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Jared S. Jones

Gardner-Webb University, jjones70@gardner-webb.edu

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EXAMINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATIONAL
EXPERIENCES OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

By
Jared S. Jones

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

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jared S. Jones under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Lesia Widener, EdD
Committee Chair

Date

Steve Laws, EdD
Methodologist

Date

Felicia Simmons, EdD
Content Specialist

Date

Steve Laws, EdD
College of Education Representative

Date

Prince Bull, PhD
Dean of the College of Education

Date

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Finally, I want to thank the principals who participated in this study. By providing meaningful professional development for aspiring principals, students for many years to come have the opportunity to obtain a quality education, led by transformative principal leaders. Our children deserve the best learning experience possible, and our principals are the catalyst that will not only foster nurturing learning environments but will propel our children into a bright future.

Abstract

EXAMINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF PREPARATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP. Jones, Jared S., 2022: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine what preparational experiences are necessary for assistant principals to effectively transition to the principalship. Fifteen principals completed a 21-item survey and answered seven interview questions to better understand how the North Carolina Standards for School Executives aligned with the daily tasks and responsibilities of school principals. The data also gathered principals' leadership perceptions, the impact of preparational experiences, and assistant principal preparation. Results from the study concluded that all seven primary North Carolina Standards for School Executives accurately reflected and aligned with the tasks and responsibilities that school principals encountered on a regular basis. Additionally, principals felt their preparational experiences as assistant principals directly related to their ability to lead as novice principals. Principals concluded that collaboration with colleagues and meaningful professional development played a valuable role in their success as school administrators. While the standards in which principals felt confident leading varied, they concluded that all seven standards are critical components of a successful leadership experience. Assistant principals should receive professional development on all seven standards that includes collaboration and experiential learning components to ensure a successful transition to the principalship.

Keywords: principal, assistant principal, preparation, professional development, North Carolina Standards for School Executives

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	12
Significance of the Study	13
Setting of the Study	14
Definition of Terms	14
Summary	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
Overview	18
History of the NCSSE	19
Standard 1: Strategic Leadership	24
Standard 2: Instructional Leadership	30
Standard 3: Cultural Leadership	33
Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership	36
Standard 5: Managerial Leadership	42
Standard 6: External Development Leadership	47
Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership	50
Summary	51
Chapter 3: Methodology	53
Research Questions	54
Participants	55
Research Design	56
Instrumentation	57
Procedures	60
Data Collection and Analysis	61
Summary	63
Chapter 4: Results	66
Purpose of the Study	66
Participants	67
Research Questions	69
Methodology	69
Overview of Survey Responses	70
Overview of Interview Responses	79
Connection to the Research Questions	90
Summary of the Findings	93
Chapter 5: Discussion	95
Introduction	95
Summary of Research	97
Implications for Practice	102
Summary of Implications	112
Limitations	113
Suggestions for Future Research	113
Final Reflection	115

References	118
Appendices	
A North Carolina Standards for School Executives	135
B Permission to Use Survey Instrument.....	148
C Examining Effective Practices Through the NCSSE.....	150
D Interview Questions	160
Tables	
1 Research Questions and Data Collection Table.....	63
2 Demographic Data and Attributes of Research Participants.....	68
3 Item Analysis of Tasks Performed.....	73
4 Principal Tasks Experienced Frequently to Almost all of the Time	76
5 NCSSE and the Percentage of Participants Who Experience Them Frequently or Almost Always	78
6 Overview of Interview Questions and Corresponding Themes	89

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was enacted in 2015 to replace the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act as the legal standard for which public educators would operate within, in order to increase the quality of educational outcomes (Jimenez & Sargrad, 2017). Specifically, this legislation was enacted to ensure that all students have an opportunity to receive an education that is fair and equitable and focused on mitigating gaps in student achievement (ESSA, 2015). In order to reduce gaps in student academic achievement levels, it is important to fully understand the role of school-level leadership, specifically focusing on the role of the principal and assistant principal and their impact on student achievement.

Traditionally, the level of student academic achievement has been directly tied to the quality of the classroom teacher. In fact, the quality of the classroom teacher is the number one factor that influences student achievement (Rice, 2003). Teachers spend a great deal of time and energy planning and executing a differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Additionally, they build classroom environments that are conducive to learning, and they build relationships with students that provide the foundation for success. While the impact of the classroom teacher is critical, the principal also plays an important role in student achievement. Gendron (2018) posited that when accounting for school-related factors, the classroom teacher has the biggest impact on student achievement and principal leadership has the second largest impact. However, Gendron noted that when examining low-performing schools, the principal has the greatest impact.

The role of the principal has shifted over time and continues to evolve in order to

meet the needs of students, teachers, and the communities in which they serve. The Wallace Foundation (2013) stated that traditional school leadership positions closely resembled those of a manager who primarily oversaw the school transportation program, maintenance and facilities, and textbook distribution. Over time, the role of the principal has become increasingly more important and something that school districts need to recognize and invest in in order to maximize student achievement. No longer is a principal simply a “manager” of the school, but instead, an entrusted leader who is visionary and can deliver on a myriad of responsibilities and expectations.

In today’s climate of heightened expectations, principals are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. They need to be educational visionaries; instructional and curriculum leaders; assessment experts; disciplinarians; community builders; public relations experts; budget analysts; facility managers; special program administrators; and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. (Bartoletti & Connelly, 2013, p. 2)

This paradigm shift of the principal’s role in creating transformational change places greater emphasis on school leadership and requires districts to examine principal preparedness and the district’s role in equipping principals with the skills needed to lead their respective schools in the 21st century. Levin et al. (2019) noted that principals are asked to fulfill duties that are far-reaching and have a profound impact on student success, staff and student morale, social-emotional learning, and teacher turnover. Districts must take a deeper look into their own school and district-level professional development plans for school administrators to ensure they are providing genuine, all-encompassing experiences that can impact high-level change.

Not only should professional development be an integral part of a district's long-term strategic planning for current principals, but it is also necessary that districts take an in-depth look at how they can incorporate specific experiences that will prepare assistant principals to fulfill the role of principal. Novice principals who do not have an accurate understanding of the complexities of the principalship may experience failure early in their tenure due to inadequate preparation. As day-to-day demands become more complex and the workload increases for school principals, so does the turnover rate that is sweeping many of the nation's school districts. As Levin et al. (2019) stated,

Principal turnover is a serious issue across the country. A 2017 national survey of public school principals found that, overall, approximately 18 percent of principals had left their position since the year before. In high-poverty schools, the turnover rate was 21 percent. (p. 3)

It is alarming to note that principal leadership is more important now than it ever has been and that in the same breath, the United States and the state of North Carolina, specifically, face principal turnover rates that could cause cascading effects on student achievement. Principal turnover not only impacts the school's leadership at the highest level, but it can also negatively affect other significant change agents within the school, such as teacher retention (Harbatkin & Henry, 2019).

In most districts, the natural progression of a school leader begins as an assistant principal and then onto the principalship if and when they are equipped to lead a school in that role. How, then, are districts preparing incoming principals, typically assistant principals, to take on the complex challenges that accompany school leadership?

Problem Statement

Santelli (2018) asserted that research indicates not all principals feel adequately prepared to lead their schools and they did not have a true sense of what the responsibilities entailed prior to being in the role. Specifically, Santelli noted that principals believe their formal training did not adequately prepare them for the principalship. It was noted that over 65% of school executives found their formal training programs did not have a realistic grasp of the day-to-day demands of the position. Santelli posited that this gap in perceived preparation versus reality could be why the turnover rate for school executives is so high.

Formal school administrator training programs certainly hold a valuable place in their role of principal preparation; however, they should not be perceived as the only mode of preparation for principals. While it should be considered, there are many other forms of training that can prepare educational leaders for the principalship. Research indicated there are many ways to build leadership capacity within school administrators. These opportunities include formal training programs, effective onboarding for novice administrators, and a strong mentoring program (Levin et al., 2020). As a direct report to the principal, assistant principals often fulfill duties that are assigned to them by the principal and are oftentimes managerial in nature. Shifting this mindset to include all-encompassing preparational experiences is critical for principal preparation and support.

The primary goal of this study was to determine whether or not leadership experiences in a rural, North Carolina school district effectively prepare aspiring school leaders for the successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role. The demands that are placed on the school principal are ever-changing; however, this study

looked specifically at the alignment of the day-to-day experiences as it relates to the implementation of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (NCSSE).

Without the proper training and exposure to standards-based experiences, principals will have an increasingly difficult time leading transformational schools. This focus on professional development for school administrators, especially assistant principals, should be a priority in order to recruit and retain effective principals. When considering increased demands, along with insufficient training and support, many principals felt that their job is not sustainable, thus contributing to the increased turnover across the state and nation (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Due to this reality, it is critical for districts to take the initiative to equip and support school executives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of current school principals to determine how their daily tasks aligned with the NCSSE and to examine their perceived leadership capacity to implement the NCSSE in their respective schools. As part of North Carolina's ESSA plan to strengthen school leadership, the NCSSE serves as a pathway to guide principals' professional growth (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI] & North Carolina State Board of Education [NCSBE], 2013). Additionally, the standards that have been established also align with the self-assessment and evaluation rubrics within which administrators operate. This allows principals to align their focus to their professional growth plans and pinpoint specific areas to broaden the scope of their leadership capabilities. The standards (Appendix A) are intended to guide the daily work of school-based principals in their efforts to lead schools out of the status quo. These standards require leaders to go beyond the required

managerial scope of work that is required to operate a school at its most basic level and shift to a multi-faceted systems approach to leadership in which principals empower stakeholders to be active participants in the change itself.

If, in fact, these standards, when implemented effectively, contribute to successful student and school performance, then school districts, including building-level principals, should provide preparational experiences for assistant principals that directly align with the standards. This study provides insight into the relationship between principal readiness, preparational experiences as an assistant principal, and the NCSSE. The North Carolina standards also tie directly to the evaluation rubric instrument on which assistant principals and principals are regularly evaluated. This further proves the importance of aligning the daily experiences of assistant principals with the standards and ensuring appropriate support and professional development are offered by school districts. Additionally, principals provided deeper insight into specific standards that should be focused on during the assistant principalship to better prepare future principals.

The responsibilities of the school principal have changed over the years and continue to evolve, especially with the increase in student needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The daily duties of principals are continuing to change and take on a different look as educational leaders meet the current needs of students.

School principals are essential for ensuring that students have access to strong educational opportunities. They shape a vision of academic success for all students; create a climate hospitable to education; cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults feel empowered to realize their schools' visions; guide instructional decisions that improve teaching and learning; and manage

people, data, and processes to foster school improvement. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its revelation of stark inequities in educational opportunity, the role of the principal has become even more critical in meeting students' needs. (Levin et al., 2020, p. 1)

The responsibility of educational leaders to meet the needs mentioned above is critical; however, it should be noted that many of the skills needed to meet the needs of students, staff, and community members are already embedded into the NCSSE standards and evaluation rubric.

For the purpose of this study, I focused on Standards 1-7. Standard 8, Academic Achievement Leadership, was not included, as it is not part of the principal's evaluation process directly but rather a reflection of the school-wide student growth data.

Additionally, Standard 8 does not include specific practices like the other standards. As I delved deeper into these seven standards, it was evident that they were comprehensive in nature and provided a framework for principals and assistant principals in which to operate.

The seven standards that school leaders are responsible for implementing have been established by NCDPI and NCSBE (2015):

1. Strategic Leadership
2. Instructional Leadership
3. Cultural Leadership
4. Human Resource Leadership
5. Managerial Leadership
6. External Development Leadership

7. Micropolitical Leadership

Strategic Leadership

Establishing a collective vision within an organization is a critical part of leading with strategy. Having an aligned vision ensures that all stakeholders are working with one another toward the same goals (Lynch, 2016). Effective strategic leadership practices will allow students, staff, and community members to establish core values and beliefs that guide the day-to-day work to ensure the vision and mission are realized. According to the American Institutes for Research (2014), schools that have principals who implement strategic leadership tend to perform better than those that do not. This is in part due to the principal's ability to identify current challenges, develop an actionable plan, and communicate the long-term vision for the school.

Instructional Leadership

The traditional role of the school principal has evolved over time and now requires more focus on instructional leadership. In order to fully serve as the instructional point person, principals must have a solid understanding of how to oversee, evaluate, and prescribe interventions that will support the improvement of teaching and learning within the school (Xu, 2018). Lunenburg (2010) suggested that in order for principals to be effective instructional leaders, they must focus on learning; encourage collaborations; analyze data to improve learning; provide support to staff; and align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Assistant principals are often given more managerial responsibilities; however, Lunenburg noted that in order to impact student achievement at a high level, principals must be the instructional leaders in their buildings. It is critical then that assistant principals gain experiences that require them to navigate complex

responsibilities that they will face as school principals and not be shielded from the multifaceted requirements of the job. Educational leaders must prioritize their daily tasks to reflect what is important to them. Many principals get bombarded with daily operational tasks that they do not spend enough time being the instructional leader of their building. In order to effectively operate as the instructional leader, it is important for principals to set aside some of the administrative tasks that consume their day and focus on improving pedagogical practices that impact learning (Jenkins, 2009). Understanding how to balance the demands of the principalship allowed for a more successful experience for staff and students.

Cultural Leadership

Creating a school culture that is conducive to student learning should be a priority for principals. Eller and Eller (2017) concluded that the cultural makeup of the school represents what the school is at its core. Additionally, the culture impacts all facets of the school day and can impact the school's ability to implement meaningful change that can impact the success of the students. When a first-year principal takes over a school, there is already a culture in place, whether good or bad. An effective leader must be able to evaluate and re-culture the school if needed, in order to align the school's mission and vision and to ensure the work within the school has meaning and purpose (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

School safety and order are top priorities for educational leaders; however, they should not be confused with school culture altogether. While safety and order can certainly impact school culture, there is much more that makes up the culture of a school. The components of school culture are not always explicit but often include the

understood expectations for students and staff that impact their daily interactions with one another, as well as their views about the school in general. In addition, the approach students and staff take to working together, addressing concerns, and formulating solutions often leads to the rules and guidelines, as well as overall operating standards students and staff navigate daily (Gordana 2020). Creating cultural change does not happen quickly and oftentimes gets overlooked by principals because of the many other responsibilities principals face. While the other duties assigned to the principal should not be overlooked, investing time, energy, and resources into creating a positive culture is vital to the success of the school (Habegger, 2008).

Human Resource Leadership

The human resource leadership standard is one of the most critical components principals must strive to understand. LaMarco (2018) suggested that the ability to understand human capital is the most important skill for leaders to possess because schools must continually develop the professional capacity within the organization if they want to achieve at maximum levels. Due to the general makeup of schools that require collaboration and collective responsibility to produce high-quality outcomes, principals must be able to cultivate relationships, nurture, and build community within their personnel.

School principals are charged with planning and implementing professional development and professional learning communities (PLCs) that will impact student achievement as part of the human resource standard. They are also responsible for recruiting, hiring, placing, and supporting staff members in their buildings. Additionally, they are to evaluate performance regularly and provide valuable feedback to staff

members that align with the school's vision (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

Managerial Leadership

The managerial leadership responsibilities principals are required to fulfill are vast; however, they are essential to the success of a school. Managerial leadership includes but is not limited to creating processes that relate to school finance/budgeting, systematic communications, master scheduling, conflict resolution, and creating school-wide rules and expectations (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015). Assistant principals are often relegated to managerial tasks, specifically student discipline, transportation, and other administrative tasks, so the principal can focus on the instructional vision for the school (Murphy, 2021).

External Development Leadership

In an effort to maximize student achievement and provide opportunities for students that extend beyond the classroom, principals must make concerted efforts to build relationships with external stakeholders. These relationships often start with the school principal engaging business leaders, faith-based organizations, local nonprofits, community organizations, and parents in meaningful conversation, built on trust, about their role in increasing student achievement (deFur, 2012). Costelloe and Cheng (2016) asserted that external partnerships can provide varying support opportunities that align with the school's vision for student success by engaging students in extracurricular learning experiences. Additionally, Costelloe and Cheng concluded that principals and districts must have processes in place to support and manage these partnerships to ensure a positive impact.

Micropolitical Leadership

As principals initiate change within their respective schools, they must understand the importance of micropolitical leadership. First-year principals, in particular, need to pay special attention to the relationships within the school community to determine how to navigate internal political structures in order to maximize change (Caruso, 2013). Principals should build relationships with teachers and staff to better understand their contributions to the school and be able to leverage their strengths to ensure the school's vision becomes a reality (NCSBE, 2006).

Research Questions

This study examined experiences of school principals to determine if they built leadership capacity as it relates to the NCSSE. The research conducted in this work provided valuable insights into the day-to-day assignments and tasks that principals are asked to perform. Additionally, the goal of this study was to examine the tasks in relation to the standards school principals were expected to fulfill. The following research question, including Sub-Questions 1, 2, and 3, guided this study:

What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?

1. How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?
2. How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?
3. What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the

NCSSE?

Significance of the Study

This mixed methods study examined the perceptions of leadership capacity within school principals as it relates to the NCSSE. Specifically, the research aimed to determine if their day-to-day responsibilities adequately prepared them for the principalship. The results of this study were used to build a district-wide professional development model that prepares assistant principals to effectively impact instruction within the school when the opportunity arises to become the lead administrator (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). The information gathered in this study also aided in establishing a district-wide mentorship program that ensures principals provide their assistant principals with opportunities that will carry over into the principalship. Research is clear that well-prepared school leaders have a better experience and lead schools with lower turnover rates than principals who are inadequately prepared. Principals are even more successful when they are involved in a meaningful mentorship program (Levin & Bradley, 2019).

This study also brought to light the importance work-based experiences have on the overall preparation and success of school administrators. As principals navigate a myriad of responsibilities and interactions throughout their day, each interaction can be used as a preparational tool as long as principals take time to coach and mentor their assistant principals effectively. Additionally, first-year principals deserve ongoing support and professional development to continue their growth as educational leaders. These data helped the district plan and deliver programming to support this ongoing need. Principals and assistant principals are held accountable to the NCSSE, and it is the district's responsibility to ensure that each educational leader has the capacity to fulfill

the responsibilities that fall within those standards.

Setting of the Study

This study took place in a small, rural school district in northwest North Carolina. The district had approximately 5,500 students who spanned from pre-K through 12th grade. The district included 19 schools: three traditional high schools, three middle schools, 11 elementary schools, one alternative middle/high school, and one early college high school. Within the district, there were 29 school administrators, including 19 principals and 10 assistant principals. The participants consisted of 15 principals from across the school district. Three principals led at the high school level, three at the middle school level, 11 at the elementary level, and one at the middle/high level. All principals who participated in this research were licensed school administrators in the state of North Carolina. The district had a leadership team that lacked experience; therefore, this research proved valuable to the district as it looked to implement effective programming to build capacity within the leadership team.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions of terms were intended to provide clarity to the readers in an effort to fully understand the purpose and findings of this study.

Assistant Principal

School executive responsible for implementing the vision and mission of the school under the direction of the principal.

Cultural Leadership

A leadership standard that school executives demonstrate in an effort to value traditions and rituals of a school culture, in an effort to build collaboration, school pride,

and a sense of belonging to the school community (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

External Development Leadership

A leadership standard that school executives demonstrate to build parent and community partnerships and to comply with district, state, and federal mandates (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

Human Resource Leadership

A leadership standard that school executives demonstrate for effective hiring, retention, and evaluation practices. It also consists of leading school-wide processes to implement professional development and PLCs (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

Instructional Leadership

A leadership standard in which school executives demonstrate the knowledge of curriculum and instruction and the ability to create systems that build capacity and hold teachers accountable for delivering quality pedagogical practices (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

Managerial Leadership

A leadership standard in which school executives demonstrate the ability to successfully implement systems, protocols, and procedures to effectively communicate, problem solve, and provide logistical support in all areas within the school (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

Micropolitical Leadership

A leadership standard in which school executives demonstrate the ability to implement systems that value the strengths of all staff members, promote diversity, and are grounded in positive, professional relationships within the school (NCDPI & NCSBE,

2013).

Strategic Leadership

A leadership standard in which school executives demonstrate the ability to improve student achievement by establishing a clear and aligned mission and vision for the school (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013).

First-Year Principal

A school executive, in their first year in the position, who is responsible for carrying out the NCSSE in an effort to improve student achievement within the school.

Summary

This research focused on the preparation of school leaders to ensure the transition from the assistant principal to the principal position was a successful experience. To complete this, I measured their perceived leadership capacity as it related to Standards 1-7 of the NCSSE. Additionally, I examined how their day-to-day responsibilities aligned with the seven executive standards to determine if they received adequate training and experience within all seven standards. Furthermore, this study provided information on the role of the principal in training, mentoring, and providing experiences to their assistant principals to build their leadership capacity around all standards.

NCDPI and NCSBE have established eight standards for principals and assistant principals; however, this study only focused on Standards 1-7. This was because Standard 8, Academic Achievement Leadership, was a reflection of the school-wide growth model for educator effectiveness and was not included in the self-assessment or the overall principal evaluation and did not include specific principal practices.

The role of the school administrator has changed over time and has become more

complex in nature. The duties and responsibilities extended beyond the traditional managerial scope of the position and into a much deeper role that required a distinctive set of skills. Because school principals had a profound impact on the success of their respective schools, districts and school leaders should invest the appropriate resources to equip future principals to lead change. For this reason, an in-depth study of school principal perceptions of their leadership capacity, based on the seven NCSSE, was administered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived leadership effectiveness of current school principals as it related to the seven primary standards found in the NCSSE. It was also my goal to determine how their perceived leadership effectiveness was impacted through day-to-day experiences and what specific preparational tasks might have enhanced their perceptions of leadership ability. “Although there are many influences on a school executive’s development, these standards will serve as an important tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21st century” (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013, p. 3). As previously stated, the NCSSE consists of eight standards; however, this body of work focused only on the seven standards on which principals are evaluated annually and those that were aligned with their self-assessment and professional development plans:

1. Strategic Leadership
2. Instructional Leadership
3. Cultural Leadership
4. Human Resource Leadership
5. Managerial Leadership
6. External Development Leadership
7. Micropolitical Leadership

These standards are used to support school executives in their quest to lead transformational schools out of the status quo. As NCDPI and NCSBE (2013) stated,

Public education's changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader -- an executive instead of an administrator. No longer are school leaders just maintaining the status quo by managing complex operations but just like their colleagues in business, they must be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. Schools need executives who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children. (p. 1)

The standards served as a guide to assist school executives in effectively improving the performance of their respective organizations. The review of literature looked deeper into each standard as it related to its importance within executive leadership.

History of the NCSSE

The purpose of the standards is to lead school administrators as they navigate the daily tasks of being a school leader. The standards contain specific implementation efforts that principals should align with their daily work, as well as provide evidences school administrators should produce to ensure they are meeting the expectations within the standards (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013). NCSBE has been clear in its strategic plan that every school needs a quality principal who can support student needs. Additionally, North Carolina has committed to providing professional development and support to ensure every student is equipped with a quality principal. The executive standards not only serve as a tool to lead successful schools but also as the instrument on which school

administrators are evaluated each year. The evaluation criteria mirror the practices and artifacts within the standards and were directly tied to the administrators' professional development plans (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

The executive standards also serve other purposes that intend to advance education, directly relating to student achievement and organizational success. Specifically, preservice training principals received in their formal education is directly related to the executive standards. Institutions of higher learning use the standards to design their curriculum as they prepare school leaders. Additionally, districts should use the executive standards to reflect on their ability to support school administrators in the delivery of the practices within the standards. While principals are directly responsible for implementing the related practices at the ground level, it is imperative boards of education and district leaders align their priorities with the core tenants of the NCSSE that have been identified as best practices for increasing student achievement (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015). The seven priority standards that were identified were originally included in the findings from a study on the school principalship funded by The Wallace Foundation (2013). There have been many theoretical frameworks school principals have used over time to lead schools; however, this particular study examined what principals actually did on a daily basis, focusing on the practical application of school leaders, which, in turn, led to the practices identified in the NCSSE that we use today (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

Portin et al. (2003) examined 21 schools across various states in search of what principals actually did on a daily basis in their respective schools. The study did not gravitate toward a specific type of principal or school but instead looked at a variety of

school systems, including public, private, charter, magnet, and others. Additionally, the study examined a wide range of principal leaders: some who were successful and some who were not. Portin et al. concluded that there are five major functions that contribute to the success of the school principal and should be identified as priorities for school systems in regard to principal development. These conclusions played an integral role in the development of the executive standards that are currently used by school leaders in North Carolina.

The Principal as Diagnostician

Portin et al. (2003) pointed out that school principals often find themselves diagnosing problems within the school and are tasked with prescribing appropriate interventions. However, schools have different needs, and the ability of principals to recognize the problem and filter through possible solutions to pinpoint the one that will move the school forward is paramount for school leaders. Visone (2018) upheld the notion that principals need to be equipped with situational awareness to be able to anticipate problems and use proactive measures to solve problems. Additionally, principals encounter a myriad of challenges and must consider many factors, as well as the various groups within the school that will be impacted, before determining the appropriate plan of action when confronted with a problem.

Leading a School, Inside and Out

In the research findings, Portin et al. (2003) found that many principals, teachers, and other staff members identified similar leadership practices that contribute to the overall success of the school. While results ranged from attending athletic events to running meetings to raising money, seven themes were consistently identified as core

practices of school principals. These seven critical functions are what we now know as the seven primary standards in the NCSSE:

- Instructional Leadership
- Cultural Leadership
- Managerial Leadership
- Human Resource Leadership
- Strategic Leadership
- External Development Leadership
- Micropolitical Leadership

The standards identified were not meant to be approached in isolation, but rather from a collaborative lens. Principals must understand how each of these standards is connected and impacts one another. These seven primary functions will be expanded on in subsequent sections.

More Than a “One-Man Band”

Portin et al. (2003) concluded that while principals are faced with challenging demands, they do not have to face them alone. The principal is ultimately responsible for the success of the school; however, collective responsibility should be placed on administrators, teachers, and community members to ensure the school is equipped to meet school needs. Grissom et al. (2021) asserted that great principals should foster collaboration in their respective schools. This includes implementing PLCs but also extends beyond teaching and learning to impact the overall operation of the school. School principals are responsible for implementation efforts of the seven standards; however, they are encouraged to distribute leadership opportunities to other stakeholders

within the school and provide collaborative efforts for students, staff, and parents to operate within.

Governance Matters

Collaboration is critical for effective implementation of the seven standards. Sharing leadership responsibilities should be the focus for principals; however, Portin et al. (2003) noted that the school's ability to govern the implementation structure is equally important. All organizations have a structure they operate within, but not all have a structure that allows for collaboration and collective efforts. Specifically, the study noted that the governance structures within the district have a direct impact on whether or not principals and their teams can operate effectively within the seven standards.

Learning by Doing

Cunningham et al. (2018) recognized that school leadership requires formal education-based training in order to equip school leaders with tools to lead successful schools. While important nonetheless, formal preparation programs do not provide enough on-the-job experiences needed for principals to effectively navigate the complexities they face regularly. Specifically, the power of professional learning experiences can play an integral role in an administrator's ability to face problems in K-12 schools. Portin et al. (2003) stated that an overwhelming majority of administrators agree that their formal training had little to no impact on their ability to perform their assigned duties. Instead, they attributed their skillset to the preparational experiences and mentorships they encountered on the job. This concept is reinforced by NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) in their approach to provide professional growth opportunities to school administrators through the NCSSE, evaluation rubric, and professional development plan.

Standard 1: Strategic Leadership

Standard 1, Strategic Leadership, is broken down into four elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element A: School Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals
- Element B: Leading Change
- Element C: School Improvement Plan
- Element D. Distributive Leadership

Strategic planning is held to be one among a number of organizational development approaches. While the strategy can be a framework to set future direction and action, it can also be used to judge current activities. A strategically focused school is educationally effective in the short term but also has a clear set of processes to translate the core purpose and vision into an excellent educational provision that is sustainable over time (Lynch, 2016).

It is important that educational leaders understand that strategic leadership plays an important role in student achievement. As Quong and Walker (2010) concluded, strategic leadership should include shifting the organization's structure and direction, when needed, to ensure the established goals are met. In education, this translates to establishing structures and practices that maximize student achievement and are sustainable for years to come. Strategic leadership includes four specific elements that school executives should use to create a successful school environment. NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) emphasized the need to create an environment that welcomes constructive, actionable feedback in an effort to build upon the core values and ideas and to repurpose itself when needed. It is also critical that leaders are able to formulate a

roadmap for moving the school toward the new, reestablished vision.

One critical element of strategic leadership is the ability to work collectively to formulate and execute a school's vision and mission. Organizations throughout the world, including schools, utilize strategic leadership to carry out their mission. Whenever individual leaders and teams utilize their resources to create aligned direction and buy-in from stakeholders, they tap into strategic leadership and help the organization to realize its potential (Hughes et al., 2014). The components of establishing direction include clarifying its mission, vision, and values. These ambitious tenets are important strategic components because they create opportunities for stakeholders to see, understand, and evaluate the multiple conditions that make up their respective schools (Hughes et al., 2014). A school's mission and vision play an integral role in student achievement, provided they are established on common values of all stakeholders. Vision and mission statements are often used interchangeably; however, it should be noted that a vision statement is typically a concise, easy-to-recall, collective direction of the school's future goals. In contrast, a mission statement provides the action steps needed to achieve the vision (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009).

Organizations, including schools, are made up of many ingredients that can alter their success; however, it is evident that a common piece that contributes to organizational success is a deep-rooted vision among stakeholders. However, as important as collective vision is to the success of a school, research shows that only one of every 10 students and staff can actually recite the vision of their respective schools (Owens, 2020). It is important that principals establish a quality vision statement that is meaningful to students, staff, and the community. University of Massachusetts Global

(2020) posited that a strong vision statement can help formulate a clear understanding of the organization's future aspirations and goals. Principals should not develop a vision and mission statement independently but should instead include help from internal and external stakeholders. Teacher Education Through School-Based Support in India (n.d.) supported the notion that teachers, students, and their parents and families, as well as community leaders, should be included in the vision-building process. The Teacher Education Through School-Based Support in India went on to say,

If stakeholders are to support the school's development, they need to be involved in understanding and developing the school's vision. Among the stakeholders will be people with varying degrees of education and understanding of what is required of modern schools. It is the responsibility of the school leader to inform and support their development. This may be challenging, especially if the vision involves improvement that is different from what has been historically provided. In one context, it may be right for the school leader to be quite directive and this may be appreciated by the school community; in a different context, such an approach may be resented and lead to problems. (p. 8)

As a novice administrator, gaining preparational experiences to develop the applicable strategic leadership skills needed to navigate the re-culturing of a school's mission and vision is critical to the success of the school and the administrator. This responsibility falls on the principal to mentor their assistant principals and mentee principals. Hutton (2020) stated,

The responsibilities of school leadership are simply too varied and too numerous to continue the hierarchical leadership model found in most schools. Lead

principals must be willing to share leadership, autonomy, and responsibilities with their assistant principals, who are colleagues and credentialed principals.

Assistant principals are, first and foremost, principals who work alongside their lead principals to fulfill the visions and missions of their schools. Embracing this paradigm shift will increase and strengthen the capacity of school leadership teams. Lead principals should make a conscious effort to provide work-life activities that prepare assistant principals for increased leadership responsibilities.

(p. 2)

As novice administrators prepare to lead schools, they must be able to lead change in their buildings and not simply manage the school. The ability to lead change, another critical element within strategic leadership, requires school executives to have the ability to positively impact student achievement by identifying growth opportunities and by articulating specific improvement strategies and the overarching vision throughout the school community (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2008). Working alongside stakeholders is an important step in establishing the vision, mission, and goals of the school. In fact, IRIS Center (2022) reminded us that although schools may have a great vision statement, it is of little value if it is not shared among stakeholders. The IRIS Center continued by offering five specific strategies school leaders should consider as part of their communication plan:

- Liaise with members of various stakeholder groups within the school (e.g., instructional staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc.) about the school's vision
- Communicate the vision to external partners who have a vested interest in the

school (e.g., parents, business leaders, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, etc.)

- Ensure the vision is concise, clear, and can be easily communicated by stakeholders
- Exhaust any and all outlets of communication (e.g., pamphlets, publications, email, website, social media) to formally and informally communicate the new vision
- Prepare staff to answer questions from community members about the vision and the implications of implementation

Once a school's direction is set, through a vision and mission statement, and school goals are established, a successful implementation plan must follow. Schmoker (2016) articulated there is a direct relationship between the amount of time school leaders devote to a successful implementation plan and the success of the school's goals themselves. Schmoker (2016) also stated school leaders should narrow their focus and be cautious not to be distracted by secondary tasks which can take time away from the top priorities, such as implementation efforts throughout the school. As school executives, principals must be able to manage the myriad of responsibilities that compete with their time on any given day to ensure they stay committed to the implementation of the school's mission, vision, and goals.

While principals are responsible for ensuring all the NCSSE, including strategic leadership, are in full operation at their respective schools, they are not required to implement all standards themselves. They must rely on strategic, distributed leadership that incorporates teachers, parents, students, and community members in the school

improvement process and create an environment that values differing perspectives. The idea of strategic, distributed leadership does not exclusively pertain to schools but also top-performing organizations throughout the world. Hughes et al. (2014) asserted that strategic thinking is behind the success of many organizations, including Apple. Hughes et al. proved the importance of distributed leadership by recalling Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple, often utilized the ideas of multiple employees in the strategic growth process. The mastermind behind Apple's success would involve the company's most trusted employees to take part in the development of the company's long-term vision and actionable steps the company should take. To guide school administrators through a similar strategic thinking process incorporating distributive leadership, NCDPI and NCSBE (2013) included the school improvement plan (SIP) as a critical element of strategic leadership.

A SIP is considered a best-practice tool that guides the school improvement process by identifying goals, outcomes for success, and details on how and who is responsible for carrying out specific actions with the SIP (Fernandez, 2009). Although SIPs are required, or strongly recommended, for nearly every school in the United States, many do not experience successful goal completion as outlined in their SIP. Some schools simply treat the SIP process as a "box" to be checked off each year, with little intention of follow-through. Dunaway et al. (2012) conducted a study that delved deeper into the SIP process, specifically the perceptions of its value and purpose. In their study, which was conducted in a North Carolina school district, nearly all principals who were surveyed felt that the SIP process was valuable, whereas just above half of the teachers surveyed felt the same. Additionally, approximately 10% of teachers and principals felt

there was adequate parent representation within the SIP process. It is important that school administrators understand the value of collective visioning and take appropriate action to include valuable stakeholders as they practice distributive leadership through the school improvement process.

Standard 2: Instructional Leadership

Standard 2, Instructional Leadership, is broken down into two elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element A: Focus on Learning and Teaching, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Element B: Focus on Instructional Time

The role of school leaders continues to evolve, with much more emphasis placed on the ability of principals to lead instructional change to increase student achievement. NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) specifically noted that school executives should be responsible for setting forth expectations for teaching and learning and should create a climate that holds educators responsible for high-quality instructional practices. In addition to establishing high instructional standards, principals should also be active participants in the learning process. Fullan (2018) recommended the principal lead the learning process in the school by initiating conversations and practices that spark collective introspection into ways to improve upon pedagogical practices in their schools.

Data suggested that consistently high-performing schools are led by principals who emphasize and monitor instructional practices regularly. In these schools, principals facilitated data collection and analysis and worked collaboratively to prescribe interventions that improve opportunities for students to learn (Cross & Rice, 2000).

Principals have the second greatest impact on student achievement within the school building, behind teachers themselves. The impact of the principal as an instructional leader is supported by the School Administration Manager project, a large-scale effort spearheaded by The Wallace Foundation to shift principal responsibilities from less managerial in nature to more instructional. In turn, the results from the School Administration Manager project supported the notion that instructional leadership is a necessity for administrators if they want to improve student achievement (Turnbull et al., 2009). According to Walker (2009), this shift in focus led to higher student achievement and an increase in the perception of the principal as the instructional leader, not only from teachers but also from students and parents. This perception is important as schools shift from a top-down approach to an inclusive approach to teaching and learning. A school-wide instructional program should not be directed solely by the principal, but it should be collaborative and include parents and teachers in the process in order to maximize the impact on student achievement (Ezzani, 2019).

Instructional leadership can have profound effects on student achievement. Simmons (2019) found that there was a direct relationship between student reading achievement and school leaders who implement and model research-based instructional strategies regularly. Additionally, the study found teacher and principal perceptions of instructional leadership were positively related to student achievement and the overall effectiveness of the instructional program at their respective schools. Ezzani (2019) studied instructional practices at an elementary school in California and found having parents and community members who trust school leadership and believe in the instructional vision help create a culture of academic achievement and accountability.

School leaders face numerous responsibilities that inherently take away their time to lead instruction; therefore, they must be focused and intentional with their time and energy as they lead instructional advancement in their schools. One of the most effective strategies principals can use to impact student achievement is to invest in building PLCs. PLCs, when implemented correctly, are an idea that educators take collective responsibility for each student's educational achievement (DuFour et al., 2006). Moreover, this specific process requires relational trust to create an environment that includes collective lesson planning, instructional delivery, analyzing data, and collaborating on intervention strategies.

Collective teacher efficacy, fostered through effective PLC implementation, is something principals should strive to build within their schools, even though the process may not come naturally to many. For years, teachers have been given autonomy to operate in isolation and entrusted to make educational decisions regarding curriculum, instructional pedagogy, assessment, and interventions on their own (Schmoker, 2006). At one point in time, educational leaders thought they were treating teachers as professionals by letting them work alone, but they quickly realized true professionals thrive when they are surrounded by other experts sharing the same goal of improving student achievement. Through PLCs, professional educators had an opportunity to share instructional strategies, compare teaching practices, analyze common assessment data, and prescribe instructional strategies to meet the needs of struggling learners (DuFour et al., 2006; Schmoker, 2006). The impact this collaborative work had on student achievement was seen in the Basileo (2016) study on the impact of PLCs. In her study of more than 2,800 educators from 60 different schools throughout the United States, it was found not only

did effective PLCs positively impact student achievement, but PLCs also had a direct relationship with positive staff morale (Basileo, 2016). When teachers are given the framework to identify and solve problems as a collective unit, their self-perception to impact educational outcomes greatly increased (Donohoo, 2017).

As principals prepare to lead student achievement initiatives, they must be trained and equipped to build processes within the school that embody high levels of relational trust. Collaboration and trust, along with goal setting and teacher autonomy laid the foundation for high-functioning PLCs to take place, thus positively impacting student achievement (Hallam et al., 2015). Principals' actions and behaviors have a profound impact on the culture within a school. When a school's culture is hindered by a lack of relational trust, mistreatment, micromanagement, or no personal regard for the people within the school, it is nearly impossible for students and staff to perform to the level at which they are capable (Moses, 2019).

Standard 3: Cultural Leadership

Standard 3, Cultural Leadership, is broken down into four elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element a. Focus on Collaborative Work Environment
- Element b. School Culture and Identity
- Element c. Acknowledges Failures, Celebrates Accomplishments and Rewards
- Element d. Efficacy and Empowerment

Establishing a positive school culture should be a priority for any new school leader. A major component of a positive culture is to ensure leadership is a shared responsibility

and one that prioritizes collaborative interactions within the organization (Shafer, 2018). In addition, Shafer (2018) highlighted the importance of the school principal in influencing the school culture through beliefs and assumptions, establishing values, creating expectations, specifying particular behavioral patterns, and providing evidence of desired behaviors within the school.

The impact culture plays within a school extends beyond the classroom and impacts every aspect of a student's school experience. Howard (2010) studied the relationship between school culture and the school library program. In his case study of four nationally recognized school library programs, Howard found each school embodied a collaborative environment in which teams worked together. Howard also found each of the four schools was led by principals who exhibited collaborative leadership characteristics and also held their students and staff to high academic expectations. These high expectations included both school-wide and individual goal setting around a variety of academic achievement indicators.

Haberman (2013) recognized the importance of organizational culture, not only in schools but also throughout business organizations. In his article, Haberman compared and contrasted the importance of organizational culture and its impact on performance, staff turnover, and the overall success of the organization. Educational leaders should spend as much time developing skills impacting culture as they do technical skills pertaining to the job. Culture drives innovation and creativity, and when coupled with a collaborative and collegial environment, teachers and students will thrive (Haberman, 2013). Sparks (2020) provided additional insight into the need for principals to understand the importance of interpersonal relationships within a school and the impact

those relationships can have on student performance and school culture. Quality professional development equipped administrators with the skills necessary to identify and respond to cultural needs within a school (Sparks, 2020).

The relationship between organizational culture and performance is not a new idea; however, recent changes in educational oversight have shifted the focus of administrators away from people and relationships and closer to programmatic, prescriptive programming (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Specifically, educators have been challenged to quickly fix underperforming schools through curriculum redesign, research-based teaching practices, and increased assessments. While these responses were rolled out with good intentions, placing too much emphasis on them placed a damper on creativity, teacher autonomy, and collaboration, thus negatively impacting the culture for students and staff (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

With the principal turnover rate hovering around 20% nationwide, the challenge for school principals to identify or establish cultural norms within a school can be daunting. On average, principals stay at the same school for only 4 years before passing the baton to another administrator (Bradley & Levin, 2019). This presents challenges for new principals and also places emphasis on district leadership to build capacity within assistant principals to be able to effectively lead the culture within a school. Specifically, with the increase in legislative accountability, principals should have the skills needed to improve academic achievement but also be able to hold true to the values, routines, traditions, and rituals of their respective schools. This is especially true when these elements of school culture are not always easy to define and take time to implement (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Transitioning an organization's culture can take years to implement and requires a commitment not only from the leader but also from the employees themselves. Moreover, the following elements of organizational culture were identified by Coleman (2017).

They include a clear and concise vision built on purpose; articulated values aligning with the vision; practices that support the values; inclusive recruitment and personnel support plan; a historical connection tied to the origins of the organization; often through symbols and storytelling; and lastly, an environment that promotes collaboration and collegiality. When these cultural elements are implemented effectively, performance can increase significantly within the organization (Coleman, 2017).

Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership

Standard 4, Human Resource Leadership, is broken down into three elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element A: Professional Development/Learning Communities
- Element B: Recruiting, Hiring, Placing and Mentoring of staff
- Element C: Teacher and Staff Evaluation

Many of the NCSSE can be captured by the organizational leadership structure defined by Bolman and Deal (2008). Bolman and Deal detailed the various frames of reference leaders should use. Specifically, the human resources frame is one that connects the human capital needs of the organization. Like most organizations, there is a reciprocal need between the organization and the people who work within it. Each entity needs the other in order to be successful; however, if the right conditions are not aligned, both will suffer (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Kouzes and Posner (2017) gave support to the idea that leaders have a

responsibility to grow and develop their employees. Specifically, Kouzes and Posner detailed an instance in which a company experienced a transition in upper-management personnel. A recently hired manager came in with a leadership style that the company was not used to. The new manager involved the team of employees in the company's decision-making process and gave them responsibility and autonomy to work within the company's shared vision. Shifting power away from the company's formal leadership and to the employees who were responsible for producing outcomes, drastically improved their self-determination and confidence levels. This paradigm shift in leadership philosophy requires leaders to develop competence in their employees so they feel confident in their abilities. Leaders should focus on developing skills and giving others control over the organization's productivity, thus cultivating leadership within the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Certainly, school leaders are responsible for producing much more than a "product"; however, this approach to human resource development is necessary for schools to realize their goals for increasing student achievement. In order to empower teachers and build their confidence, principals should construct a school culture that supports interdependence, collective leadership responsibility, and a focus on building capacity within all teachers (Hadden, 2007). Administrators should not get caught up in the traditional "one-size-fits-all," sit-and-get, lecture-style professional development. Instead, principals should converse regularly with staff members to gauge relevant professional development needs, encourage teacher-leadership within the school and empower teachers to share their practices with others, and create time for calibration to determine if the professional development is fulfilling the intended outcomes (Canle,

2020).

The Wallace Foundation (2013) examined the principal's role as the comprehensive leader within the school. The Wallace Foundation identified specific attributes that contribute to a principal's success as it relates to student achievement, staff growth, and the overall instructional climate throughout various schools. According to The Wallace Foundation principals played an impactful role in creating a climate of collaboration by committing time and resources to PLCs and establishing a culture of collective responsibility in which all staff members share the commitment to the school's academic growth. In addition, they were in tune with the professional development needs of their classrooms and provided regular feedback to teachers on their instructional practices.

Instructional coaching is a form of professional development that has been shown to positively impact professional practice, thus increasing student achievement. Professional coaching refers to an ongoing collaborative conversation between the principal and teacher that is focused on student learning, teaching practices, and altering behaviors to ensure substantive academic achievement is realized (Knight et al., 2018). Knight et al. (2018) continued by emphasizing the importance of establishing partnerships between administrators and teachers that are reciprocal, opening the door for active listening, asking impactful questions, and engaging in two-way conversations that enact trust, confidence, and a growth mindset within teachers.

Coaching is also common in the business world. Often termed "executive coaching," this idea serves the same purpose: to increase productivity by increasing self-awareness and responsibility. Additionally, these partnerships involve two-way

conversations focused on growth and development, in order to maximize the productivity of the employee (Lai & Palmer, 2019). Executive coaching has become commonplace for many business executives as well. In a study of more than 70 business executives who have an executive coach, it was evident that those who received coaching reaped significant benefits (Longenecker & McCartney, 2020). Through personal interviews and focus groups, these business leaders indicated that benefits included an increase in self-awareness, encouragement and support, critical feedback that allowed the leader to remain aligned with the vision of the organization, increased their emotional intelligence, and a gave a stronger sense of teamwork and collaboration in the work environment.

Establishing school-wide PLCs is another element of human resource leadership that principals should be equipped to implement. This type of professional development provides teachers with opportunities to share teaching practices and brainstorm ways to improve student learning. PLCs also provide time for reflection, value differences, build comradery among staff members, and also provide a platform for teachers to stay current on the latest research-based practices (Serviss, 2021).

Knowing that PLCs contribute to staff development and increased student achievement is critical for principals to understand; however, understanding the components of how to implement PLCs within a school is much more important. According to Jenkins's (2016) study on the process that principals use to establish successful PLCs, leaders stated that they clearly defined and articulated their expectations as they related to PLCs. Additionally, they invited all staff to be part of the PLC process, regardless of position, and created processes to develop leadership capacity within the school, encouraging a shared leadership approach. Finally, the study identified that

principals created a trusting and safe work environment, were active participants in the PLC meetings, and approached the meetings ready to partner with teachers to problem solve and promote student learning (Jenkins, 2016).

In addition to developing professional capacity within staff members, principals are also tasked with hiring and mentoring quality teachers. In a study of more than 500 principals in North Carolina, school leaders tended to value the experience level and educational background of prospective candidates. Principals who participated in the study revealed that teachers with an advanced degree or an undergraduate degree from a high-ranking institution tend to have a slight edge on the competition. Lastly, knowledge of the state standards was more appealing to principals from traditionally low-performing schools (Giersch & Dong, 2018). While the school principal was responsible for hiring new teachers, they often utilized hiring teams made up of other teachers and staff to allow for diverse perspectives when hiring. Additionally, principals should establish in advance a profile for what the hiring team is looking for in a particular position (Mason & Schroeder, 2010). Additional steps principals should take when hiring are ensuring jobs are posted internally and externally, having a process of screening candidates based on predetermined criteria, keeping job descriptions up-to-date, and being familiar with all state and local human resource laws and regulations (Mabry, 2019).

Once teachers are hired, it is critical that principals provide appropriate mentorship for incoming teachers. Not only does providing a mentor to new teachers help with retention, but it also impacts student performance in the classroom (Davis, 2008). Teachers who are new to the profession altogether rely heavily on mentoring from another experienced teacher, ideally from the same content area, to provide specific

feedback on pedagogical practices and classroom management and to provide support and encouragement. Additionally, these mentoring experiences tend to be more fruitful when they are informal and dialogue takes place between the mentor and mentee (Jones et al., 2018). Establishing a mentorship program within the school not only impacts novice teachers but also benefits experienced teachers as well. Specifically, mentoring can increase confidence, competence, and over self-perceptions in their ability to positively influence student achievement. Mentoring that includes specific and timely feedback as it relates to teaching practices is also beneficial and can be seen as a quality professional growth opportunity (Walters et al., 2019).

As principals develop their mentorship programs, they should keep in mind that aside from direct mentor/mentee conversations, teachers can also find value in observing model classrooms and meeting as a peer group regularly to discuss common struggles (Alexander & Alexander, n.d.). McCarthy (2010) concluded that providing mentors to new teachers, as well as teachers with nontraditional educational backgrounds, was necessary in order to facilitate a successful experience. Moreover, the study concluded best practices when establishing a mentoring program are to ensure mentors are trained and have similar content and/or grade-level knowledge, and that mentor/mentee meetings are regularly scheduled. Agre's (2014) study on the principal's role in the teacher, mentor, and principal relationship concluded that mentoring beginning teachers establishes the groundwork for developing instructional leadership capacity within teachers. Additionally, trusting relationships between the principal, mentor, and teacher assist in creating a culture that promotes professional growth and development, and principals can utilize the teacher observation tool to build capacity within beginning

teachers.

Teacher and staff evaluations are another important component of human resources leadership. NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) clearly stated that principals should conduct evaluations with the intent of impacting student achievement by improving teacher performance. However, this does not always happen. In fact, many times, principals approach formal teacher evaluations as compliance-driven “hoops” through which to jump, focusing very little on the content knowledge or instructional practices (Derrington, 2011). Additionally, principals often use similar, generic feedback remarks on end-of-year evaluations, instead of giving specific and measurable feedback to bolster classroom teaching performance. Principals should be trained and held accountable for implementing staff evaluations with fidelity. Specifically, evaluation should focus on improving instructional practices through student achievement outcomes and should be focused on data-centered feedback (Hallinger et al., 2014). Moody (2018) suggested that evaluations should not only be conducted by the principal but should also include observations and evaluations from peers, specifically due to their knowledge of teaching and learning and the quality of feedback they can provide. Moody also suggested that principals should utilize video as a means to observe teachers, especially since formal evaluation does take significant time. Lastly, principals should approach evaluations as a coaching opportunity, not solely a mundane compliance task that holds little significance in regard to actual teacher improvement (Moody, 2018).

Standard 5: Managerial Leadership

Standard 5, Managerial Leadership, is broken down into four elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element A: School Resources and Budget
- Element B: Conflict Management and Resolution
- Element C: Systematic Communication
- Element D: School Expectations for Students and Staff

The roles and responsibilities of school leaders have shifted over the years to focus more on instructional leadership, and rightfully so, as the goal of education is to increase student achievement outcomes. However, effective managerial leadership is an essential component of organizational success and should not be overlooked. Because principals are often stretched thin due to the varying demands placed on them, they often view their success as their ability to effectively navigate between instructional and managerial responsibilities (McBrayer et al., 2018). Principal managerial leadership provides processes and structures that help staff, students, and parents successfully navigate various aspects within the school (Istaryatinigtias & Rusin, 2021). Additionally, Istaryatinigtias and Rusin (2021) suggested the managerial leadership capacity of a principal has a direct impact on the overall identity of the school and dramatically impacts the operational effectiveness within the school.

A large piece of school management includes securing resources and finances for the school's operations, specifically for academic programming, personnel, and intervention. The amount of discretionary funds principals have control over varies between public school units; however, principals should be trained to effectively manage financial resources and budget allocations within their respective schools (Superville, 2019). Idris (2018) concluded that parents, staff, and other stakeholders should be involved in the budgeting process for schools, and adequate training should be provided

to various groups within the school, including extracurricular groups, Parent Teacher Organization, etc. Idris also recommended that additional training in financial management is necessary for school principals.

Hart et al. (2018) stated that in order to successfully manage school finances, principals should schedule regular meetings with the school financial officer to review internal financial documents for compliance. Additionally, principals should ensure the school's budget is detailed and include processes for monitoring financial allocations to make certain there is alignment between the principal, the school's budget, and the school's improvement goals. Hart et al. continued by suggesting that while schools often receive funds from the state and local governments, principals should build and manage relationships with outside groups, such as parent organizations, civic clubs, and other business partners to increase fundraising efforts.

Conflict management is another element of managerial leadership that can derail principals if they are not properly equipped to address it. Handling conflict for principals is a regular daily task for many, and being underprepared to effectively resolve conflict can be detrimental to the organization's culture (Aguilar, 2016). Public schools are meant to be collaborative in nature, and the same applies to conflict management. Batool et al. (2016) studied 100 principals, both from private and public schools, and found that the majority of public school principals chose a collaborative approach to managing conflict, whereas private school leaders used an authoritarian approach to resolving conflict. Additionally, the study concluded that while the age and experience of the principals did not play a factor in the perceived ability to manage conflict, secondary school principals need additional training and support on conflict management. In a similar study of nine

secondary principals, Jack and Ukaigwu (2018) determined that principals use integrating and compromising approaches to conflict management more than any other style. Jack and Ukaigwu concluded that principals should implement a framework that encourages diverse viewpoints and new ideas that can help mitigate conflicts within schools.

Lynch (2021) recommended principals should act as the mediator of conflicts that arise within the school and should promote a system that allows for active listening by all parties involved. Furthermore, principals should make concerted efforts to limit any friendships between themselves and staff members, as this could exacerbate conflicts within the school. Lastly, principals should implement norms or rules that staff should follow when conflict arises. This includes keeping the conflict in a controlled, healthy environment and out of the classroom where it could negatively impact students.

Establishing an effective communication plan is a component of managerial leadership that enables parents and community members to engage in their child's education. The more parents are involved in their child's academic education, the better the student will perform academically (Benner & Quirk, 2020). Moreover, in their study of more than 900 parents, more than 400 teachers, and more than 400 school leaders, it was found that engaging parents and community members in effective school communication efforts contributed to a shared vision for building a collaborative effort to increase student achievement. Farrell and Collier (2010) studied 15 elementary school educators and examined their perceptions of family-school communication. It was overwhelmingly documented that effective communication between school staff and parents/families had a positive impact on student achievement. While there was no particular mode of communication that was more preferable than others, the information

included in regular school communication was important. Specifically, proactive communication about student progress, or lack thereof, logistical information pertaining to school events or schedules, and addressing problems and concerns through effective communication contributed to the success of the school.

In a 3-year multi-case study conducted in three elementary schools, Cosner (2011) found that principal communication was a contributing factor to the success of a school reform initiative that focused on implementing data-based collaborative teams. Principal communication, both oral and written, reiterated the school's goals and outlined processes and data-based approaches for collaboratively achieving its goals. It was also noted that principal communication regarding the reform initiative was ongoing and consistent, providing explicit guidance to teachers on how best to succeed in their reform efforts.

Principal-teacher communication is also essential to the success of the school and the morale within it. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) noted the communication from principals towards teachers, particularly when they were under emotional distress, impacted their response to a situation. Berkovich and Eyal concluded that when principals practiced active listening techniques and responded to stressful situations with an empowering or normalizing response, teachers, in turn, were able to reframe their situation and approach it with more positivity and self-confidence. According to Hughes et al. (2014), communication is also a way to build trust among stakeholders. Leaders often wish to create an environment that allows others to be open and honest in regard to communication and provides opportunities for leaders to provide empowering responses; however, leaders themselves struggle with reciprocating their same expectations.

Principals should use effective communication to relay their rules and expectations to their students and staff. Communication efforts should extend beyond the classroom and building signage and include social media, newsletters, and face-to-face interactions (Westrich, 2017). By establishing effective communication systems within the school, principals can create an environment in which students, staff, and parents have a common understanding of the values, expectations, rules, and vision of the school (Dayton, 2021).

Standard 6: External Development Leadership

Standard 6, External Development Leadership, is broken down into two elements according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- Element A: Parent and Community Involvement and Outreach
- Element B: Federal, State, and District Mandates

The level of parental involvement in their child's education can have a significant impact on their child's achievement levels; thus, principals should plan to implement systems and processes to engage parents and community members so they can assist the school and their child in moving toward a common goal (Adams, 2020). Lara and Saracostti (2019) concluded from their research that parental involvement had a direct impact on student achievement outcomes. In their study of 498 third-grade parents and guardians, it was found that while parental involvement in their child's academic work at home was beneficial, it did not have the same effect as other forms of involvement. Particularly, parental involvement initiated by students or teachers in which parents came into the school building to engage in dialogue about their child's education saw the most benefit.

Community involvement is essential for the development of students and schools and the strengthening of communities. Casto (2016) concluded that school-community partnerships that intertwine are mutually beneficial to all parties. These relationships can yield additional opportunities for students extending beyond the school day, including after-school and summer programs. These partnerships can also lead to increased volunteer involvement and can create a sense of belonging within the school and community.

School leaders should recognize the importance of community involvement and seek to gain trust and manage productive relationships with those in the community (Poynton et al., 2018). In their study of 59 stakeholders throughout five separate school districts, Poynton et al. (2018) found schools that implement stakeholder training programs had profound results on community engagement. Specifically, parent and community engagement thrived when the training programs focused on educating community members on the role of schools and school leadership. It is important for community members to have an all-encompassing understanding of how schools impact communities and also the comprehensive duties school leaders are tasked to fulfill. Training programs should also focus on developing and maintaining productive relationships. Overall, an increase in trust, efficacy, and engagement grew out of the stakeholder development programs.

Schwanke (2020) recommended principals utilize social media and video to educate communities about school goals, as well as the mission, vision, and expectations of the school principal. This will allow administrators to control the message stakeholders see and hear. Another way to build community partnerships is to make the needs within

the school known to civic, faith, or nonprofit organizations within the community. Lastly, principals should find ways to take the school into the community. This could include outreach opportunities for students and teachers or include students in community-wide events such as parades and festivals. By engaging the community, principals can create relationships that will lead to partnerships between the school and the community.

Another component of external development leadership involves principals carrying out state, federal, and district mandates through established protocols (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2008). Owens (2012) posited that while educational leaders have their own individual leadership styles, many experience changes in their approach to leadership as more mandates are placed on them. The study concluded that principals shifted from their preferred leadership style when asked to implement an external mandate. The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (2020) suggested that educational leaders are placed in less-than-desirable positions facing mandates due to a lack of funding and adequate time to plan and implement the required mandates. Even still, educational leaders are responsible for creating processes and procedures to ensure legislative action is realized at the classroom level (Granados, 2021).

Miller (2020) advised that anytime leaders have to implement change, they should be certain to take the necessary steps to ensure successful implementation. This includes communicating with stakeholders well in advance, formulating a collective vision and plan, embedding changes into the organization's routines and procedures, and finally, analyzing data regularly to ensure intended progress is being made. Acton (2020) examined school leaders as change agents and found common hurdles to implementing change, including legislative mandates, were a lack of professional development on

instituting change and a lack of collective direction regarding the implementation. The research suggested that implementing change should include proper training and effective communication efforts to ensure alignment and commitment from the entire team.

Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership

Standard 7, Micropolitical Leadership, consists of one element according to the NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) evaluation rubric and self-assessment form:

- School Executive Micropolitical Leadership

School leaders, according to the rubric and self-assessment, should develop relationships and implement systems that will leverage staff expertise in order to maximize impact on the school's mission and vision.

Caruso (2013) concluded that while school principals know and understand the importance of relationship-building in a successful micro-political landscape, novice principals tend to retreat to a more controlling approach when faced with conflict. Moreover, when faced with macro-political uncertainty, principals reduce the availability of micro-political systems available to staff. In a school setting, district, state, and federal mandates can negatively impact the school, primarily due to the pressure associated with such mandates. Principals tend to retreat from their core values, often built around collaboration, and move towards a direct leadership style in an attempt to fulfill the requirements of external groups. Empathetic leadership can help leaders have a better understanding of the diverse backgrounds making up an organization (Kock et al., 2018). Kock et al. (2018) provided additional support that educational leaders who show empathy towards their subordinates generate higher rates of job satisfaction and increased performance. The knowledge gained from lending an empathetic and understanding ear

helps principals understand background information that can contribute to a collaborative school climate.

Summary

A majority of principal vacancies throughout the country will be filled by current assistant principals. Due to the complex nature of the principalship, aligning professional preparational learning experiences to the seven primary standards within the NCSSE is critical to their success (Hutton, 2020). The NCSSE also align with the responsibilities researchers state are important for school leaders to possess. These responsibilities include establishing and promoting a unified direction that promotes academic excellence, creating a culture and climate conducive to collaboration and professional development, managing human resources, and implementing processes and procedures to ensure effective operations within the school (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The executive standards are designed to guide principals in their transformational leadership approach within schools. The functions within each standard assist school leaders in creating a sustainable school culture that is built on systems and processes that will be entrenched into the makeup of the school for years to come. While there is an evaluative component that reflects the ability of school leaders to carry out the seven standards, the purpose of the standards is to aid in the growth and development of assistant principals (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

School executives, including district leaders, have a responsibility to provide experiences to assistant principals that will expand their leadership capacity and enable them to carry out the functions listed within the NCSSE. Principals should not assign tasks that will isolate assistant principals, but instead, should collaborate alongside them

to carry out the executive standards and work together as a highly efficient leadership team (Holloway & Sgambelluri, 2019). Utilizing this approach will also provide assistant principals with an introspective look at how their leadership styles and their principal's leadership styles impact the individuals they are serving, as well as provide the insight needed to build a leadership team that values diverse contributions (Hayes & Burkett, 2020). Understanding the executive standards and their implications on school leadership and professional growth is a necessary step school districts must take to continue improving academic outcomes for students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this research was to provide district and school leaders with valuable findings that will inform decision-making as it relates to professional development for assistant principals. Education has changed dramatically over the past 2 decades and now requires that school leaders become more than managers. They must be able to lead transformational change within schools through numerous avenues, which include but are not limited to navigating political influences; creating an environment of collective responsibility and accountability; enhancing the academic program delivery; and meeting the mental, physical, social, and emotional needs of students and staff (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2015).

In order to equip assistant principals and principals with the skills needed to effectively lead their schools, ongoing professional development must be in place. Assistant principals need relevant professional learning experiences that align with their daily responsibilities and should be involved in productive conversations with their principals regarding the implementation of the executive standards (Shelton & Welu, 2014). This research focused on the current perceptions and practices of school principals. Utilizing research that contained perceptions and reflections of sitting school-level principals who have a wide range of leadership experience provided me with the necessary results to establish meaningful professional development for assistant principals who desire to transition to the principal role. Additionally, by examining the alignment between principals' daily tasks and the NCSSE best practices, I gained a better understanding of what preparatory experiences are needed the most to ensure a successful transition from the assistant principal to principal role for aspiring leaders.

Establishing high-quality, continuous professional development for school administrators that builds professional capacity is a proactive approach districts can take to promote a culture of growth (Levin, 2021). Before a support program can be established, districts should understand the current needs of school administrators. Specifically, when considering how assistant principals and principals spend their day, districts should seek to understand how their daily tasks align with the practices identified through the NCSSE. More importantly, districts need to understand how educational leaders perceive their preparation, or lack thereof, as they plan professional development to equip future school principals.

This study incorporated a mixed methods research design and intended to examine current school principals' perceptions of their ability to lead within the NCSSE, as well as take a closer look at the alignment between their daily tasks and NCSSE best practices. The participants were asked to complete a survey and participate in an interview. The data collected in this research not only included current perceptions of leadership capabilities but also compared daily tasks of administrators to the practices identified in the NCSSE, as well as pinpointed areas in which administrators felt they needed additional support and training.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research question. Sub-Questions 1, 2, and 3 provided additional support as I pursued answers to what preparatory experiences are needed for school leaders:

What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?

1. How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?
2. How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?
3. What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the NCSSE?

This chapter includes the methods used that provided in-depth information on school leaders' perceptions of their own leadership capacity. These perceptions were gathered from interview findings, along with survey results, and were analyzed to determine if school administrators have the leadership capacity needed to effectively implement the seven executive standards in their respective schools. Additionally, the findings assisted districts in providing proper support and training for administrators by determining how the daily experiences school administrators experience align with the seven NCSSE.

Participants

Participants in this study included 15 prekindergarten through 12th-grade public school administrators from a small, rural school district in northwest North Carolina. There are approximately 5,500 students enrolled in 19 different schools. The district contains 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, three traditional high schools, one early college high school, and one alternative middle and high school combination. The purposeful sampling method was used to identify the participants in this study, primarily due to their knowledge and experience of the research topic that would help answer the

research questions that were identified (Palinkas et al., 2013). The individuals who participated in this research did so on a voluntary basis. There have not been, nor will there be, any incentives for taking part in this study.

There were 18 potential participants; however, 15 principals from across the school district consented to participate in both portions of the research study. Four principals led at the high school level, two at the middle school level, and nine at the elementary level. All principals who participated in this research were licensed school administrators in the state of North Carolina.

Research Design

The research design of this study assisted me in identifying the beliefs, ideas, and self-perceptions of school principals who were currently serving at the time of this study. Specifically, this mixed methods study, which incorporated qualitative and quantitative components, helped gather perceptions of leadership capacity, as well as examined daily routines of administrators to determine if their roles and responsibilities aligned with the NCEES. A mixed methods study also provided additional data points that strengthened the study's conclusions and the overall validity of the study (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The qualitative portion of this research design provided perceptions and insight based on experiences and gave readers greater meaning and context behind the results and findings (Joyner et al., 2013). Additionally, qualitative research provided insightful responses that allowed for a deeper understanding as it related to the problem statements. The data collected through interviews were analyzed to identify themes from the descriptions provided.

The design of this research included surveys and interviews. I used the qualitative

data gathered from the interviews to help explain the quantitative findings. The research design was consistent with the explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

The overall intent of this design is to have the qualitative data help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results. A typical procedure might involve collecting survey data in the first phase, analyzing the data, and then following up with qualitative interviews to help explain the survey responses. (Creswell, 2014, p. 224)

This particular sequential design included the administration of a survey that principals completed identifying how their daily tasks and responsibilities aligned with the executive standards. Once surveys had been completed, principals were then contacted to schedule an interview. The interview questions aligned directly with the NCSSE and research questions. Once interviews concluded and data were collected, I analyzed the data and reported the results.

Instrumentation

Two different data-collection instruments were used for this research. They included a survey and an interview that included questions designed around the research questions. By utilizing multiple data-collection instruments, I was able to triangulate the data, thus providing validity to the study. Triangulation refers to collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources to support and strengthen the findings of the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

Survey

The first data collection instrument to be used was a survey. This survey provided me with the ability to draw conclusions based on the numeric description of the

tendencies, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants (Creswell, 2014). The survey instrument that was used in this study was created by GriffinJordan (2021). Permission was granted (Appendix B) to utilize this particular survey. An in-depth validation process was used in the initial research.

The survey consisted of 21 items in which participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement. The statements are a reflection of the practices identified within the NCSSE and their alignment with the daily responsibilities and tasks of administrators. Additionally, the survey contained questions pertaining to demographic information, as well as questions about their experience levels, prior positions, and current grade levels in which they served. This information allowed me to identify trends in the data as it pertained to the preparatory skills needed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The results of the survey gave me the information needed to draw informed conclusions (GriffinJordan, 2021). I noted that the survey underwent a validation process through a pilot study and received a content validity ratio of .80.

The Lawshe method was utilized to measure the content validity of the instrument and secure the content validity ratio (CVR) for each survey item. From there, the content validity index (CVI) was computed, which measures the validity for the entire survey instrument. According to Gilbert and Prion (2016), when used by a panel of content experts, the CVR is a valuable instrument in determining validity for both the individual instrument items as well as the overall validity for the whole instrument. Both the CVR and CVI offer a quantitative measure of validity of a survey instrument. The CVR computes the validity of a single item; the CVI on the other hand measures the content validity of the entire instrument or tool.

As noted by Gilbert and Prion, Tilden et al. (1990) suggested CVI values must exceed 0.70 to be considered valid. (GriffinJordan, 2021, p. 57)

These items within the survey were converted to an electronic Google form. The survey was titled Examining Effective Practices through the NCSSE (Appendix C). The form was sent to participants through their preferred email address, and they were given the flexibility to complete the survey at a time that was convenient for them, as long as it is completed within the assigned time window.

Interviews

The second method in which data were collected was through individual interviews. Each participant was asked a set of predetermined questions (Appendix D) centered on their preparational experiences as it relates to the NCSSE. These questions delved deeper into the tasks and responsibilities their mentor principal assigned to them, as well as identified areas in which they felt more growth opportunities and experiences were needed. School administrators from every grade span took part in the interview process, which strengthened the overall validity of the study. Specifically, understanding the different preparatory skills needed at the three different grade spans was critical to the development of assistant principals. Additionally, having administrators with varying experience levels, as well as representation from the alternative school and the early college high school, brought different perspectives to the skills needed to effectively lead at different levels throughout the school district. The interview questions were shared with five district-level administrators who all have principal experience to validate the questions through interrater reliability. The purpose of interrater reliability was to gather feedback and general consensus that the interview questions would generate appropriate

responses that provided information needed to answer the research questions.

The interviews were conducted via Google Meet, an online platform that allowed conversations to be recorded for efficient data synthesis. This format was convenient for me and the participants as it allowed the interviews to occur in the privacy of one's home if one chose. Additionally, due to COVID-19, administrators were familiar with and comfortable with the Google Meet platform. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. Due to the triangulation of data methods, participants were identifiable by me. The two methods of data collection were analyzed to identify common trends and themes between participants.

Procedures

Prior to beginning the research phase, I gained permission from the district to be studied. Additional permissions were obtained from the Gardner-Webb University Institutional Review Board, the governing body that establishes necessary parameters to protect the rights of human subjects in research (U.S. Food & Drug Administration, 2019). Once permission was granted from the district and the Institutional Review Board to begin research, participants were contacted via email to inform them of the study and ask for their participation. I provided detailed information about the research and the role their participation played in prescribing appropriate professional development for the district.

Once participants consented to participate in the research, I shared the survey to their preferred email account and gave them a 1-week time window in which the survey should be completed. At the midpoint during the 1-week window, I sent a reminder email to the participants who had not completed the survey. Once participants completed the

survey, I contacted them to schedule a time to conduct the interview portion of the research.

Interviews were held via Google Meet at a time convenient for the participants. Each participant received the exact same introduction, overview, and questions. Once interviews were completed, I recorded themes from the interviews and trends as I examined relationships between their interview responses and the survey data provided in Phase 1. Additionally, the interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts.

Data Collection and Analysis

I used Google Forms and Google Meet to conduct the research. The survey results were automatically loaded into a spreadsheet that I used to manipulate findings to look for trends within the responses. The survey results also included demographic information, as well as the names of participants. The demographic portion of the survey gathered information pertaining to gender, race/ethnicity, years of experience as an assistant principal, years in education, and occupation prior to becoming an administrator. Participants received pseudonyms that were used to communicate findings. I collected email addresses and names prior to the survey so potential patterns were able to be identified throughout the second phase, the interview process.

The interviews were conducted through Google Meet, a virtual platform that provided flexibility and convenience for participants. Participants were informed prior to the interview that the conversation was going to be recorded. This was to ensure that findings were transcribed with accuracy. The participants in this study included 15 current school principals. By researching current principals with a variety of leadership

experiences, I was able to gain a wide range of responses about their perceptions of effective school leadership as it pertains to implementing the NCSSE. Additionally, by examining the alignment between principals' daily tasks and the NCSSE best practices, I gained valuable insight as to what preparatory experiences are needed the most to ensure a successful transition from the assistant principal to principal role for aspiring leaders.

The results of this study were analyzed to examine how school leaders perceived their leadership ability as it pertained to the NCSSE. Specifically, the results helped determine if educational leaders felt their preparational experiences and daily tasks aligned with the executive standards set forth by the NCSBE. The findings from the interviews and surveys were analyzed to further identify themes that school and district leaders can interpret to establish meaningful professional development for aspiring principals. The interview results provided context and meaning behind the survey responses and gave me additional data points from which to draw conclusions. The data gathered from the surveys and interviews will help educational leaders at the district level ensure that assistant principals are receiving consistent and valuable professional development training that will equip them for the principalship at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Table 1 provides detailed information on how the data collection instruments used within this survey aligned with the research questions that were established.

Table 1*Research Questions and Data Collection Table*

Research questions	Instrument	Explanation	Research methodology
What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?	Participants completed a 21-item survey and responded to open-ended interview questions.	Participants responded by rating themselves to what degree their daily tasks and responsibilities aligned with the NCSSE. Interview questions gained perceptions of their ability to lead within the NCSSE and gained insight into other valuable preparatory experiences.	Quantitative/ Qualitative
Sub-Question 1. How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?	Participants completed a 21-item survey with a 5-point Likert scale.	Participants rated themselves on their perception of how their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities aligned with the seven primary standards within the NCSSE.	Quantitative
Sub-Question 2. How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?	Participants completed a 21-item survey and completed open-ended interview questions.	Participants rated themselves on how their daily responsibilities align with the NCSSE. They also responded to open-ended interview questions regarding their leadership preparation.	Quantitative/ Qualitative
Sub-Question 3. What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the NCSSE?	Participants completed an interview with open-ended interview questions.	Participants responded to open-ended interview questions with specific support measures that they feel are necessary for principal preparation as it aligns with the seven primary standards within the NCSSE	Qualitative

Summary

This mixed methods research design allowed me to examine how assistant

principals' daily tasks and responsibilities impacted perceptions of their ability to effectively carry out the NCSSE. The diverse representation within the study lent itself to stronger research results. Assistant principals often take positions that are outside of the grade span in which they have the most experience. Due to this, having administrators represented from elementary, middle, and high school allowed for a comprehensive data analysis that will drive professional growth at all levels throughout the school district. Additionally, the early college high school and the middle/high alternative school present challenges of their own. Understanding the complexities of the daily requirements of these principals was valuable as the district prepares future leaders of nontraditional schools.

The survey results and interview responses were analyzed, and the findings will assist district leaders in prescribing professional development that will ensure a smooth transition from the assistant principal to the principal role. Specifically, the survey data provided quantitative information related to the day-to-day tasks of principals as they aligned with the seven NCSSE. In contrast, the responses to the interview questions allowed principals to pinpoint areas in which they felt school leaders needed professional growth opportunities regarding the implementation of the NCSSE. These qualitative data were based on principals' feelings, perspectives, and experiences throughout their time as educational leaders. While the focus of this research was specifically focused on preparation of school leaders based on the NCSSE, additional information regarding principal preparation was identified to strengthen the district's professional development plan. It also highlights commendations of the leadership development within the district at the time of this study. In the subsequent chapters, the findings of the study are

conveyed, and the research questions are answered.

Chapter 4: Results

The results from this mixed methods study, including survey and interview findings, are presented in this chapter. Additionally, the purpose of the study, including the relevant research questions and the methodology used in this body of work, was revisited to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived leadership capabilities as they related to executing the practices found in the seven primary standards of the NCSSE. Additionally, the study aimed to capture school principals' perceptions of how their daily tasks aligned with the seven primary executive standards. The executive standards serve as a road map for school administrators to use when leading their respective schools and give specific practices that should be executed regularly by school administrators. The standards are aligned with administrators' professional growth plans and evaluation rubrics, which are ultimately used to build their transformational leadership capacity, leading to positive student and school achievement outcomes (NCDPI & NCSBE, 2013). There are eight executive standards; however, for the purpose of this study, I focused only on the seven primary standards, as Standard 8 is simply a reflection of the school's student growth data each year and does not include specific practices for administrators to follow.

The study examined current school principals' perceptions of their leadership ability and alignment of their daily tasks. However, the primary goal of gathering this data was to support a deeper understanding of what skills are needed for assistant principals to successfully transition to the principal role. The data gathered will help

districts understand the professional development experiences assistant principals should receive and will also guide ongoing efforts to build capacity within current principals.

The seven standards school leaders are responsible for implementing have been established by NCDPI and NCSBE (2015):

1. Strategic Leadership
2. Instructional Leadership
3. Cultural Leadership
4. Human Resource Leadership
5. Managerial Leadership
6. External Development Leadership
7. Micropolitical Leadership

Participants

There were 18 school administrators initially identified as potential participants in the study, all from a small, rural school district in northwest North Carolina. The district was comprised of approximately 5,500 students at 19 individual school campuses. The district consisted of 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, three traditional high schools, one early college high school, and one alternative middle and high school combination. Of the 18 potential participants, 15, or 83%, agreed to take part in the research by completing both the survey and the interview. Table 2 provides an in-depth look at the demographic information and other attributes of school administrators who participated in this study. The demographic and attribute data collected included the following: gender, race/ethnicity, years of experience as an assistant principal, grade span in which they served, total years as an educator, and the position held prior to becoming

an assistant principal.

Table 2

Demographic Data and Attributes of Research Participants

Demographic/Attribute	n	Percentage
Gender		
Female	6	40%
Male	9	60%
Race/ethnicity		
White	15	100%
Years as assistant principal		
0-3	13	86.66%
4-8	1	6.66%
9-15	1	6.66%
Current grade span served		
Elementary	9	60%
Middle	2	13.33%
High	4	26.66%
Years as an educator		
11-20	7	46.66%
21-30	7	46.66%
31 or more	1	6.66%
Position prior to assistant principal		
Teacher	13	86.66%
Counselor	1	6.66%
Central office staff	1	6.66%

The participants in the study brought a variety of experiences and years of service to this research. There were nine male participants, which was 50% more than the six female participants. All participants in the study were White. Over 86% of participants had 0 to 3 years of experience as an assistant principal before moving to the principal position. Two participants served as assistant principals for 4 to 8 years and 9 to 15 years respectively. Of the 15 total participants, 60% of served students at the elementary level,

13.33% at the middle school level, and 26.66% at the high school level. This was important as I examined the perceptions between administrators at different grade spans. Seven of the participants had 11 to 20 years of experience in education, seven others had 21 to 30 years, and only one participant had over 30 years of experience in education. Thirteen of the participants (86.66%) held a classroom teaching position prior to going into administration. One participant was a school counselor, and another held a central office position prior to administration.

Research Questions

The following questions were established to support the purpose of this study. The sub-questions provided additional information as I sought answers regarding what preparatory experiences are needed for school leaders.

What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?

1. How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?
2. How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?
3. What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the NCSSE?

Methodology

The mixed methods design of the study gave me the information needed to capture the beliefs and perceptions of current school principals' abilities to lead within

the seven primary NCSSE. I used a survey and interview questions, located in Appendix C and Appendix D respectively, to gather multiple data points to strengthen the research. The intended purpose of the sequential mixed methods design was for the qualitative interview responses to explain in more detail the quantitative survey responses.

The survey (Appendix C) included 21 items in which participants were asked to rate the degree to which they experienced each task/responsibility as a school principal. All seven of the primary standards were represented in the survey, each having three specific items that aligned with each standard. The interview portion of the research consisted of seven predetermined questions that helped identify trends and themes regarding the leadership capabilities and perceived preparational experiences of school principals. The questions also gave me a chance to assess current needs regarding our district's professional development so appropriate steps can be taken to strengthen the professional growth opportunities provided to assistant principals and principals.

Overview of Survey Responses

The survey portion of the research was completed by all 15 participants, each completing a 21-item survey in which principals were asked to rate their level of agreement for each statement in the survey using a 5-point Likert scale. The points on the scale directly corresponded with the frequency with which they felt they experienced the stated task or responsibility as a school principal. The response options that principals were given included (1) almost never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) frequently, and (5) almost always. The statements within the survey directly relate to the practices identified in the seven primary executive standards.

Two standards, cultural leadership and micropolitical leadership, produced the

highest average response using the Likert scale. The average, or mean response rate, was 4.53 for the micropolitical leadership standard and 4.42 for the cultural leadership standard. These data indicate that principals operate frequently to almost always within these two standards. Although the mean for cultural leadership as a whole was slightly behind the micropolitical standard, two items within the cultural standard had the highest mean score of the 21 total items in the survey. Item 3(a), created a collaborative team work environment, had a mean response score of 4.67, with 67% of principals indicating they almost always create a collaborative team work environment. Item 3(b), communicated positive values about school, teaching, and professional growth while using a shared vision to establish strong school identity, had the second-highest mean response score of 4.60, with 60% of principals agreeing they almost always operate within that particular element.

The three items within Standard 7, micropolitical leadership, followed with an average response score of 4.53 for each item. Sixty percent of participants almost always experience tasks associated with Element 7(a), actively engaged with staff and students while maintaining visibility in classrooms and at extracurricular events, and 53% of principals almost always work within Elements 7(b), collaborated with the School Improvement Team to lead in school-wide decision-making, and 7(c), provided opportunities for which voices of staff members were heard and respected.

Standard 4, human resource leadership, had the lowest mean response score of the seven standards with a score of 3.93. Specifically, the lowest-ranked item within the survey came from Element 4(c), established structures and models for professional development, continuous learning, and new teacher support. This particular element had a

mean response score of 3.47, with 67% of principals indicating they sometimes experience this particular element in their work as a school leader. The second-lowest ranking item was 1(a), spearheaded major initiatives and created systematic review processes. This item had a mean response score of 3.67, and 40% of principals indicated that they operate within the particular element some of the time.

Table 3 provides detailed information for each of the 21 items in the survey, including the lowest (min) and highest (max) Likert scale scores, the average score, or mean (M) for each item, and the standard deviation (SD) for each item. The items are a reflection of how current principals perceive their daily tasks and responsibilities align with the seven NCSSE.

Table 3*Item Analysis of Tasks Performed*

Task	Min	Max	M	SD
Spearheaded major initiatives and created systemic review processes.	3	5	3.67	0.62
Facilitated the implementation of the School Improvement Team	2	5	4.27	0.88
Took the lead in distributing leadership roles among staff	3	5	4.13	0.64
Facilitated conversations about curriculum, instruction, and assessment	2	5	4.20	0.86
Provided staff feedback through formal and informal observations	3	5	4.40	0.74
Identified student needs and provided innovative tools and programs to meet them	2	5	3.80	0.77
Created a collaborative "team" work environment	4	5	4.67	0.49
Communicated positive values about school, teaching, and professional growth, while using a shared vision to establish strong school identity	4	5	4.60	0.51
Actively supported traditions that were culturally responsive	3	5	4	0.53
Used data from Teacher Working Conditions survey to lead in maintaining a nurturing work environment	3	5	4.13	0.64
Assigned teachers to courses that reflect their instructional strengths	2	5	4.20	0.86
Established structures and models for professional development, continuous learning, and new teacher support	3	5	3.47	0.74
Collaborated to ensure balanced budget to support school community	4	5	4.33	0.49
Interviewed and recommended quality teachers who met school needs	3	5	4.40	0.74

(cont.)

Task	Min	Max	M	SD
Collaborated to develop master schedule with focus on student success	3	5	4.27	0.70
Implemented protocols to ensure compliance of all local, state, and federal mandates	4	4	4.33	0.49
Advocated on behalf of the school and shared accomplishments in the district and community	3	5	4.07	0.70
Created a system of shared responsibility with stakeholders	3	5	3.93	0.70
Actively engaged with staff and students while maintaining visibility in classrooms and at extracurricular events	3	5	4.53	0.64
Collaborated with the School Improvement Team to lead in school-wide decision-making	4	5	4.53	0.55
Provided opportunities for which voices of staff members were heard and respected	4	5	4.53	0.55

The mean of a data set, commonly known as the average, is calculated by adding all scores for each item and dividing by the total number of responses. The mean is important because it gives one value that represents an entire data set and can give readers an idea of what the average response was for all participants (Cherry, 2022). The lowest mean score within the 21-item survey was 3.47, indicating that principals spent some of the time to a frequent amount of working within the responsibilities or tasks within that standard. The highest mean score within the survey was 4.67, indicating that participants operate within that standard a frequent amount of the time to almost all of their time. Because the lowest mean score was 3.47, all 21 items within the survey, which are all linked to the seven primary NCSSE, should be considered important in the work of principal preparation, as administrators indicated they spent at least some of their time operating within all standards.

The standard deviation of each item was also calculated to show the variability within the responses. A lower standard deviation indicates that all responses were clustered close together and were relatively consistent among participants. A higher standard deviation indicates that responses were further from the mean and not as consistent among all participants (Frost, 2022). Because the survey used a Likert scale from 1 to 5, a standard deviation score higher than 1 would mean a greater variability between responses. The highest standard deviation represented in the data set was .88, indicating that all responses for the 21-item survey were relatively consistent among participants.

The data collected from the survey are a reflection of the amount of time principals spend operating within the specified elements of the executive standards. The lowest mean score of the 21-item survey was 3.47, which means that some of the time to a frequent amount of the time, principals operate within that element. There are three other elements that had a mean score of 3.67, 3.80, and 3.93. While these elements should be experienced regularly by school principals, they were the lowest four elements within the survey. The remaining 17 elements all had a mean score above 4, indicating that principals spend a frequent to almost all of their time operating in those standard elements. The focus of this research was to gather data that could inform the professional development efforts of aspiring school principals. To do that, I focused on the elements the principals stated they spend “frequent to almost all of their time” experiencing. Table 4 shows the 17 items with a mean score above 4 and the percentage of principals who said they spent a frequent to almost all of their time operating within those standards.

Table 4*Principal Tasks Experiences Frequently to Almost All of the Time*

North Carolina Executive Standard	Percentage of principals	Task experienced frequently or almost all of the time (response of >4.0)
Strategic Leadership	87%	Facilitated the implementation of the School Improvement Team
Strategic Leadership	87%	Took the lead in distributing leadership roles among staff
Instructional Leadership	87%	Facilitated conversations about curriculum, instruction, and assessment
Instructional Leadership	86%	Provided staff feedback through formal and informal observations
Cultural Leadership	73%	Created a collaborative "team" work environment
Cultural Leadership	100%	Communicated positive values about school, teaching, and professional growth, while using a shared vision to establish strong school identity
Cultural Leadership	86%	Actively supported traditions that were culturally responsive
Human Resource Leadership	87%	Used data from Teacher Working Conditions survey to lead in maintaining a nurturing work environment
Human Resource Leadership	87%	Assigned teachers to courses that reflect their instructional strengths
Managerial Leadership	100%	Collaborated to ensure balanced budget to support school community
Managerial Leadership	87%	Interviewed and recommended quality teachers who met school needs
Managerial Leadership	87%	Collaborated to develop master schedule with focus on student success
External Development Leadership	100%	Implemented protocols to ensure compliance of all local, state, and federal mandates

(continued)

North Carolina Executive Standard	Percentage of principals	Task experienced frequently or almost all of the time (response of >4.0)
External Development Leadership	80%	Advocated on behalf of the school and shared accomplishments in the district and community
Micropolitical Leadership	93%	Actively engaged with staff and students while maintaining visibility in classrooms and at extracurricular events
Micropolitical Leadership	100%	Collaborated with the School Improvement Team to lead in school-wide decision-making
Micropolitical Leadership	100%	Provided opportunities for which voices of staff members were heard and respected

All 17 of the items were experienced frequently to almost all of the time by more than 73% of participants. A minimum of 85% of principals agreed they spend a frequent amount to almost all of their time within 15 of the 17 elements. Four elements had a response rate of 100%, indicating that every principal who participated in the survey agreed they spent at least a frequent to almost all of their time experiencing the tasks associated with those particular standards and elements. The elements and standards that had 100% agreement were

- Cultural Leadership: communicated positive values about school, teaching, and professional growth, while using a shared vision to establish strong school identity
- Managerial Leadership: collaborated to ensure balanced budget to support school community
- Micropolitical Leadership: collaborated with the School Improvement Team to lead in school-wide decision-making
- Micropolitical Leadership: provided opportunities for which voices of staff

members were heard and respected

Table 5 summarizes the seven NCSSE in which principals agree they spent a frequent amount to almost all of their time experiencing the tasks associated with the particular elements in the standards.

Table 5

NCSSE and the Percentage of Participants Who Experience Them Frequently or Almost Always

Executive standard	Percentage of participants
Micropolitical Leadership	97.70%
Cultural Leadership	95.50%
Managerial Leadership	91.10%
External Development Leadership	84.40%
Instructional Leadership	82%
Strategic Leadership	78%
Human Resource Leadership	68.80%

The data presented in Table 5 are consistent with earlier findings that micropolitical and cultural leadership are the two standards in which most participants agreed they spend a frequent amount to almost all of their time. The percentages of participants who agreed with the items related to those standards were 97.70% and 95.50% respectively. The two standards with the lowest levels of agreement were strategic leadership with 78% and human resource leadership with 68.80% of principals agreeing they spend a frequent amount to almost all of their time experiencing these standards. Of the 315 total item responses, there were only four responses that had an agreement level below 3 (sometimes) on the Likert scale. Those four responses garnered a Likert scale score of 2, indicating that principals who entered that response only seldom spend time operating in the respective elements within those standards. The elements in

which one participant indicated they seldom spend time were

- 1.b. facilitated the implementation of the School Improvement Team
- 2.a. facilitated conversations about curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- 2.c. identified student needs and provided innovative tools and programs to meet them
- 4.b. assigned teachers to courses that reflect their instructional strengths

Although 98.7% of total responses indicated that principals spent at least some of their time operating within all 21 elements and seven standards, 1.3% of total responses showed that a principal seldom spent time operating within four of the 21 elements. The data support that professional development for assistant principals should be focused on the seven primary NCSSE. This information also proved valuable to the school district as it supports current principals. The survey analysis was used in conjunction with the interview responses to help answer the research questions. The same 15 participants from the survey also agreed to complete the interview portion of the research.

Overview of Interview Responses

Each participant received the same seven interview questions, and all interviews were recorded using Google Meet. Transcriptions of each interview were used to better identify themes within the responses. Some of the questions were more direct than others in an effort to obtain specific answers, particularly as they related to principals' perceived ability to carry out the executive standards. Other questions were asked in a way that gave respondents the ability to give a wide range of answers. The subsequent paragraphs provide an overview of the responses and themes identified from the responses.

Interview Question 1: What experiences do you feel have been most beneficial in your professional growth as a school administrator?

I asked this question to all principals who participated in the interview portion in an effort to gain a better understanding of what impacts their professional growth the most. There were three themes that were identified and coded with a significantly high frequency and stood out among other responses. Experiential learning was coded 24 times throughout the responses to this question and was presented by 100% of the participants as having been one of the most beneficial experiences to their professional growth. Different types of experiential learning varied among participants. Some noted that experiences they were given as an assistant principal drastically supported their transition to the principalship. Others attributed pre-administrative experiences to their ability to serve as a principal, and others valued the experiences they received as a principal as the most beneficial to their professional growth. One participant noted that the opportunity to make mistakes as an assistant principal through experiential learning and receiving feedback from their mentor principal was important because they were able to process those mistakes as a team.

Five participants added that collaboration was also an important component of their growth as a school administrator. The opportunity to work through situations together provided the chance to be vulnerable and problem solve with professionals who experience similar situations. Six participants added that professional development was also important to their professional growth and development. Specifically, the principals noted professional development that incorporated collaboration and experiential learning components yielded higher benefits to their professional growth. Having the opportunity

to implement strategies and content covered in the professional development offered a risk-free environment to make mistakes and grow professionally.

Interview Question 2: Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel most confident in implementing, and why?

Question 2 was direct, with the intent of gaining a better understanding of the standard(s) principals felt the most comfortable implementing, and why. Of the seven executive standards, four emerged with the highest frequency codes. Instructional leadership, cultural leadership, human resource leadership, and managerial leadership stood out as areas in which the majority of principals felt comfortable implementing. Six principals, five from the elementary level and one from the middle school level, indicated that instructional leadership was an area in which they felt comfortable navigating. Standard 2, cultural leadership emerged as another standard in which seven principals felt confident in their abilities. Of those seven, four served at the elementary level, one at the middle school level, and two at the high school level.

Human resources leadership was another standard that rose to the top, with seven principals indicating they feel confident in their leadership abilities in regard to human resource leadership. Four of these administrators served at the secondary level and three at the elementary level. Lastly, the managerial leadership standard was identified by six principals as being a standard they felt confident implementing. Only one elementary principal selected this standard, whereas five of the six secondary principals who participated in the study indicated this was a strength of theirs. Strategic leadership was also recognized by four principals as being an area of confidence.

Another theme that was consistent in the responses to Question 2 was how prior

experiences, whether at the assistant principal level or experience prior to administration, played a large role in developing their leadership capacity. Principals noted that experiential learning opportunities given to them as assistant principals played a large role in their ability to carry out the standards as a principal. If they did not receive direct experience, they were at least included and mentored through specific situations within the standards that facilitated their growth and confidence to implement the standards as a principal. Other principals expressed that their experiences prior to administration impacted their ability to lead. Specifically, experience as a classroom teacher and instructional coach drastically impacted the ability of several elementary principals to lead instruction within their schools. Several other secondary principals noted their experience in coaching assisted in their ability to understand cultural leadership at a higher level.

Interview Question 3: Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel you need the most support, and why?

Four standards were identified as areas in which principals indicated they felt they need more support. Strategic, instructional, managerial, and external development leadership standards were recognized as standards principals did not feel as confident in their ability to implement. Specifically, responsibilities involving the School Improvement Team and working with stakeholders to establish a mission, vision, and goals, and an implementation plan are areas in which some principals need support.

Instructional leadership was also identified as a standard in which principals needed more support. All seven principals who responded in this manner worked at the secondary level or spent a significant amount of their pre-administrative experience at the

secondary level. All seven respondents indicated that the transition from secondary to elementary was challenging because of the vast differences in curriculum and instructional practices and that they lacked sufficient experience or training in this area prior to becoming a principal.

Managerial leadership was also a standard identified in which some principals did not feel confident. Specifically, the budget component of managerial leadership was an area where some principals did not feel as confident and stated they had not been included in budget training prior to becoming a principal. Understanding the budget codes, fund types, and restrictions was more difficult to learn than anticipated. Additionally, the sheer volume of things to manage as a principal was identified as being an area in which focus and support should be given as it relates to creating rules, protocols, and procedures to effectively operate.

Lastly, external development was an area in which support was requested. The focus was not on developing relationships with community members or parents, but rather on how to engage them formally in the school. Creating avenues for parents to be involved in the School Improvement Team, Parent Teacher Organization, or other organizations within the school was identified as an area of support, as well as how to incorporate them into the decision-making process.

Interview Question 4: Which executive standards do you feel are most important for the success of a first-year principal, and why?

All participants in this survey were at one point in time a first-year principal. I asked each participant what standards they felt are needed to ensure success as a first-year principal. Ten of the 15 participants indicated that cultural leadership should be a

priority for first-year principals. Many principals stated that the school culture has to be right before any of the elements from the other standards can be implemented. Having the ability to assess the culture and identify what small changes, if any, need to be made in order to bring collaboration, collegiality, trust, and a team atmosphere to the school is vital, according to principals. Understanding what the school community values and trying to preserve those values and traditions while also making necessary incremental changes are key to the success of a first-year principal.

Other standards that were identified as necessary for the success of a first-year principal include the instructional, human resource, and managerial leadership standards. From an instructional leadership standpoint, ensuring that first-year principals have a process in place to monitor classroom instruction and are able to provide support to struggling teachers is important. Having procedures in place to support PLCs, data analysis, and instructional planning can help first-year principals start on a solid foundation. Also, it was noted that establishing instructional priorities as a new principal sets the tone for the instructional direction for years to come.

Human resource leadership was identified as another priority standard for new principals. All seven principals who identified this standard referenced the ability of a first-year principal to build relationships and empower staff through their trust and confidence in them as important for their success. Lastly, managerial leadership was noted as a priority standard for first-year principals. From the responses, it is evident that the ability to develop routines, procedures, and systems to help with the number of tasks principals are required to manage is crucial. One principal noted that without proper routines and protocols, chaos will ensue.

Interview Question 5: What experiences, related to the Standards for North Carolina School Executives, do you wish you would have had as an assistant principal that would have better prepared you for the principalship?

Question 5 prompted principals to reflect on their preparation as an assistant principal and their professional capacity as a principal. Because principals have spent time as an assistant and now the lead principal, I felt it was beneficial to find out what experiences would have better prepared them for the transition to the principal role. Three standards were identified: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and managerial leadership.

Regarding strategic leadership, six principals noted that having more experience with facilitating the school improvement process, establishing long-range goals, and building a collective vision would have been beneficial to their transition. From the instructional standpoint, having more experience leading PLCs, facilitating instructional conversations, and analyzing data would have proved beneficial. Lastly, training on school finance and budget rose to the top as I spoke to principals about experiences that would have helped their transition. Participants noted that their mentor principal at the time had control over these items and gave very little responsibility or even exposure to them as they served as an assistant principal.

Interview Question 6: Please share any other information regarding your preparational experiences as an assistant principal as it relates to the ability to carry out the NCSSE.

This open-ended question was designed to gain information on preparational experiences as it relates to the ability to carry out the NCSSE. Two standards stood out in

the responses: instructional leadership and managerial leadership. Particularly, in regard to managerial leadership, budget and financial management was the major focus. Additionally, experiential learning was coded 20 times in this one response, which was the highest of any other code frequency.

Principals were clear that the most effective way to learn and build capacity within the NCSSE is simply to have a broader range of experiences that include instructional and financial components. Many principals stated that the time spent as an assistant principal was focused on discipline, testing, and transportation. Only a few principals stated their experience as an assistant principal was all-encompassing and included exposure to all standards.

Elements in which principals stated they feel confident in implementing were attributed to their experiences as an assistant principal. For example, one participant noted that his experience in leading summer school contributed to his confidence in handling scheduling and logistics at the school in which he currently serves. Likewise, experience with discipline and communicating with parents on discipline matters helped one principal build skills to successfully deal with confrontation. Another principal concluded that her experience as an intern and assistant principal equipped her to lead instruction as a first-year principal.

On the contrary, one principal clearly stated that his lack of experience and exposure to the budget caused him to struggle when navigating Title I funds and the restrictions that come with that particular fund source. Another principal stated that he was never tasked with leading anything instructional as an assistant principal, and when he was a first-year principal, he struggled to lead instruction in his building because he

had not been given those experiences. From the responses, it was evident that quality experiences mattered when it came to how prepared these principals felt to operate within the seven primary NCSSE.

Interview Question 7: What other information would you like to share regarding the preparation of assistant principals?

Question 7 was also open-ended and gave participants the ability to share information regarding principal preparation that was not necessarily tied to the executive standards. Two themes, experiential learning and collaboration, were prominent in responses. Providing assistant principals with opportunities to collaborate with principals and district leaders in district-wide leadership meetings and professional development was recommended. Moreover, providing opportunities for assistant principals to collaborate with each other was mentioned as another way to increase preparation efforts of future principals.

As previously mentioned, experiential learning was identified as a necessary function to adequately prepare future principals. Specifically, assigning specific projects to assistant principals that fall out of their ordinary responsibilities would be beneficial, along with providing coaching and feedback. Assistant principals need to be given larger tasks they can “own” and be allowed to make mistakes and even struggle through the implementation efforts. Participants understood that some responsibilities fall on the school principal and no one else. However, they were also quick to suggest that even when situations arise in which the principal takes the lead, assistants should receive exposure to the issue at hand. According to principals, it is important to talk through problems and let assistant principals see the decision-making processes that are used.

Pertaining to experiential learning, principals noted that it is important to give assistant principals exposure to different grade spans as a school administrator. While no participants stated that shuffling principals regularly in order to provide an array of experiences was necessary, they did state how beneficial it would be to have had the opportunity to serve at different grade levels. Specifically, respondents noted that having an opportunity to lead summer school or spending time assisting with back-to-school planning for a different grade span would have been valuable. Lastly, there are two nontraditional schools in our school system, one early college high school and one alternative school. Several principals suggested providing opportunities for assistant principals to learn more about those particular schools since their program delivery is vastly different from that of a traditional setting. In summary, providing learning experiences that are centered on all seven executive standards and the elements within them would pay significant dividends for assistant principals as they transition to the principalship.

Summary of Themes

Table 6 provides a summary of the themes identified in each interview question as it relates to principals' perceptions of preparational experiences for assistant principals. The table also includes themes regarding perceptions of their own ability to lead within the seven primary NCSSE and what they attribute to their professional growth.

Table 6*Overview of Interview Questions and Corresponding Themes*

Interview questions	Emerging themes
1. What experiences do you feel have been most beneficial in your professional growth as a school administrator?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning opportunities that included coaching and feedback. • Collaboration with other principals who have been through similar experiences. • Professional development that incorporates collaboration and experiential learning opportunities.
2. Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel most confident in implementing, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional leadership – primarily noted more in elementary principals • Cultural Leadership • Human resource leadership • Managerial leadership – seen more in secondary principals • Prior experiences were attributed to the confidence in implementing the standards listed above.
3. Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel you need the most support, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic leadership – organizing the School Improvement Team and establishing mission, vision, and long-range goals and implementation plan. • Instructional leadership – focus on secondary principals primarily. • Managerial leadership – budget, school finance, and sheer volume of things to manage. • External development leadership – parental and community engagement in the school improvement process.
4. Which executive standards do you feel are most important for the success of a first-year principal, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural leadership – ensuring an environment of trust, collaboration, and preserving values of the school community. • Instructional leadership – establishing instructional priorities and processes to support PLCs, data analysis, and instructional planning • Human resource leadership – building relationships and empowering staff through trust, confidence, and support. • Managerial leadership – develop routines and procedures to assist with the number of tasks that principals are responsible for.
5. What experiences, related to the Standards for North Carolina School Executives, do you wish you would have had as an assistant principal that would have better prepared you for the principalship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic leadership – school improvement process, long-range goals, and building collective vision. • Instructional leadership – PLCs, instructional conversations, and data analysis. • Managerial – budget and school finance.
6. Please share any other information regarding your preparational experiences as an assistant principal as it relates to the ability to carry out the North Carolina Standards for School Executives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning – directly relates to capacity to lead within the respective standards; more focus on instructional and managerial leadership. • Lack of experience and exposure can cause incapacity to lead effectively within those respective standards

(continued)

Interview questions	Emerging themes
7. What other information would you like to share regarding the preparation of assistant principals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More experiential learning – need a broader range of experiences that encompass all seven NCSSE. • Exposure to other grade spans • Collaboration with district leaders, current principals, and colleagues across the district.

Connection to the Research Questions

The data collected from the survey and interview responses were gathered to assist in answering the following research questions on principal preparation. Below you will find the primary research question and Sub-Questions 1, 2, and 3, along with answers to each question based on the findings. The following questions were established to support the purpose of this study. The sub-questions provided additional information as I sought answers regarding what preparatory experiences are needed for school leaders.

Research Question: What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?

Participant responses from the survey and interviews provided valuable information regarding specific preparatory experiences needed to ensure a successful transition to the principalship. All 21 items within the survey yielded a mean score of 3.47 or higher, indicating that principals spend at least some of their time operating within all seven executive leadership standards. Responses from 17 of the 21 items indicated that principals spent at least a frequent amount of time experiencing tasks associated with those particular standards. From the data, it is evident that preparational experiences that embody all seven standards are necessary for the development of future principals.

Providing experiential learning opportunities for assistant principals was a

common theme in the interview responses. Specifically, allowing assistant principals to take ownership of projects that fall out of their prominent skillset can provide growth opportunities needed to build their leadership capacity. These opportunities should align with all seven standards, however, exposure to strategic (School Improvement Team, long-term planning), instructional (PLCs, data analysis), and managerial (budget, procedures) learning opportunities were identified as focus areas for assistant principal development.

Sub-Question 1: How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?

Principals were asked to rate their level of agreement regarding the frequency in which they experience the stated task or responsibility listed. Principals completed a 21-item survey using a 5-point Likert scale. The response options that principals were given included (1) almost never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) frequently, and (5) almost always.

Results from the survey indicated principals perceive their daily tasks and responsibilities align with the seven executive standards a significant amount of time. When considering there are seven standards, no standard had a mean score below 3.47, which meant principals spent some to a frequent amount of their time operating within the seven standards and elements. Seventeen of the 21 elements had a mean score above 4, meaning they perceive they spend a frequent to almost all of their time working within the tasks and responsibilities of those 17 elements. There was only one standard that had a mean score less than 4, human resources leadership, indicating principals spent some to a frequent amount of their time within the responsibilities and tasks aligned with that

standard. Although the mean score for the human resource standard was below 4, two of the three elements within that standard had a mean score above 4.

The two standards with the highest mean score were micropolitical leadership (4.53) and cultural leadership (4.42). Overall, the data suggest that principals perceive their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE frequently to almost all of the time. The data suggest that professional development for assistant principals should be aligned with all seven of the NCSSE in order to ensure a successful transition to the principalship.

Sub-Question 2: How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?

Regarding the qualitative survey findings, there was no significant difference in the mean responses between elementary, middle, and high school, or between elementary and secondary participants. Results from the interviews, however, indicated some variance. Based on interview responses, elementary principals feel more confident in implementing Standard 2, instructional leadership, than their colleagues at the middle or high school levels. Conversely, secondary principals feel more confident implementing Standard 5, managerial leadership, than elementary principals.

Data supports the need for more preparational opportunities around instructional leadership for those with a background in secondary education. There is no noted difference in perceptions of preparational experience outside of the instructional leadership standard. Many principals, regardless of the level at which they serve, share similar perceptions regarding preparational experiences.

Sub-Question 3: What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the NCSSE?

Principals were clear in their interview responses that more experiential learning opportunities that align with strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and managerial leadership would have better prepared them for the principalship. Moreover, understanding the school improvement and long-range planning processes would have been beneficial to their preparedness. Understanding how to lead PLCs, instructional conversations, and data analysis, as well as having additional knowledge of the budget and school finance portion of managerial leadership, would have proven valuable to their transition.

Throughout the professional development of all executive standards, principals noted how important collaboration and experiences were to the development of assistant principals. Participants stated they were often relegated to certain tasks, primarily discipline, testing, and transportation, and that having a wider variety of experiences would have impacted their ability to lead the seven standards as a first-year principal. Additional opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other administrators were also noted as something that would have benefited their professional growth.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 4 provided a detailed overview of the research findings, which included two parts, a 21-item survey and responses to seven interview questions. Each item within the survey was directly aligned with one of the seven standards for school executives. The survey was designed to gather principal perceptions regarding how much of their daily tasks and responsibilities align with the seven NCSSE. The interview questions

were intended to gain perspectives on the confidence levels of principals to implement the respective standards, as well as learn more about what they felt contributed to their ability to serve as school principals. Participants provided valuable feedback regarding specific professional development experiences that are needed to ensure a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal position.

Survey results revealed that principals spent a significant amount of their time operating within all seven of the NCSSE. While some standards yielded higher mean scores than others, all standards were deemed important to the operation and success of the school principal and were labeled as tasks regularly completed by principals. Interview findings concluded that collaboration and hands-on experiential learning is the most effective form of professional development. Providing assistant principals with the opportunity to take ownership and work through mistakes, with the support of the principal, is crucial to their development. Additionally, strategic, instructional, and managerial leadership are areas in which school districts need to focus to ensure a successful transition to the principal position.

The sequential mixed methods design used in this research was intended to use interview responses to help explain the quantitative responses in the survey. However, with further review, there is no significant connection to confidence, or lack thereof, in implementing any of the particular standards or the amount of time principals spend operating within them. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research, highlighting significant findings, as well as offers a reflection, discussion of limitations, delimitations, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of current school principals to determine how their daily tasks aligned with the NCSSE and to examine their perceived leadership capacity to implement the NCSSE in their respective schools. To accomplish this, principals participated in a two-part research study. Part 1 included a 21-item survey that measured participants' agreement with relevant statements regarding the execution of practices that aligned with the seven primary NCSSE. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale to rate their level of agreement on the amount of time they spent operating within the tasks or responsibilities within each standard. The scale included five options: (1) almost never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) frequently, and (5) almost always. All seven of the primary NCSSE were represented in the survey, each containing three items, for a total of 21 items. This portion of the research was important to ensure future professional development offerings for assistant principals align with the tasks and responsibilities school leaders experience regularly.

The second part of the research consisted of interviews with the same participants as Part 1. Each participant was asked seven interview questions pertaining to their confidence to implement the seven executive standards, as well as other questions regarding prior experience as an assistant principal and overall perceptions related to principal preparation. While some questions directly related to preparation efforts regarding the NCSSE, some questions provided an opportunity for participants to share their individual perceptions and insights regarding leadership development.

There were 15 participants who took part in the survey. All of them were school

leaders serving as the lead principal in their respective schools, all located in a small rural school district in northwest North Carolina. Participants were selected because of their knowledge and understanding of the topic and their prior experience serving in the assistant principal role before transitioning to the principal position. Of the 15 participants, nine worked at the elementary school level, two worked at the middle school level, and four were principals at the high school level.

One research question along with three sub-questions provided a structure for both components of the research design. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

What changes in preparatory experiences need to occur for a successful transition from the assistant principal to the principal role?

1. How do principals perceive that their daily tasks align with the best practices identified through the NCSSE?
2. How do perceptions of preparational experiences differ among principals who lead elementary, middle, and high schools?
3. What additional support could have been beneficial to assist with administrator preparedness that is aligned with the seven standards in the NCSSE?

Responses from the survey and interview questions helped answer the research questions and provided data to guide the district's professional development efforts. The subsequent paragraphs summarize the themes and findings from the survey, and interview portions of the study informed those answers and overall conclusions to the research.

Summary of Research

There were 21 total items included in the survey (Appendix C), representing all seven of the primary NCSSE. The mean response scores for all items ranged from 3.47 to 4.67, concluding participants felt they regularly experienced tasks and responsibilities related to all 21 items at least some of the time to almost always. The response rates indicated all seven standards and 21 elements are significant to the role of the school principal; thus, quality professional development should be in place since aspiring principals can expect to spend a large portion of their time operating within those elements.

The cultural and micropolitical leadership standards had the highest mean response scores of 4.53 and 4.42 respectively, signifying principals spend a frequent amount to almost all of their time completing tasks and responsibilities within those two standards. When examining all seven standards as a whole, the lowest mean score for a standard was 3.93, the human resource leadership standard. Although this standard had the lowest mean score, it still fell within a range indicating it was a regular responsibility for principals. NCDPI and NCSBE (2008) established the executive leadership standards as best practices for school administrators to guide their day-to-day work within schools to ensure the best possible student outcomes. The executive standards are intended to serve as a framework for school leaders and, based on survey results, are consistently aligned with the tasks school principals experience regularly.

Additional data from the survey revealed that while there was a slight variance in responses, most principals had similar views on how they spent their time. The standard deviation for all responses was .66, indicating that responses were quite similar

throughout the survey portion of the study. A standard deviation above 1 would have indicated there was greater variability within the responses. Of the 315 total item responses by principals, 85.3% of the responses suggested school leaders spend a “frequent amount to almost all” of their time completing tasks and responsibilities related to the seven standards. Additionally, 13.3% of responses indicated principals spent at least some of the time functioning within the seven NCSSE. These data are significant and are consistent with the framework North Carolina school leaders are expected to follow.

The intent of the interview questions was to provide additional data to enhance the district’s professional development efforts of assistant principals to support the transition to the principalship. Each participant was asked the same seven interview questions (Appendix D); all centered on their perceived leadership ability to implement the NCSSE, as well as their thoughts on leadership development and prior experiences to which they attributed to their professional growth. The responses allowed me to identify themes and trends that contributed to the goal of the research.

Experiential, hands-on learning opportunities emerged as a beneficial professional growth opportunity many principals attributed to their current ability to lead. As Cunningham et al. (2018) suggested, professional learning experiences equip school leaders with tools to lead the challenges schools regularly face. Principals in this study confirmed this idea by concluding that experiences played a significant role in their transition to the principalship. All participants indicated their assistant principal experiences were vital to their transition to the principalship; however, participants I-2, I-4, I-8, I-9, I-12, I-13, and I-14 noted prior experience as a teacher or coach was also

valuable. Participants I-2, I-3, I-6, I-7, I-8, I-11, I-12, and I-13 felt the areas in which they were given the most responsibility as an assistant principal were the same leadership areas they felt confident in as a first-year principal. These responsibilities were instructional and managerial in nature.

Collaboration was also critical for the growth of school principals. As Portin et al. (2003) affirmed, all schools need structures in place to promote collaboration. Whether the partnerships included colleagues across the district, leadership at the central office, or interactions with mentor principals, having the ability to collaborate with other professionals broadens principal perspectives and increases their capacity to lead. Participants I-1, I-2, I-4, I-10, I-11, and I-15 commended the district on the time set aside for collaboration and advocated for more time to grow together as professionals. Two principals, I-8 and I-15, also noted professional development, particularly when combined with an experiential component, played a major role in their ability to lead effectively.

Instructional leadership, cultural leadership, human resources leadership, and managerial leadership stood out as areas principals felt confident implementing. It is important to note elementary principals felt more confident implementing the tasks and responsibilities associated with instructional leadership than secondary principals. Specifically, Participants I-2, I-7, I-8, I-9, and I-15 are all elementary principals and concluded instructional leadership was an area in which they felt most confident. Participant I-1 also felt most confident in the instructional leadership standard, and although a secondary principal, they had significant elementary experience as a teacher and assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. Secondary Principals, I-3, I-5, I-6,

I-12, and I-13 felt more comfortable, in general, operating within the managerial standard. Elementary Principal I-2 also noted managerial leadership as an area of confidence; however, they spent a significant amount of time at the secondary level prior to becoming an elementary principal. There was no significant difference in regard to cultural or human resource leadership responses between elementary, middle, and high school principals.

Four standards were identified as areas in which principals needed more support: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and external development leadership. Seven principals, I-3, I-5, I-6, I-9, I-11, I-12, and I-14, noted instructional leadership was an area they did not feel confident leading, and all of them served at the secondary level or spent a significant amount of time at the secondary level prior to becoming a principal. Fullan (2018) suggested the principal should be able to lead teaching and learning in their buildings in order to promote ongoing advancement. Instructional leadership development should be a focus for school principals.

As it relates to strategic leadership, several principals did not feel confident leading the school improvement process or establishing a long-range vision for their school. Specifically, Participants I-2, I-7, I-9, and I-15 indicated this was an area they did not feel fully capable leading within their respective schools. Schmoker (2016) and Hughes et al. (2014) were clear that distributing leadership across an organization through strategic, collaborative planning dramatically impacted long-term success. Moreover, the time spent implementing actionable steps of the long-term strategic plan was even more important. From a managerial standpoint, 53% of participants shared their concerns regarding the lack of preparation to adequately lead school finance and

budgetary issues. In contrast, one participant, I-10, stated their mentor principal included them in every budget meeting and taught them skills necessary to navigate budget and school finance. Those experiences positively impacted their ability to lead this managerial leadership element with confidence when they transitioned to the principal role. Lastly, external development was listed primarily due to principals' lack of knowledge and skills to effectively incorporate parents and community members in the school improvement process. Several principals, Participants I-2, I-12, I-13, and I-15, shared that they struggle implementing formal opportunities to engage parents and the community as much as they would like.

Cultural leadership was identified by over 65% of participants as being the most important standard for first-year principals. The ability of novice principals to assess and value cultural norms is critical as they attempt to make their own mark on the school's culture. Additionally, implementing a school culture that is positive and inviting and centers on collaborative practices involving students, staff, parents, and the community is critical for first-year principals (Shafer, 2018). Principal I-12 stated that if a school's culture is not right, no other standard implementation efforts will be fully realized. If implemented correctly, cultural leadership would lay a solid foundation to successfully implement all other standards.

To conclude the findings summary, it should be noted principals placed a premium on experiences received prior to taking the principal position. From my interview conversations, all participants concluded a relationship exists between the experiences of an assistant principal and their ability to lead within the seven primary NCSSE as a principal. Regardless of what standard(s) principals felt most confident in,

they attributed their confidence to their preparational experiences. These findings are consistent with the GriffinJordan (2021) study, which concluded assistant principal experiences positively impact an assistant principal's readiness to transition to the principal position.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of school principals to conclude how their daily tasks and responsibilities aligned with the NCSSE and to examine their perceived leadership capacity to implement the NCSSE. The data gathered also informed appropriate professional development for assistant principals to ensure their transition to the principalship is successful. According to NCDPI and NCSBE (2008), school administrators in North Carolina are equipped with a framework that incorporates seven practicable standards to guide the daily work of principals and assistant principals. Through the study, I was able to determine how the tasks and daily responsibilities of these seven standards actually align with the daily tasks and interactions of school principals. Additionally, I gained a better understanding of how preparational experiences influenced the transition to the principalship.

Principal turnover is on the rise, with approximately one of every five schools welcoming a new principal each year (Levin et al., 2019). As Santelli (2018) suggested, turnover rates are increasing partly because formal training programs alone do not prepare administrators for the demands principals will experience in the position. The demands are multifaceted and require a skillset of a transformational leader, not simply one who can manage the building (Bartoletti & Connelly, 2013). Most often, assistant principals are the ones transitioning into these principal vacancies; therefore, educational

leaders should ensure a successful transition for future principals by incorporating relevant professional development opportunities aligned with the experiences they will encounter as a principal. The subsequent sections include the implications for practice, paralleled with recommendations based on the study results.

Professional Development

The results of this study indicate principals operate within all seven primary executive standards on a regular basis, thus implying district professional development efforts should incorporate all seven standards and the associated practices and tasks. One hundred percent of participants in this study expressed a direct relationship between their preparational experiences prior to becoming a principal and the level of confidence they had to operate within the standards. Participant I-10, in particular, concluded while formal training and professional development helped prepare for the transition to the principalship, the daily tasks experienced on the job had a bigger impact on their readiness to lead. They added there are many things that happen daily that assistant principals cannot mimic through formal education and training.

Assistant Principal Institute. The first recommendation is to provide an assistant principal institute for all assistant principals in the district. As indicated in the research, the daily tasks and responsibilities principals' experience aligned consistently with seven primary executive standards; however, the same is not true for assistant principals. Unfortunately, assistant principals do not traditionally receive the same experiences and are often limited to tasks that are managerial in nature (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

One hundred percent of principals in this study indicated that while they spent a routine amount of time operating within the seven primary standards, their time as an

assistant principal was quite different. Specifically, all 15 participants concluded that as assistant principals, they were often relegated to tasks they already felt comfortable with and aligned with their skill set. Therefore, if they were a strong manager and good at logistics and conflict resolution, they were confined to managerial-type responsibilities, or if curriculum and instruction were strengths, they were given tasks and responsibilities that aligned accordingly. Rarely were assistant principals given opportunities to grow outside of the area where they felt most confident.

The response data collected in the research directly supports that not all assistant principals are given experiences that expand their leadership capacity to lead within all seven executive standards. Fifty-three percent of participants concluded managerial leadership was a standard to which they did not receive enough exposure, particularly as it pertained to school finance and budget. Forty-six percent of participants indicated instructional leadership was not a priority during their assistant principal experience, and 26% indicated strategic leadership was an area where they received little to no exposure. To ensure assistant principals receive all-inclusive experiences, which expand all seven executive standards, a professional learning institute for assistant principals would be beneficial. The institute would take place once per month and include a variety of guest speakers, site visits, and real-world scenarios for these future principals to consider, all centered around the NCSSE.

Within the institute, district leaders would provide professional development on all seven standards, as well as scenarios and experiences for assistant principals to practice together. Over 98% of total survey responses indicated principals routinely spent time fulfilling the practices identified in all seven primary executive standards.

Additionally, experiential learning was coded significantly higher than any other factor that positively influenced professional growth within the participants. Participant I-3 stated in the interview portion of the research that their assistant principal experience certainly contributed to their professional growth; however, there are many facets of the principalship you cannot fully understand until you do it. Moreover, 100% of respondents concluded the experiences received as an assistant principal were not all-inclusive and did not cover all practices within the seven executive standards. Therefore, a proposed assistant principal institute that encompasses experiential training on all seven standards would provide an opportunity to gain hands-on experience that assistant principals may not receive as part of their routine tasks and responsibilities.

Increased Professional Development for Principals. Additionally, the data gave noteworthy insight into the needs of current principals. While all standards have been identified as critical for the success of the school principal, current principals should receive ongoing professional growth opportunities in several standards to ensure their skillset and confidence are sufficient to lead necessary change. Quality professional development can give principals the skills needed to identify and respond to needs within the school (Sparks, 2020).

One of the standards in which principals should receive ongoing professional development is instructional leadership. Cross and Rice (2000) concluded that schools that perform at a consistently high level are led by principals who emphasize and monitor instructional practices regularly. The mean response score for the instructional leadership standard was 4.13, indicating that principals spent significant time operating within instructional leadership; however, some may not feel fully equipped to alter the

instructional program or teaching practices within their respective schools. Specifically, 46% of respondents indicated instructional leadership was an area in which they need more support. The participants who responded in this manner currently work at the secondary level or had a significant number of pre-principal experiences at the secondary level. If principals are to lead teaching and learning in their schools, districts must ensure they have the capacity to do so effectively. With that said, there were other specific standards identified that principals did not feel completely comfortable implementing, primarily due to a lack of exposure and training.

Managerial and strategic leadership were other standards in which some principals did not feel adequately equipped to lead within their schools. For Participants I-1, I-2, I-5, I-6, I-9, I-11, I-12, and I-15, this included managerial leadership, specifically a lack of preparation on school budget and finance, whereas other participants, I-2, I-7, I-9, and I-15, lacked confidence in organizing school improvement efforts and long-term goal setting and implementation, which falls under strategic leadership. For principals with a background in secondary education, I-3, I-5, I-6, I-9, I-11, I-12, and I-14, it was a lack of confidence to effectively implement instructional leadership in their building.

It is recommended that current principals receive regular professional development on all seven leadership standards and be encouraged to seek professional development opportunities outside of the district. Districts should not imply that all current principals fully understand the executive standards, nor the tasks and responsibilities noted within them. The district should provide ongoing professional development on the executive standards to ensure principals continue to grow in the seven executive standards and are capable of leading effective schools.

Mentorship and Collaboration

An additional recommendation for the district is to incorporate a formal mentorship program that includes training for current principals on their role as a mentor and how to share leadership experiences with their assistant principals. Levin et al. (2020) stated implementing a strong mentoring program is one way to effectively onboard administrators and ensure their success. As noted in this study, experiences directly impacted the confidence to lead within the tasks and responsibilities associated with each standard at the lead principal level, especially when given the chance to work collaboratively alongside their mentor principal. Participant I-8 concluded that their formal preparational program included a mentoring component that contributed immensely toward their professional growth and positively impacted their ability to lead as a first-year principal. Participant I-10 added the ability to work alongside a principal who allowed them to shadow closely gave them the confidence and skills to handle the daily demands of the position.

Mentorship experiences provide enhanced self-awareness, encouragement, and valuable feedback for assistant principals as they remain aligned with the vision of the school and district (Longenecker & McCartney, 2020). Lead principals are directly responsible for assigning duties and responsibilities to their assistant principals and are tasked with developing their leadership capacity. Understanding the importance of the mentor/mentee relationship is vital, not only for the development of assistant principals but also for the success of the building-level principal (Levin & Bradley, 2019).

A successful mentorship program will include professional development for principals on giving appropriate feedback, professional coaching, and distributive

leadership. Principals are not to be solely responsible for the implementation of the executive standards but should include their assistant principals in an effort to develop their skillset and also support the work of the principal. Principals will meet with the superintendent or other district-level personnel at least once per quarter to discuss the mentor/mentee relationship and their role in developing their assistant principal(s). Principals should also work alongside assistant principals and use their self-evaluation form to establish a workable plan to address the deficiencies in their leadership skillset.

My study, along with supporting research, concludes the value of a mentor to an assistant principal is significant and plays a vital role in their professional growth and development. Specifically, the results from the study indicate that collaborative coaching and mentoring efforts strengthen professional growth opportunities for school administrators. Therefore, a formal mentor and coaching experience will be established in the district. Principals will be expected to serve as ongoing mentors for their assistant principals, encouraging regular conversation and informal dialogue around the daily experiences and tasks the administrative team experiences. To ensure lead principals are prepared to mentor their assistant principals, mentor principals will receive training and support on the importance of delegating responsibility, relinquishing control to allow assistant principals to grow and develop, giving appropriate feedback, and executive coaching.

The assistant principal institute will also include an executive coaching and mentoring component in which participants will be assigned a mentor. The mentors will be district-level administrators (superintendent, assistant superintendent, and directors) who have spent time as school principals. This will provide all assistant principals a

chance to see how colleagues at other grade spans process situations and allow them to gain new perspectives on leadership as it pertains to the standards. Mentors will work closely with participants on the experiential components within the institute and will serve as a partner with whom they can bounce ideas and process their thinking. Additionally, mentors will provide specific and timely feedback on the participants' work, contributing to their professional growth (Walters et al., 2019).

The district will also provide opportunities for collaboration through formal and informal opportunities. Sixty percent of principals stated collaboration is beneficial to professional growth and the value of working alongside colleagues broadens the lens through which they view situations they encounter regularly. Therefore, participants will complete the institute together as a cohort and have opportunities to collaborate as professionals. Over the summer when school is not in session, it is recommended that assistant principals collaborate with colleagues outside of their grade span to discuss planning for the upcoming school year. This process alone will expose assistant principals to the intricacies involved in the budget preparation, scheduling, personnel assignments, and procedures used at different grade spans. Again, these types of experiences will broaden assistant principals' perspectives and increase their capacity to lead at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Leadership Opportunities

My study concluded that school administrators value experiential learning and growth opportunities that allow them to take ownership of a project. When coupled with effective coaching, experiential learning opportunities, which can include productive failure, significantly impacts leadership development. My study confirmed that assistant

principals need to be assigned a project or task where they can take ownership, with coaching from their mentor principal. Specifically, Participant I-3 noted they would have benefited greatly if they would have been given an opportunity to lead something on their own, instead of always taking a support role to the principal. This participant stated they wish they would have been given ownership of an instructional problem in the school because they were not prepared to address instructional problems as a first-year principal. Allowing assistant principals to take responsibility for planning and executing specific tasks will build confidence to do the same when they transition to the principal position.

I recommend the district provide opportunities for assistant principals to take formal leadership roles within the district to build their leadership capacity. For example, the district should utilize assistant principals to lead district-wide events such as Battle of the Books, science fairs, spelling bees, curriculum nights, and other scholastic events. Additionally, they should take a lead role in developing, planning, and implementing the summer learning program within the district. All participants stated having opportunities to lead and experience hands-on opportunities to learn was the most valuable contributor to their professional growth. Additionally, all 15 participants concluded hands-on experience is the most important contributor to their professional growth. Portin et al. (2003) concluded in their study that a majority of administrators felt their experiences prior to becoming a principal contributed most to their professional growth. Incorporating experiential learning for assistant principals and assigning them tasks and responsibilities they can fulfill as part of their routine assignments will provide them an opportunity to grow and learn in a low-risk environment with appropriate coaching. This will serve as a beneficial opportunity for assistant principals to take a lead role in planning and

executing district-wide events while building their professional capacity.

Collaboration With University Preparation Programs

Santelli (2018) concluded in their research that formal training alone does not adequately prepare assistant principals for the transition to the principalship and could be the root cause of increased turnover. The district will take a proactive approach to meet with university-level principal preparation programs to open avenues of collaboration and conversation around principal preparation. While formal training may not fully prepare administrators for the daily demands, efforts should be made to enhance the formal education experience to ensure it aligns with the tasks and responsibilities of the lead principal.

All 15 principals who participated in this research indicated that while their formal training and education positively contributed to their preparation, it was far from sufficient and lacked experiential components that encompassed the daily responsibilities and tasks principals encounter. As Participant I-10 noted, there are many tasks and responsibilities principals encounter that are difficult to mirror. Portin et al. (2003) affirmed in their research that school administrators felt their formal training had very little impact on their ability to perform their assigned duties as school administrators. Principals spend time and energy completing required formal training; therefore, it should reflect realistic school administrator experiences. It is recommended the district spearhead conversations with principal preparation programs and open lines of communication to discuss findings in this study and ways to improve the principal preparation experience.

Summary of Implications

The results from my study, along with research conducted in the literature review, have allowed me to establish meaningful implications for practitioners to consider. These implications, accompanied by specific recommendations, are summarized below.

- The district should incorporate an assistant principal institute in which assistant principals gain professional development, along with hands-on experiential learning opportunities, all centered around the seven primary standards for school executives. The assistant principal institute should include executive coaching and mentoring throughout the program to enhance the learning experience.
- The district should implement ongoing professional development for current principals on the NCSSE and encourage professional development opportunities beyond the school district that include opportunities for collaboration.
- The district should establish a strong mentoring program that promotes collaborative coaching between principals and assistant principals.
- The district should provide informal and formal opportunities for collaboration for current principals, assistant principals, and the district leadership team.
- The district should provide formal leadership opportunities for assistant principals to lead district events. They should be given ownership and the responsibility to plan and execute the event with guidance from district leadership.

- The district should build avenues for collaboration with college and university-level preparation programs to strengthen the formal educational experience aspiring administrators receive.

Limitations

The school district in which the survey was conducted is relatively small; therefore, the findings of the research were limited and should be used alongside other bodies of research to accurately form conclusions about principal preparation.

Additionally, I served as the assistant superintendent of the district in which the research took place. Although I was not an evaluator of any of these administrators, participants may not have been completely forthright when responding. During the initial phase of participant selection, I communicated how important it was they were honest in their responses and that the findings from the surveys and interviews would only be used to strengthen the professional development within our school system.

Additional limitations may include a lack of administrative experience from some of the educational leaders who participated in the study. Depending on the number of years spent in educational leadership, some administrator responses may be limited due to a lack of experience within the assistant principal role. Lastly, because of my role within the district, school leaders may have felt pressured to volunteer for the survey, and their results may have contained bias which could have skewed the results.

Suggestions for Future Research

The body of work within this research project has contributed to the field of educational leadership and should be used alongside other relevant literature and academic studies to draw informed conclusions on principal preparation. Because this

study was limited to a rural school district in northwest North Carolina, additional research is needed to strengthen the impact of the study.

Assistant Principal Perceptions

The research presented in this study focused specifically on the practices and perceptions of principals and their leadership pertaining to the NCSSE. Conducting a similar study in which assistant principals align their daily tasks and responsibilities with the seven executive standards would prompt further discussion about the types of roles and tasks they are assigned. It would also give more information on the variance between principal and assistant principal perceptions and could potentially establish exemplary mentor/mentee relationships that the district could research more extensively. The study would also allow current assistant principals to share their thoughts and ideas on their preparation and perceived ability to lead within the executive standards.

Larger Participant Study

The participants identified for this study were principals in a rural school district in northwest North Carolina. To strengthen the research, similar studies should be expanded to cover different regions in the state in an effort to capture diverse perspectives. Conducting a regional or state-wide research project of a similar nature would yield results that could support or contradict the findings. Either way, a larger participant pool would provide more comprehensive research from which to draw informed conclusions.

District Professional Development

The goal of this study was to examine principal perceptions of their ability to carry out the NCSSE as well as to determine how aligned their daily tasks and

responsibilities were to the NCSSE. A larger study of principal perceptions across the state of North Carolina would provide a substantial amount of data to consider.

Additionally, conducting research on principal preparation and the impact of district professional development regarding the principals' perceived abilities to lead would be beneficial to all school districts. Some districts provide a large amount of professional development for principals, while others do not. The topics covered within these professional development sessions can differ substantially; therefore, pinpointing district professional development programs and their relationship to principal perceptions could bring value to school systems as they determine their professional development efforts moving forward.

Final Reflection

The purpose of this research study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the seven primary standards for North Carolina school executives align with the daily tasks and responsibilities school principals encounter. Additionally, I sought to identify the standards principals felt most confident implementing, and why. All this information was used to identify the changes needed in professional development for school administrators, particularly assistant principals as they transition to the principalship. Having knowledge of what principals value with regard to professional development was beneficial to establishing meaningful professional learning opportunities moving forward.

There was one research question along with three sub-questions that served as the focal point during the study. These questions were answered through a 21-item survey and/or an interview which consisted of seven questions. Each participant completed both

portions of the research and offered valuable information as I was able to establish themes and conclude findings that contributed to the overall purpose. The findings and conclusions are summarized below.

1. The daily tasks and responsibilities of school principals are directly aligned with the best practices identified in the NCSSE.
2. Principals feel the most confident implementing executive standards in which they had significant training and experience.
3. Principals feel less confident implementing executive standards to which they had little to no exposure, training, or experience.
4. Principals established there is a direct relationship between their experiences as an assistant principal and their confidence to lead as a first-year principal.
5. Experiential, hands-on learning opportunities are needed to successfully implement an assistant principal professional development program.
6. Opportunities for collaboration among colleagues are beneficial to the professional growth of school administrators.
7. All seven primary executive standards should be included in the training of assistant principals.

Conducting my study on assistant principal preparation has allowed me to introspectively assess the professional development currently offered to school administrators. Principals are influential to the success of the schools they lead, and sometimes, they are the most influential person who can impact student achievement within the school (Gendron, 2018). Therefore, it is the collective responsibility of the district leadership team, including the superintendent, senior leadership, and directors, to

equip assistant principals with the skills necessary that will provide a successful transition to the principalship. Education is critical to the development of students across the world. A quality educational experience provides immense opportunities for students to become highly skilled, impactful leaders. Districts must ensure future principals are equipped to deliver a dynamic and fruitful educational experience, prioritizing student development and academic success. This is an imperative step that we must take to invest in our future!

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Appendix A

North Carolina Standards for School Executives



North Carolina Standards for School Executives

As Approved by the State Board of Education
December 2006 and July 2011

Revised May 2, 2013



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS DIVISION
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A New Vision of School Leadership

Public education's changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader – an executive instead of an administrator. No longer are school leaders just maintaining the status quo by managing complex operations, but just like their colleagues in business, they must be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. Schools need executives who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children. Out of these relationships the executive must create among staff a common shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school, its values that direct its action, and commitment and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision-making. The staff's common understanding of the school's identity empowers them to seek and build powerful alliances and partnerships with students, parents and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to produce increased student achievement. The successful work of the new executive will only be realized in the creation of a culture in which leadership is distributed and encouraged with teachers, which consists of open, honest communication, which is focused on the use of data, teamwork, research-based best practices, and which uses modern tools to drive ethical and principled, goal-oriented action. This culture of disciplined thought and action is rooted in the ability of the relationships among all stakeholders to build a trusting, transparent environment that reduces all stakeholders' sense of vulnerability as they address the challenges of transformational change.

Philosophical Foundations of the Standards

The standards are predicated on the following beliefs:

- Today schools must have proactive school executives who possess a great sense of urgency.
- The goal of school leadership is to transform schools so that large-scale, sustainable, continuous improvement becomes built in to their mode of operation.
- The moral purpose of school leadership is to create schools in which all students learn, the gap between high and low performance is greatly diminished and what students learn will prepare them for success in their futures, not ours.
- Leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school district.
- The work of leadership is about working with, for and through people. It is a social act. Whether we are discussing instructional leadership, change leadership or leadership as learning, people are always the medium for the leader.
- Leadership is not about doing everything oneself but it is always about creating processes and systems that will cause everything to happen.
- Leadership is about the executive's ability to select and develop a strong executive staff whose complementary strengths promote excellence in all eight functions of leadership identified in this document.
- The concept of leadership is extremely complex and systemic in nature. Isolating the parts of leadership completely misses the power of the whole. It is not

just knowing what to do, but why to do it, how to do it and when to do it.

- Within a school district there are nested leadership systems (local boards of education, central office, school, and classroom). For the organization to be successful, these systems must be aligned and supportive, and function as a team.
- Leadership is about setting direction, and aligning and motivating people to implement positive sustained improvement.
- Leaders bring their “person” to the practice of leadership. Matching the context of leadership to the “person” of the individual is important to the success of the leader.

- **Practices** – The practices are statements of what one would see an effective executive doing in each standard. The lists of practices are not meant to be exhaustive.
- **Artifacts** – The artifacts are 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.
- **Competencies** – Although not articulated, there are many obvious competencies inherent in the practices of each critical leadership function. This document concludes with a list of those competencies which may not be obvious but that support practice in multiple leadership functions.

Intended Purposes of the Standards

The North Carolina School Executive Standards have been developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers.

Although there are many influences on a school executive’s development, these standards will serve as an important tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21st century. Taken as a whole these standards, practices and competencies are overwhelming. One might ask, “How can one person possess all of these?” The answer is, one person cannot. It is, therefore, imperative that a school executive understands the importance of building an executive team that has complementary skills. The more diversity that exists on the team, the more likely the team will be to demonstrate high performance in all critical function areas. The main responsibility of the school executive is to create aligned systems of leadership throughout the school and its community.

In addition, these standards will serve other audiences and purposes. These standards will:

- Inform higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of school executive degree programs;
- Focus the goals and objectives of districts as they support, monitor and evaluate their school executives;
- Guide professional development for school executives;
- Serve as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for school executives.

Organization of the Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

- **Standard** – The standard is the broad category of the executive’s knowledge and skills.
- **Summary** – The summary more fully describes the content and rationale of each standard.

The Eight Standards of Executive Leadership and Their Connection

Relevant national reports and research in the field focused on identifying the practices of leadership that impact student achievement were considered in the development of these standards. Particularly helpful were the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework, and work by the Wallace Foundation, the Mid-continental Regional Education Laboratory, the Charlotte Advocates for Education and the Southern Regional Education Board. Work by the National Staff Development Council, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 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. Additionally, input was solicited from stakeholders and leaders in the field.

The eight critical standards used as the framework for the North Carolina School Executive Standards are borrowed from a Wallace Foundation study, *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship* (2003). Unlike many current efforts that look at all of the things principals “might” or “should” do, this study examined what principals actually do. As such, it is grounded in practice, exploits story and narrative, and supports the distribution of leadership rather than the “hero leader.”

North Carolina’s Standards for School Executives are interrelated and connect in executives’ practice. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices. Executives’ abilities in each standard will impact their ability to perform effectively in other standard areas. For example, the ability of an executive to evaluate and develop staff will directly impact the school’s ability to reach its goals and will also impact the norms of the culture of the school. School executives are responsible for ensuring that leadership happens in all eight critical areas, but they don’t have to provide it.

STANDARD 1**Strategic Leadership**

Summary: School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Practices: The school executive practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- Is able to share a vision of the changing world in the 21st century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes;
- Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- Utilizes data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey in developing the framework for continual improvement in the School Improvement Plan;
- Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st century skills;
- Creates with all stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination;
- Creates processes that provide for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all school stakeholders;
- Creates processes to ensure the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school;
- Adheres to statutory requirements regarding the School Improvement Plan;
- Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives;
- Facilitates the successful execution of the school improvement plan aligned to the mission and goals set by the State Board of Education;
- Facilitates the implementation of state education policy inside the school's classrooms;
- Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;
- Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning that reflect latest research and best practices and in preparing students for success in college or in work;
- Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

Artifacts:

- Degree to which school improvement plan strategies are implemented, assessed and modified
- Evidence of an effectively functioning, elected School Improvement Team
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- School Improvement Plan, its alignment with district and state strategic priorities, and a plan for growth on items of concern as evidenced in the NC TWC Survey
- The degree to which staff can articulate the school's direction and focus
- Student testing data



STANDARD 2

Instructional Leadership

Summary: School executives will set high standards for the professional practice of 21st century instruction and assessment that result in a no-nonsense, accountable environment. The school executive must be knowledgeable of best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school for the design of highly engaging schoolwork for students, the on-going peer review of this work and the sharing of this work throughout the professional community.

Practices: The school executive practices effective instructional leadership when he or she:

- Focuses his or her own and others' attention persistently and publicly on learning and teaching by initiating and guiding conversations about instruction and student learning that are oriented towards high expectations and concrete goals;
- Creates an environment of practiced, distributive leadership and teacher empowerment;
- Demonstrates knowledge of 21st century curriculum, instruction, and assessment by leading or participating in meetings with teachers and parents where these topics are discussed, and/or holding frequent formal or informal conversations with students, staff and parents around these topics;
- Ensures that there is an appropriate and logical alignment between the curriculum of the school and the state's accountability program;
- Creates processes and schedules that facilitate the collaborative (team) design, sharing, evaluation, and archiving of rigorous, relevant, and engaging instructional lessons that ensure students acquire essential knowledge;
- Challenges staff to reflect deeply on and define what knowledge, skills and concepts are essential to the complete educational development of students;
- Creates processes for collecting and using student test data and other formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction;
- Creates processes for identifying, benchmarking and providing students access to a variety of 21st century instructional tools (e.g., technology) and best practices for meeting diverse student needs;
- Creates processes that ensure the strategic allocation and use of resources to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs;
- Creates processes to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction;

- Creates processes that protect teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time; and
- Systematically and frequently observes in classrooms and engages in conversation with students about their learning.

Artifacts:

- School Improvement Plan
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- Student achievement data
- Dropout data
- Teacher retention data
- Documented use of formative assessment instruments to impact instruction
- Development and communication of goal-oriented personalized education plans for identified students (ESOL, exceptional children, Level I and Level II children)
- Evidence of the team development and evaluation of classroom lessons

STANDARD 3

Cultural Leadership

Summary: School executives will understand and act on the understanding of the important role a school's culture contributes to the exemplary performance of the school. School executives must support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future. A school executive must be able to "recreate" the school if needed to align with school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school as the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals.

Practices: The school executive practices effective cultural leadership when he or she:

- Creates a collaborative work environment predicated on site-based management that supports the "team" as the basic unit of learning and decision-making within the school and promotes cohesion and cooperation among staff;
- Communicates strong ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and professional learning communities with teachers, staff, parents, and students and then operates from those beliefs;
- Influences the evolution of the culture to support the continuous improvement of the school as outlined in the School Improvement Plan;

- Systematically develops and uses shared values, beliefs and a shared vision to establish a school identity that emphasizes a sense of community and cooperation to guide the disciplined thought and action of all staff and students;
- Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the school and staff;
- Visibly supports the positive, culturally responsive traditions of the school community;
- Promotes a sense of well-being among staff, students and parents;
- Builds a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff that result in a "can do" attitude when faced with challenges; and
- Empowers staff to recommend creative, 21st century concepts for school improvement.

Artifacts:

- Work of Professional Learning Communities within and tangential to the school
- Documented use of the School Improvement Team in decision-making throughout the year
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- School Improvement Plan
- Teacher retention data
- Student achievement data
- Awards structure developed by school



STANDARD 4

Human Resource Leadership

Summary: School executives will ensure that the school is a professional learning community. School executives will ensure that processes and systems are in place that result in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high-performing staff. The school executive must engage and empower accomplished teachers in a distributive leadership manner, including support of teachers in day-to-day decisions such as discipline, communication with parents, and protecting teachers from duties that interfere with teaching. They also must practice fair and consistent evaluation of teachers. The school executive must engage teachers and other professional staff in conversations to plan their career paths and support district succession planning.

Practices: The school executive practices effective human resource leadership when he or she:

- Provides structures for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the School Improvement Plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and for 21st century student learning;
- Models the importance of continued adult learning by engaging in activities to develop personal knowledge and skill along with expanded self-awareness;
- Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial outcomes to improve their efficacy;
- Creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision-making roles within the school that foster their career development;
- Creates and monitors processes for hiring, inducting and mentoring new teachers and other staff to the school;



- Uses the results of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey to create and maintain a positive work environment for teachers and other staff;
- Evaluates teachers and other staff in a fair and equitable manner and utilizes the results of evaluations to improve performance;
- Provides for results-oriented professional development that is aligned with identified 21st century curricular, instructional, and assessment needs, is connected to school improvement goals and is differentiated based on staff needs;
- Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully benefit from their strengths; and
- Is systematically and personally involved in the school's professional activities.

Artifacts:

- School Improvement Plan
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey – with special emphasis on the leadership and empowerment domains
- Copy of master school schedule documenting the time provided for individual and collaborative planning for every teacher
- Number of National Board Certified teachers
- Teacher retention data
- Number of teachers pursuing school executive credentials, National Board Certification, or advanced licensure in their teaching areas
- Records of school visits for the purpose of adult learning
- Record of professional development provided staff and an assessment of the impact of professional development on student learning
- Mentor records, beginning teacher feedback, and documentation of correlation of assignment of mentor to mentee
- Copies of professional growth plans
- Student achievement data

STANDARD 5 Managerial Leadership

Summary: School executives will ensure that the school has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. The school executive must be responsible for the monitoring of the school budget and the inclusion of all teachers in the budget decisions so as to meet the 21st century needs of every classroom. Effectively and efficiently managing the complexity of every day life is critical for staff to be able to focus its energy on improvement.

Practices: The school executive practices effective managerial leadership when he or she:

- Creates processes to provide for a balanced operational budget for school programs and activities;
- Creates processes to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce in the school that meets the diverse needs of students;
- Creates processes to identify and solve, resolve, dissolve or absolve school-based problems/conflicts in a fair, democratic way;
- Designs a system of communication that provides for the timely, responsible sharing of information to, from, and with school and district staff;
- Designs scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and addresses diverse student learning needs;
- Develops a master schedule for the school to maximize student learning by providing for individual and on-going collaborative planning for every teacher; and
- Collaboratively develops and enforces clear expectations, structures, rules and procedures for students and staff.

Artifacts:

- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- School Improvement Plan
- External reviews, such as budget
- Copies of master schedules/procedures
- Communication of safety procedures and behavioral expectations throughout the school community

STANDARD 6 External Development Leadership

Summary: A school executive will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect but in fact build community, the leader proactively creates with staff opportunities for parents, community and business representatives to participate as "stockholders" in the school such that continued investments of resources and good will are not left to chance.

Practices: The school executive practices effective external development leadership when he or she:

- Implements processes that empower parents and other stakeholders to make significant decisions;
- Creates systems that engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success;
- Designs protocols and processes that ensure compliance with state and district mandates;

- Creates opportunities to advocate for the school in the community and with parents;
- Communicates the school's accomplishments to the district office and public media in accordance with LEA policies;
- Garners fiscal, intellectual and human resources from the community that support the 21st century learning agenda of the school; and
- Builds relationships with individuals and groups to support specific aspects of the learning improvement agenda and also as a source of general good will.

Artifacts:

- PTSA participation
- PTSA meeting agendas, bulletins, etc.
- Parent attendance at School Improvement Team meetings
- Survey results from parents
- Evidence of visible support from community
- Booster club participation
- Number of school volunteers
- Plan for shaping the school's image throughout the community
- PTSA membership
- Evidence of business partnerships and projects involving business partners

STANDARD 7

Micropolitical Leadership

Summary: The school executive will build systems and relationships that utilize the staff's diversity, encourage constructive ideological conflict in order to leverage staff expertise, power and influence to realize the school's vision for success. The executive will also creatively employ an awareness of staff members' professional needs, issues, and interests to build social cohesion and to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision-making.

Practices: The school executive practices effective micropolitical leadership when he or she:

- Uses the School Improvement Team to make decisions and provides opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies;
- Creates an environment and mechanisms to ensure all internal stakeholder voices are heard and respected;
- Creates processes and protocols to buffer and mediate staff interests;
- Is easily accessible to teachers and staff;
- Designs transparent systems to equitably manage human and financial resources;
- Demonstrates sensitivity to personal needs of staff;
- Demonstrates awareness of informal groups and relationships among school staff and utilizes these as a positive resource;





- Demonstrates awareness of hidden and potentially discordant issues in the school;
- Encourages people to express opinions contrary to those of authority;
- Demonstrates ability to predict what could go wrong from day to day;
- Uses performance as the primary criterion for reward and advancement;
- Maintains high visibility throughout the school; and
- Maintains open, vertical and horizontal communications throughout the school community.

Artifacts:

- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- Teacher retention data
- Dissemination of clear norms and ground rules
- Evidence of ability to confront ideological conflict and then reach consensus
- Evidence of shared decision-making
- Evidence of use of a decision matrix
- Evidence of a school that operates through teams
- Evidence of distributed leadership

STANDARD 8

Academic Achievement Leadership

Summary: School executives will contribute to the academic success of students. The work of the school executive will result in acceptable, measurable progress for students based on established performance expectations and using appropriate data to demonstrate growth.

An executive's rating on the eighth standard is determined by a school-wide student growth value as calculated by the statewide growth model for educator effectiveness. For the purposes of determining the eighth standard rating, the school-wide growth value includes data from End-of-Course assessments, End-of-Grade assessments, Career and Technical Education Post-Assessments, and the Measures of Student Learning.

The student growth value places an executive into one of three rating categories:

- Does not meet expected growth: the school-wide student growth value for is lower than what was expected per the statewide growth model.
- Meets expected growth: the school-wide student growth value is what was expected per the statewide growth model.
- Exceeds expected growth: the school-wide student growth value exceeds what was expected per the statewide growth model.

All local school boards shall use student growth values generated through a method approved by the State Board of Education.





Competencies

A competency is a combination of knowledge (factual and experiential) and skills that one needs to effectively implement the practices. Factual knowledge is simply “knowing” content; experiential knowledge is the knowledge one gains from understanding – it is knowing the when and why. Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. It is when one can put their accumulated knowledge into a series of steps that – if followed – will lead to practice.

There are many competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the eight critical functions of leadership. The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them, but can effectively and efficiently execute them. Although the principal may not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective use in the various leadership practices.

The competencies listed below are not so obvious in the practices, can be applied to multiple practices and are absolutely essential for all school executives to possess to ensure their success. For example, the competency – conflict management is important in Micropolitical Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and perhaps one could argue that this competency is necessary in all eight Standards. These competencies are listed here to emphasize their importance and to make sure they are incorporated into the development of school executives.

- **Communication** – Effectively listens to others; clearly and effectively presents and understands information orally and in writing; acquires, organizes,

analyzes, interprets, maintains information needed to achieve school or team 21st century objectives.

- **Change Management** – Effectively engages staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation.
- **Conflict Management** – Anticipates or seeks to resolve confrontations, disagreements, or complaints in a constructive manner.
- **Creative Thinking** – Engages in and fosters an environment for others to engage in innovative thinking.
- **Customer Focus** – Understands the students as customers of the work of schooling and the servant nature of leadership and acts accordingly.
- **Delegation** – Effectively assigns work tasks to others in ways that provide learning experiences for them and in ways that ensure the efficient operation of the school.
- **Dialogue/Inquiry** – Is skilled in creating a risk-free environment for engaging people in conversations that explore issues, challenges or bad relationships that are hindering school performance.
- **Emotional Intelligence** – Is able to manage oneself through self awareness and self management and is able to manage relationships through empathy, social awareness and relationship management. This competency is critical to building strong, transparent, trusting relationships throughout the school community.
- **Environmental Awareness** – Becomes aware and remains informed of external and internal trends, interests and issues with potential impacts on school policies, practices, procedures and positions.



- **Global Perspective** – Understands the competitive nature of the new global economy and is clear about the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful in this economy.
- **Judgment** – Effectively reaching logical conclusions and making high quality decisions based on available information. Giving priority and caution to significant issues. Analyzing and interpreting complex information.
- **Organizational Ability** – Effectively plans and schedules one's own and the work of others so that resources are used appropriately, such as scheduling the flow of activities and establishing procedures to monitor projects.
- **Personal Ethics and Values** – Consistently exhibits high standards in the areas of honesty, integrity, fairness, stewardship, trust, respect, and confidentiality.
- **Personal Responsibility for Performance** – Proactively and continuously improves performance by focusing on needed areas of improvement and enhancement of strengths; actively seeks and effectively applies feedback from others; takes full responsibility for one's own achievements.
- **Responsiveness** – Does not leave issues, inquiries or requirements for information go unattended. Creates a clearly delineated structure for responding to requests/situations in an expedient manner.
- **Results Orientation** – Effectively assumes responsibility. Recognizes when a decision is required. Takes prompt action as issues emerge. Resolves short-term issues while balancing them against long-term goals.
- **Sensitivity** – Effectively perceives the needs and concerns of others; deals tactfully with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict. Knows what information to communicate and to whom. Relates to people of varying ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- **Systems Thinking** – Understands the interrelationships and impacts of school and district influences, systems and external stakeholders, and applies that understanding to advancing the achievement of the school or team.
- **Technology** – Effectively utilizes the latest technologies to continuously improve the management of the school and enhance student instruction.
- **Time Management** – Effectively uses available time to complete work tasks and activities that lead to the achievement of desired work or school results. Runs effective meetings.
- **Visionary** – Encourages imagineering by creating an environment and structure to capture stakeholder dreams of what the school could become for all the students.

Effectiveness of School Executives

Per federal requirements, the state must adopt definitions of effective and highly effective school executives.

A highly effective administrator is one who receives a rating of at least "accomplished" on each of the Principal Evaluation Standards 1-7 and receives a rating of "exceeds expected growth" on Standard 8 of the Principal Evaluation Instrument.

An effective administrator is one who receives a rating of at least "proficient" on each of the Principal Evaluation Standards 1-7 and receives a rating of at least "meets expected growth" on Standard 8 of the Principal Evaluation Instrument.

An administrator in need of improvement is one who fails to receive a rating of at least "proficient" on each of the Principal Evaluation Standards 1-7 or receives a rating of "does not meet expected growth" on Standard 8 of the Principal Evaluation.

Future-Ready Students for the 21st Century

The guiding mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century.

NC public schools will produce globally competitive students.

- Every student excels in rigorous and relevant core curriculum that reflects what students need to know and demonstrate in a global 21st century environment, including a mastery of languages, an appreciation of the arts, and competencies in the use of technology.
- Every student's achievement is measured with an assessment system that informs instruction and evaluates knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions needed in the 21st century.
- Every student will be enrolled in a course of study designed to prepare them to stay ahead of international competition.
- Every student uses technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that will be needed as a life-long learner to be competitive in a constantly changing international environment.
- Every student has the opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associate's Degree or college transfer credit.

NC public schools will be led by 21st century professionals.

- Every teacher will have the skills to deliver 21st century content in a 21st century context with 21st century tools and technology that guarantees student learning.
- Every teacher and administrator will use a 21st century assessment system to inform instruction and measure 21st century knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions.
- Every education professional will receive preparation in the interconnectedness of the world with knowledge and skills, including language study.
- Every education professional will have 21st century preparation and access to ongoing high quality professional development aligned with State Board of Education priorities.
- Every educational professional uses data to inform decisions.

NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.

- Every learning environment will be inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible for student success.
- Every school provides an environment in which each child has positive, nurturing relationships with caring adults.
- Every school promotes a healthy, active lifestyle where students are encouraged to make responsible choices.
- Every school focuses on developing strong student character, personal responsibility, and community/world involvement.
- Every school reflects a culture of learning that empowers and prepares students to be life-long learners.

Leadership will guide innovation in NC public schools.

- School professionals will collaborate with national and international partners to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st century learning, and understand global connections.
- School leaders will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic continuous improvement.
- Educational professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
- The public school professionals will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.

NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st century systems.

- Processes are in place for financial planning and budgeting that focuses on resource attainment and alignment with priorities to maximize student achievement.
- Twenty-first century technology and learning tools are available and are supported by school facilities that have the capacity for 21st century learning.
- Information and fiscal accountability systems are capable of collecting relevant data and reporting strategic and operational results.
- Procedures are in place to support and sanction schools that are not meeting state standards for student achievement.

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, NC 27601-2825

In compliance with federal law, NC Public Schools administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination issues should be directed to: Dr. Rebecca Garland, Chief Academic Officer
Academic Services and Instructional Support :: 6368 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6368 :: Telephone: (919) 807-3200 :: Fax: (919) 807-4065

Appendix B

Permission to Use Survey Instrument

Request

3 messages

Jared Jones <[REDACTED]>

Wed, Mar 30, 2022 at 9:46 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Dr. Griffin-Jordan,

My name is Jared Jones and I am the Assistant Superintendent for [REDACTED]. I am also working on my dissertation as part of the doctorate program in educational leadership through Gardner-Webb University. Specifically, I am conducting research on principal preparedness by examining the perceived leadership capacity of the assistant principals and first-year principals in our district as it relates to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Additionally, the goal of the study is to determine if the day-to-day experiences of assistant principals prepare them to carry out the responsibilities within the executive standards.

Through my research, I came across your dissertation, *Secondary Principal Perceptions of Preparatory Experiences*, and instantly connected to your research and passion for leadership development. I am requesting to use your survey instrument (Appendix B) in my study. Your particular survey aligns with my research and will be used to collect information from assistant principals and first-year principals who participate in the survey. Results will be used to grow the research around principal preparation and will contribute to the growth and development of leaders in our state, and beyond.

I am happy to talk to you further about this request via phone, email, or electronic meeting. Please let me know what questions you have. Thank you for taking this request into consideration.

Sincerely,

--



Jared S. Jones
Assistant Superintendent

[REDACTED]

Office: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]

  

Renita Griffin Jordan <[REDACTED]>

Thu, Mar 31, 2022 at 2:04 PM

To: Jared Jones <[REDACTED]>

Good afternoon Mr. Jones,

You've chosen an excellent topic to research! I am pleased to grant you permission to use my dissertation survey instrument in your study on principal preparedness. I hope you're able to gain as much insight through your research as I did in mine.

Best of luck,

Dr. Renita Griffin Jordan

Appendix C

Examining Effective Practices Through the NCSSE

Examining Effective Practices through the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (Standards 1-7)

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Your answers will provide valuable information that will contribute to research on assistant principal professional development. Please be as honest as possible in your responses. Each participant's anonymity will be preserved.

This survey contains two parts. Part A: Demographic Information, and Part B: Survey.

This survey contains a demographic information section (Part A) and a 21-item survey (Part B). The survey will take approximately ten (10) minutes to complete.

Please click "Next" to begin Part A.



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Examining Effective Practices through the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (Standards 1-7)



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* Required

Part A: Demographics for Survey

Check appropriate identifier in each area (Part A)

First Name: *

Your answer

Last Name: *

Your answer

Gender *

☐ Male

☐ Female

Race/Ethnicity *

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic

☐ White

☐ Asian

☐ Other

How many did you serve as Assistant Principal? *

- ☐ 0-3
- ☐ 4-8
- ☐ 9-15
- ☐ 16 or more

What Grade Span do you Currently Serve? *

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Middle
- ☐ High

Years as an Educator *

- ☐ 0-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31 or more

What position did you hold prior to Assistant Principal? *

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Central Office
- ☐ Other

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Examining Effective Practices through the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (Standards 1-7)



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* Required

Part B: Survey

This survey contains statements that depict a variety of tasks/responsibilities of school administrators. Please rate each statement 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), indicating the degree to which you experience each task/responsibility as a school administrator.

I. Strategic Leadership *

	(1) Almost Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Frequently	(5) Almost Always
a. Spearheaded major initiatives and created a systemic review processes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Facilitated the implementation of the School Improvement Team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Took the lead in distributing leadership roles among staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

II. Instructional Leadership *

	(1) Almost Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Frequently	(5) Almost Always
a. Facilitated conversations about curriculum, instruction, and assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Provided staff feedback through formal and informal observations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Identified student needs and provided innovative tools and programs to meet them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

III. Cultural Leadership *

	(1) Almost Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Frequently	(5) Almost Always
a. Created a collaborative "team" work environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Communicated positive values about school, teaching, and professional growth, while using a shared vision to establish strong school identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Actively supported traditions that were culturally responsive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IV. Human Resource Leadership *

(1) Almost
Never (2) Seldom (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently (5) Almost
Always

a. Used data
from Teacher
Working
Conditions
survey to lead
in maintaining a
nurturing work
environment

☐☐☐☐☐

b. Assigned
teachers to
courses that
reflect their
instructional
strengths

☐☐☐☐☐

c. Established
structures and
models for
professional
development,
continuous
learning, and
new teacher
support

☐☐☐☐☐

V. Managerial Leadership *

	(1) Almost Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Frequently	(5) Almost Always
a. Collaborated to ensure balance budget to support school community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Interviewed and recommended quality teachers who met school needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Collaborated to develop master schedule with focus on student success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

VI. External Development Leadership *

	(1) Almost Never	(2) Seldom	(3) Sometimes	(4) Frequently	(5) Almost Always
a. Implemented protocols to ensure compliance of all local, state, and federal mandates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Advocated on behalf of the school and shared accomplishments in the district and community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Created a system of shared responsibility with stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

VII. Micropolitical Leadership *

(1) Almost
Never

(2) Seldom

(3) Sometimes

(4) Frequently

(5) Almost
Always

a. Actively engaged with staff and students while maintaining visibility in classrooms and at extracurricular events

☐☐☐☐☐

b. Collaborated with the School Improvement Team to lead in school-wide decision making

☐☐☐☐☐

c. Provided opportunities for which voices of staff members were heard and respected

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Appendix D
Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Questions for All

1. What experiences do you feel have been most beneficial in your professional growth as a school administrator?
2. Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel most confident in implementing, and why?
3. Of the seven primary Standards for North Carolina School Executives, which standards do you feel you need the most support, and why?
4. Which executive standards do you feel are most important for the success of a first-year principal, and why?
5. What experiences, related to the Standards for North Carolina School Executives, do you wish you would have had as an assistant principal that would have better prepared you for the principalship?
6. Please share any other information regarding your preparational experiences as an assistant principal as it relates to the ability to carry out the North Carolina Standards for School Executives.
7. What other information would you like to share regarding the preparation of assistant principals?