administration. Findings also show that students do not have a clear connection

between artifact assignments and the leadership competencies. Congruent with survey data, content analysis suggests that the areas to focus on for increased positive satisfaction in cohort member experiences is with course instructors, artifacts, and district partnerships.

Research regarding cohort grouping strategies exists and is mostly positive. As seen in the literature review, this structure emphasizes shared authority of the learning, opportunities for collaboration, and teamwork in practice-like situations. Additionally, cohort learning experiences and structures include enhanced feelings of group belonging and support, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning, and assistance (Davis et al., 2005). In the findings, no evidence surfaced that countered this; however, the literature suggests that implementation of component experiences from the intermediaries creates differences in cohort member experiences.

Survey findings show where component experience differences exist for cohort members. To increase similarities in positive cohort member experiences with the components of the program, offered below are recommendations.

- Establish protocols with student outcomes of sense making and understanding the big picture of the portfolio, competencies, and requirements of evidences and artifacts; conduct these in class. Survey data convey a discrepancy in candidate understanding of the connection between the artifacts in portfolio and competencies.
- Facilitate protocol with the outcome of portfolio planning with students; create time in the class for preparation planning of scope and sequence of artifacts in an attempt to help with completing program requirements.

Findings show a notable difference in student responses when asked about the



scope and sequence of the artifact assignments helping them understand and successfully complete the program. Creating time for portfolio planning with students triangulates the course content, competencies, and artifacts.

- Create a leadership role for strategically managing the district partnerships and opening doors for students to complete artifacts and evidences; this is a faculty member who can strengthen SOE relationships with district leaders as a main function of his/her role. Davis et al. (2005) pointed out that effective principal preparation programs have strong partnerships with stakeholder districts. Pursuant with the Stanford University study, code frequency data and interview respondent analysis show that district partnership strength is an area to improve in both Research Questions 1 and 3. Creating a role within the SOE for this work has the potential to positively impact the clinical experience and proficient portfolio completion with artifact and evidence field-based experiences.
- Utilize case study methodology based on real-life school-leader challenges to simulate experiences. Case studies provide opportunities to visualize, discuss, and skill build for cohort members in sites or districts with barriers to the clinical experience. Consistent with Wagner (2007), case studies of authentic situations simulate experiences for candidates who are in districts or schools where access or samples are limited. Survey findings display differences in candidate experiences with regard to their site supervisor and internship supervisor. Interview respondents corroborate survey findings. Interview respondents conveyed that district leadership and school leadership are both responsible for lack of access to potential portfolio artifacts and evidences.

Creating case study simulations is a way for candidates to experience the artifacts and evidences from the NCSSE if access or authentic examples are not available.

### **Future Research**

Future studies examining programs at an IHE may consider a replication study of their principal preparation program. The questions were narrowed to consider implementation of outlined processes and cohort member experiences. Fidelity of implementation is vital in order to reveal if the program is indeed doing what it said it would do when approved.

Future studies exploring beyond the research questions used here may include a comparative analysis of the handbook iterations and the portfolio proficiency levels. This future study could ask if the iterations significantly impact the portfolio proficiency levels. Identifying significance could help in the cost-benefit analysis of creating new iterations of the program's handbook.

Finally, future researchers could aspire to use this study as a template for other university academic departments and improvement of fidelity within those programs. A first study of its kind at Sample Southeastern University, faculty members are afforded a look at their programmatic processes as calibrated against fidelity, candidate experiences of those program processes, findings from data, and recommendations. Evaluation studies like this one serve to foster a culture of feedback and continuous improvement, lend data- and finding-based recommendations to program leaders, and show accreditation committees the seriousness with which program leaders seek to reflect and improve.

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Appendix A  
Interview Protocol



Respondent:

Respondent Title with the University:

Time:

Date:

### Interview Questions

1. What programmatic responsibilities fall under your role?

Follow-up: At what point did you assume your responsibilities with the Master of School Administration program?

2. Explain your understanding of implementing the program processes as required in the Master of School Administration Blueprint.

Follow-up: How did implementation begin? How has it evolved?

3. Talk about how fidelity is achieved with regard to program implementation as required by the Blueprint.

4. To what extent have you seen difference in cohort groups with regard to their programmatic experiences? For example: internship differences.

5. To what extent have you seen differences in cohort groups with regard to outcomes? For example: project proficiency differences.

### Debrief

How did the process work for you?

What went well with this process?

What could have gone better?

Appendix B

Interview Respondent 1 Transcript

1. What programmatic responsibilities fall under your role?

Placement of instructors is my biggest role. Not just assigning the course names, but I match the faculty and their skills with the program and what course they should teach. I help with textbook selection, syllabus, course objectives and goals, faculty evaluation, course artifacts, and instructional practice. I also continue to review our education programs. I collaborate with the university and other universities for continued validity and reliability in our programmatic offerings. In accreditation years I oversee those processes. We are getting ready to go through CAEP accreditation.

Follow-up: At what point did you assume your responsibilities with the Master of School Administration program? I was the Associate Dean at the time of the blueprint creation and was named Dean at the time of blueprint implementation.

2. Explain your understanding of implementing the program processes as required in the Master of School Administration Blueprint.

Around 2007/2008 the State Board of Education said that IHEs were not doing a good job with preparations for teachers, principals, superintendents. In addition, schools of education were not collaborating with districts. The State Board of Education asked the Department of Public Instruction who then required IHEs to revise their programs. Teacher education was first, then principal preparation, followed by superintendent preparation. To get your blueprint approved, it had to be a revision of your program. It went through a peer view process, it went through editing processes, and then to the state board for review and approval. Our first cohort was in the fall of 2010 as the implementation of the blueprint and approved program. The blueprints

were required to be aligned to prominent national programs. They gave us House Bill requirements but not how to implement them. Our scope and sequence is different.

We have five semesters. We have a full program internship, and we have a disposition building and skill building process over five semesters. We are now doing what the State Board of Education said we were not doing originally.

3. Talk about how fidelity is achieved with regard to program implementation as required by the Blueprint.

There is more training involved than normal. Fidelity is impacted based on what the professors know and understand, so they have to be better prepared to implement the program. They have common syllabi, textbooks, and assessments. Training included scope and sequence, assessment, academic freedom, collaborating, and technical requirements.

4. To what extent have you seen difference in cohort groups with regard to their programmatic experiences? For example: internship differences.

The district is the biggest difference between cohort groups. If students are from districts that are supportive then they have more flexibility and access. Whereas if the student is from a district that doesn't provide access to data, for example, for an artifact, then they have less to work with when completing the assignments. Also I've noticed social issues in different areas and second language complexities in different areas. One way that we have discussed compensating for differences in programmatic experiences is simulations. Simulations are missing for areas that have low quality or inexistence for some students.

5. To what extent have you seen differences in cohort groups with regard to outcomes? For example: project proficiency differences.

We need to address admission standards since outcomes are driven by ability and what they bring to the table.

#### Debrief

How did the process work for you? What went well with this process? What could have gone better? – It went well. At first I thought I would have liked the questions in advanced. Now that we have finished, I realize that the answers really speak to what the person's first answer is about the program which shows how they've internalized it and what they believe about the mission. So I thought it went well and I'm pleased.

Appendix C

Interview Respondent 2 Transcript

1. What programmatic responsibilities fall under your role?

I visit the seven satellite campuses twice per semester. When I am there, I talk to three students individually and ask a set of standard questions. While I am visiting, I talk to the instructor and chat about needs they might have for their course or facility. There is not a standard set of questions for the instructor. I also look at the facility. I then report to the dean but I do not report the names of the students.

Follow-up: At what point did you assume your responsibilities with the Master of School Administration program?

Started with MELS in August 2011 supervising interns; new role March 2012 as Quality Assurance Coordinator. I bring the experience of serving on the Professional Teaching Standards commission in NC. I represented all superintendents with teaching standards, principal standards, and superintendent standards when they were revising the standards in the early 2000s. I was the advisor to state board for 2 years; worked with McREL and evaluation instrument development. My role was alignment fidelity as an advisor to the state board with the standards as they matriculated from teacher to superintendent.

2. Explain your understanding of implementing the program processes as required in the Master of School Administration Blueprint.

Since I've been around I've seen great evolution. Everyone was doing their own thing and now there is a standard course of study through 130 adjunct faculty and 14 satellite campuses. Adjunct faculty members bring knowledge from their jobs and this is a huge asset; courses are exactly what students need to be leaders in schools.

The biggest difference comes from the two trainings per year. Plus feedback from the field, this has created evolution as well. I think that the internship area still needs continuous improvement.

3. Talk about how fidelity is achieved with regard to program implementation as required by the Blueprint.

That's an important question. The handbook gives instructors a clear roadmap. The quality assurance coordinators have helped tremendously with fidelity because the standard set of questions asks about the internship, artifacts, technology. Originally there was disconnection with professors not knowing how to make sure that the artifacts are linked to the classwork. Now when I visit the rooms they all mostly sound the same and are talking about the artifacts.

4. To what extent have you seen difference in cohort groups with regard to their programmatic experiences? For example: internship differences.

Internship – varies from district to district – urban are more restrictive; principal also differ. For example, when students need to do research and interview district office folks, etc. Also, non-district employees have a hard time with placement. For the most part, teachers have principals that work with them to learn and grow administratively; teachers in the program mostly end up being teacher leaders at their site. Also it makes a difference with the level of principal that you have – veteran or new.

Classwork and artifacts are pretty consistent across the board.

5. To what extent have you seen differences in cohort groups with regard to outcomes? For example: project proficiency differences.



Higher fidelity – seeing the campuses, listening in classes, talking with students in classes makes me realize it's higher over the last three years.

#### Debrief

How did the process work for you? What went well with this process? What could have gone better? It went well. Easy.

Appendix D

Interview Respondent 3 Transcript

1. What programmatic responsibilities fall under your role?

Five years; chair of the department; handbook maintaining; blueprint into operation; right descriptors in the right semester in the right courses; lead faculty member with the cohorts; we've had huge turnover throughout the years; responsible for meetings with faculty; setting the direction of the faculty; handling staff development (most were past principals and bought into the program); manager of TaskStream for the program; IRB committee for Gardner-Webb and teacher education committee; served on the library committee; chairing dissertations; teaching in the doc program

Follow-up: At what point did you assume your responsibilities with the Master of School Administration program? Fall 2010 as chair of MELS with implementation of the blueprint.

2. Explain your understanding of implementing the program processes as required in the Master of School Administration Blueprint.

The state doesn't tell you how to implement it. When we created the blueprint, we redefined the courses and curriculum. We melded traditional courses together where themes were congruent. Implementation-wise we tried to standardize courses for instructors and keep them within a window without stifling academic freedom while simultaneously satisfying the artifacts and evidences. Handbook has this laid out.

BlackBoard has assignments in there for each class. Individual professors must do the components of the artifacts but can do more in their courses. We have standardized texts. We have standard syllabi but professors can adjust timelines in their courses. We've created shells in BlackBoard for each professor.

Since use of technology in the classroom has been a point of emphasis for the last few years, we have had trainings from our BlackBoard lead and completed book studies around online education. It's one of those things that we consider a necessity. We struggle sometimes with the network at GW but we try to do more than just PowerPoints. We do have WebEx that we can use. One of the competencies is technology.

The internship used to be in the last 2 semesters. The blueprint says that we will have an internship the entire time. They have things to do when they are in each semester. They have a committee. We keep up with their internship tasks. They have 400 hours of tasks plus items from the portfolio of artifacts. They need to know how to run a school not just observe and get hours watching buses come and go. There is a committee for the internship now (for extra pay) that integrates the coursework, site, and internship because the instructor, site super and internship super are on the committee.

Follow-up: How did implementation begin? How has it evolved?

Program implementation was a massive process and mostly the changes haven't been in the content. We made adjustments in process to eliminate problems. We were open to making things better and had reasons for each change.

3. Talk about how fidelity is achieved with regard to program implementation as required by the Blueprint.

Standardization is one thing that helps with fidelity. When we have sessions like the retreat to look at and discuss how people interpret what is written. If there is vagueness in the directions or components, people will interpret it differently. There is a fine balance between creativity and a template. Internship supervisors differ

greatly which decreases fidelity. Rater reliability is a fidelity issue. We are working on it to strengthen this. We started with the OMA because it has the lowest scores and teachers are least familiar with in terms of the artifacts. Students struggle with the big picture and how it fits together.

4. To what extent have you seen difference in cohort groups with regard to their programmatic experiences? For example: internship differences.

Students that have come later get benefit of the changes. We don't have the same complaints. We've learned a lot as we've progressed. We've made changes that made sense and kept the rigor. Had students leave; had internship supervisors leave. I've tried to be an advocate for a student and taken on the faculty and university. There are no major differences in the courses since they were implemented. There are variances from one instructor to another. Some are better than others because of life experiences. The ones with rich life experiences bring a special quality to the curriculum.

5. To what extent have you seen differences in cohort groups with regard to outcomes? For example: project proficiency differences.

They are growth outcomes. They all reach a level proficiency to graduate and proficiency on the 37 descriptors and 21 competencies to be recommended for a license. We have had plenty of people not continue or graduate. However, most of our people grow and continue to work on the artifacts and evidences until they reach proficiency. Handbook clarification and directions hasn't shown measureable change. For the student, the communication is higher and the comprehension is higher. We would need to clarify each and conduct rater reliability for each artifact to

see significant higher scores and less “developing” work to achieve closer to first-time proficiency.

#### Debrief

How did the process work for you? What went well with this process? What could have gone better? Worked just fine. It took more than 20 minutes but that wasn't a problem.

Appendix E

Interview Respondent 4 Transcript

1. What programmatic responsibilities fall under your role?

There is an actual job description with Dr. Eury. We were the liaisons between the SOE and the outlying cohorts (not on main campus). One of the reasons that SOE wanted quality control coordinators is because there was a disconnect. SOE wanted to provide a face and a name that they would know. I met once per semester with cohorts at western satellite campuses. I pulled students out of the classroom and asked the same set of 6 questions. I then filed report if there were issues for SOE. I was someone they could email or call and pay attention to their concerns. Provided SOE the info they needed to make informed decisions. It was a lot of fun.

Follow-up: At what point did you assume your responsibilities with the Master of School Administration program? Three years.

2. Explain your understanding of implementing the program processes as required in the Master of School Administration Blueprint.

All programs had to be revised, rethought, and revisioned. All of the faculty were part of that revisioning process. It was about thinking futuristically about how to best prepare school leaders. This was two pronged – knew we had to look at the school admin program. We did this with all of the undergraduate programs first. We knew internally that we needed to do it because of continuous improvement and viability; plus external need to redesign. We never said that we needed to redesign because of SBOE. We knew there was a lag between what we were doing and what principals needed in schools. We ended up running two programs at the same time. Old program was a cluster program, not a cohort program. Cluster program was at a site and folks were entering and completing at different times. Students started with



whatever course was being offered at that time. This was problematic with the new program because we wanted the research course to be at the beginning. The cohort program was more cohesive. Implementation took a little while because of ending the cluster program and moving to a cohort design. The cohort program came immediately after revisioning and then took a while in some cases because of the cluster program. We had to use a lot of adjunct instructors for a while.

3. Talk about how fidelity is achieved with regard to program implementation as required by the Blueprint.

You achieve fidelity by following the Blueprint. This transition happened while I was transitioning out; I wasn't part of implementing the Blueprint. Traveling around as the quality control coordinator, I saw fidelity. Candidates knew their courses; they knew which site; they knew books from the beginning. The only unknown was who was going to teach the course. Students knew from the start what was expected from them. In terms of the instructor sticking with what they were supposed to do, I did not see issues with them not implementing. Once I was told that the instructor "should have told us more" from a student. In terms of following the syllabi and doing what they were supposed to do, I did see an issue. There were more questions about the portfolio and TaskStream. Some instructors were more attuned to TaskStream than others. Those who were not attuned would bring people in to help with those questions. I would see Dave Shellman often travel to sites to bring classes up to speed with TaskStream.

4. To what extent have you seen difference in cohort groups with regard to their programmatic experiences? For example: internship differences.

- The big issue with TaskStream was really manipulation and maneuvering. Cohort members would help each other learn the platform. A lot of the folks in a cohort were in the same school so they could help each other. They became a cohesive unit and supportive unit – didn't matter if there was a celebration or issue – they were cohesive and helped one another. There were various levels but they helped each other level-out. I was really impressed when I would talk to the candidates about how they supported and helped one another. The cohort is a strong part of the revision.
5. To what extent have you seen differences in cohort groups with regard to outcomes? For example: project proficiency differences.

I only went once per semester and talked with the candidates. My focus mainly was on goals. Differences in proficiency with respect to graduation outcomes weren't part of my visit. During the last visit, I used an open ended question which was "what do you need to tell me with respect to the program (holistically) or what do I need to know that I can take back to the SOE?" They were pretty confident by the end; the stress came at the beginning in the first two semesters. They were stressed to complete at the end, but they were able to look back and see how they had grown and wish they had caught-on earlier. There will always be difference in proficiencies – you can see it and hear it – but they would talk about how they met the proficiency level and goals of the program. They would talk about how they were going to translate their learning and implement it in to their classroom or future job of lead teacher or assistant principal.

#### Debrief

How did the process work for you? What went well with this process? What could have gone better? The interview was fine. The only issue was thinking through questions that

weren't targeted at what I particularly did for the SOE. We managed to talk around them and it worked out fine.