STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

by

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ABSTRACT

TIMOTHY EDWARD TAYLOR. Isolation and characterization of Student Perceptions of Their Principal Preparation.
(Under the direction of DR. CLAUDIA FLOWERS)

Using causal comparative research methodology, this study examined the effectiveness of higher education PK-12 principal preparation programs. Forty-nine graduate students in three principal preparation levels were surveyed about their perceptions of their preparedness on success factors needed to be a principal and the qualities of an effective leadership program. Results of one-way analyses of variances indicated nine success items were statistically significant differences with moderate effect sizes. Of the nine items, six were associated with principal success factors and three were associated with the qualities of an effective leadership program. The overall ratings suggested that students in all levels of the program felt prepared to take on the role of a school administrator; however, students were least confident in their preparedness to monitor and assess the implementation of adopted curriculum and monitor and support the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The implications and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

DEDICATION

First and foremost, to my family. To my wife, Phien, who has accompanied me along the way and for her unwavering support and love - you are an amazing wife, mother, and best friend, but these simple words cannot express how thankful I am that you chose me. To my children, Emery and Ansel, who continue to provide me with so much joy and laughter – we started this journey together and I cannot wait for our future adventures together as a family. To my parents, Dwight and Paula, thank you for your continued belief in me and for all that you have sacrificed to help make me the man I am today. To my brothers, Ken and James, who have always been able to keep me grounded and I value our brotherhood more than you know. To my mother-in-law, Thao, cảm ơn vì sự' cống hiến của bạn cho gia đình chúng tôi. To my friends both near and far, I thank you for your friendship and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School principals are leaders in improving outcomes for a school and its students. Further, they are second only to classroom teachers on impact on student academic performance (Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Today, in a rapidly changing educational environment, school principals are asked to do more with less. In response, universities across the nation are taking a close look at their principal preparation programs and responding to these new demands in a meaningful way (Lauder, 2000).

There are 43 states that require an individual to undergo the completion of a principal preparation program (Anderson & Reynolds, 2015), and there are over 700 principal preparation programs found within the United States (G.W. Bush Institute, 2016). Students who enroll in university level education leadership programs are often working professionals looking to make the transition away from the role of teacher to an initial leadership role such as a dean of students, assistant principal, or even principal. Also, current principals who are looking to attain advanced placement, which often requires additional credentials, choose to enroll in these programs. Unfortunately, the quality of graduates that a university principal preparation programs produces has come under question by many educational researchers (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, 2005; Elmore, 2000; Hess, 2003; Levine, 2005). In response to these growing criticism, many leading educational organizations, foundations, and state departments of

education have developed frameworks in which to guide preparation programs in support of building the knowledge and skills needed to lead schools effectively.

Though research on principal preparation programs has taken many forms in recent years, this study focuses on the perceptions of university program participants. A program's coursework and clinical experiences allow participants to learn from others both in a theoretical and practical manner. In this study, the researcher aims to identify the perceptions of participants within one university's principal preparation program related to their theoretical and practical experiences that are designed to prepare them to be future school leaders.

Problem Statement

Shortages in the ranks of qualified school leaders have caused many educational stakeholders to question the effectiveness of university principal preparation programs nationwide (Davis et al., 2005; Hoachlander, Alt, & Beltranena, 2001; Levine, 2005). The role of the principal has changed dramatically since the days of the early school eras that saw the principal as a manager and keeper of administrative duties to ensure a smooth operational focus, to one that is complex and "has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological, and global change" (Levine, 2005, p. 11). Not only have principals been considered the instructional leaders within a school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004), they must also promote teacher development, lead change initiatives, become finance managers, and develop external relationships with the community (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007, 2010; Fullan, 1993; Levine, 2005; McLaughlin & Hyle, 2001).

More attention should be given to the programs offered by institutions of higher learning and their effectiveness to prepare current and future school leaders (Knoeppel & Logan, 2011). With the constant change in the role of principal, principal preparation programs need to adapt to meet the ever shifting needs for what it takes to become an effective school principal. What remains to be resolved is the question of the overall effectiveness of the many different university principal preparation programs to prepare their graduates to become effective school leaders. While this study will attempt to highlight the perceptions of the differences among principal preparation participants in different programs, a growing number of researchers have indicated the complexity of determining the effectiveness of the nearly 700 different programs offered across the country (Stryon & LeMire, 2009).

If principals are not effectively prepared to lead schools, the consequences are numerous, which will impact generations of students to come. In 2007, the Southern Regional Education Board surmised that more work remains in order to develop a more learning-centered school leadership preparation system that would be used to promote a cohesive framework for university preparation programs. In the absence of these frameworks and subsequent preparation practices, universities will continue to produce candidates not qualified to lead schools. And, if school principals are shown to have direct impact on student performance, then the future performance of our schools may be in jeopardy as their ability or inability to effectively lead schools will impact teachers, students, and the communities in which they serve.

Significance Statement

Leadership in schools, like in most organizations, is a critical antecedent of overall performance and success (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). This study will provide insight that may be used by university principal preparation programs, nontraditional preparation programs, principals themselves, central office personnel, and the larger educational research community to further develop effective preparation programs for future school leaders. In doing so, these efforts may have a direct impact on student learning. Universities have an ethical obligation to society as they are responsible for the preparation of future school leaders (Calabrese, 1991). Since school principals have a direct impact on student achievement (Levine, 2005) and are found to be second only to teachers (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2012) in their degree of impact on student academic performance, the focus on their preparation must be evidence-based and withstanding of challenges.

In 2001, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) developed the 13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals (see Appendix A) to support the development of the expectations and competencies for principals and to bridge the gap of principal job expectations with the preparation programs they complete. In the past, individual states, universities, and districts were left to develop their own ideas and structures on how to engage principal development and accountability structures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to identify coursework and experiences that impact the SREBs 13 Critical Success Factors for effective principals. The perceptions of current students in a principal preparation will be investigated based on the extent to

which they perceive their program exhibits the following 13 Critical Success Factors: 1) focus on student achievement, 2) develop a culture of high expectations, 3) design a standards-based instructional system, 4) create a caring environment, 5) implement data-based improvement, 6) communicate, 7) involve parents, 8) initiate and manage change, 9) provide professional development, 10) innovate, 11) maximize resources, 12) build external support, and 13) stay abreast of effective practices (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

The research question investigated in this study is, what are the differences in the perception of student preparation between the different types of principal preparation programs (features described in detail in Chapter 3) related to the 13 Critical Success Factors? Within the university's principal preparation program, three types of students participate. First, there is a district-university partnership called the Aspiring Principals Program. Second, there is a cohort of North Carolina Principal Fellows who are vetted by a state commission to gain acceptance to the fellowship. Lastly, the remaining students are self-selected, meaning a candidate has identified him or herself as a person who meets the desired characteristics and university requirements needed to take on the role of student within this degree or licensure program.

Assumptions

When conducting a study that involves the use of a survey within a sample population, a few basic assumptions should be acknowledged and addressed (Creswell, 2013).

1. The researcher has assumed that the participants surveyed will provide an honest and truthful answer to each of the survey statements and questions. As

a result of this unknown, there is a possibility that responses are bias and not reflective of the students' experiences in the principal preparation program.

2. The survey has been used in a number of studies and the researcher assumed the instrument is technically sound for the population in this study.
3. The researcher has also assumed based on their inclusion within the sample and participation within the study, each individual has had the same coursework and requirements of internship in each of the principal preparation programs.

Limitations

The study itself is not without its limitations despite the researcher's best effort. As such, there are limitations that must be acknowledged and discussed.

1. Because of the nature of this study, participants may be fearful to answer the questions honestly, since at the time of participation in the study, it runs concurrently with their participation in the program upon which they were reflecting.
2. The perceptions of principal preparation effectiveness are difficult to measure.
3. The very nature of perceptions can be called into question and may not reflect some participants' later success. This study will only examine participants' perceptions.
4. The participants may hold a variety of roles (e.g., teacher, administrator, coach, university student). In essence, the participants are providing their perceptions that have been constructed up until the point of answering the survey, and that is inherent to the design of the study.

5. The researcher must also acknowledge that participant responses may also be the result of selective memory, telescoping (recalling events that occurred at one time, but remembered during another) attribution, and exaggeration.
6. Participants are not randomly assigned into principal preparation programs and causal inferences are limited.

Delimitations of the Study

This study will be conducted using a survey that has been twice modified from its original form. The original survey, *Survey of Principal Internship Programs* (see Appendix C), was created by the Southern Regional Education Board in 2001. The survey consists of a confidentially and consent agreement, statements related to the perception of program participants as determined by the SREBs 13 Critical Success Factors, three open-ended response questions, and six demographic questions. The researcher also acknowledges the following delimitations:

1. The sample included eligible candidates within one university, however, there is potential benefit to conduct a small study as it can be strengthened by the findings in similarly sized studies.
2. The survey, *Survey of Principal Internship Programs*, was created by researchers from within Southern Regional Education Board, and has not gone through psychometric examination.

Methodology Statement

In alignment with the research purpose, the quantitative research method of causal comparative research design was chosen for this study. The researcher compared the differences (Mertler, 2009) of conditions that already exist among the different levels of

the independent variable (i.e., the university principal preparation program) and the dependent variables, which are the 13 Critical Success Factors outlined previously. Since there were three open-ended response questions within the survey, the researcher used coding to extract themes, which is a form qualitative data analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that will be used for this study is the *13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals* (See Appendix A) that were developed by the Southern Regional Education Board in 2001. The *13 Critical Success Factors* were chosen due to their expansion of the skills and competencies needed by school principals to lead effective change in schools and pedagogy to increase student achievement. All of the *13 Critical Success Factors* can be found within the evaluation criteria of principal preparation program participant's coursework, internship experiences, as well as the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*, which serves as the design framework for their university preparation program.

Conclusion Statement

As a society that guarantees access to education for all children, it is crucial that school leaders are prepared to meet current and future challenges found within the nation's educational settings. In order to support these learning processes, preparation programs must ensure they provide meaningful coursework, activities, and clinical experiences to have the most impact on the development of future school leaders.

In the following chapters, the researcher will provide a review of literature, as well as a detailed descriptions of the research design and methodology, results, and findings. Within the literature, a guide to understanding the historical context of the

changing role of the principal is provided, as well as critiques of university principal preparation programs, characteristics of exemplar programs and their attempts to counterpoint the critiques, recruitment issues of high quality principals. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology that will be used in this study, including sample selection, rationale for the design, data collection method, description of data analysis and procedures, detailed site selection criteria, and participant selection criteria. Chapter 4 reviews the results and summary of the data analyses, provides a description of the participants and survey items, research questions, and the qualitative analysis. In Chapter 5, the researcher provides an introduction to the chapter, a summary of the study, the research question, a summary of the findings, implications, recommendations for future research, and a closing summary.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research is to identify coursework and experiences in university principal preparation programs that impact the *13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals*. Within this review, the researcher highlights the differences in educational organizations' outlook on university preparation programs, a sampling of exemplar programs across the nation, the changing role of the principal, and a variety of principal standards and competencies as developed by educational organizations and three states. Throughout the review of the literature, it is the researcher's foundation that for school leaders to meet the increased demands of current school needs, university preparation programs must create a framework that supports their development to become effective in the role of principal.

In the nearly four decades following the release of the scathing governmental report in 1983 called *A Nation at Risk*, a flurry of education reform movements throughout the varying levels of education governance and an array of educational research have generated different topics of focus related to student achievement, total school improvement, teacher development and retention, and principal effectiveness. Moreover, there has been a significant increase in interest in how much, and to what extent, a school leader impacts student achievement (Cotton, 2004; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; McCarthy, 2002; Murphy, 2002; O'Day, 2002; Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009) and whether traditional approaches to preparing

principals are sufficient (Elmore 2000; Hess 2003; Levine 2005; Mitgang & The Wallance Foundation, 2012; Murphy 2002). In order for a principal to lead an effective school, a principal must first have effective preparation. This effective preparation originates in both an individual's collective professional experience and in his or her university preparation program where a principal earns his or her degree or licensure certification (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; Levine, 2005; Mitgang et al., 2012).

In 2001, the passage of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* brought with it further speculation and concern related to principal effectiveness as it magnified the student achievement levels in the years since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). Since then, greater scrutiny of the impact school leaders have on student achievement has been magnified resulting in greater demands for accountability for the position (Levine, 2005). During this same time, university preparation programs have faced similar scrutiny related to how well they are preparing future school leaders to take on the increased demands found when leading a school.

With the increased demands, both at the school and university levels, some states have sought supplemental funding to reform school leader evaluations and the university programs that prepare them for future and current roles. Under the *Race to the Top* (RttT) program, which was funded by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2010* by the federal government states that were awarded federal grant money had to agree to remove any policy or legislative barriers that kept student achievement results from being linked to the purposes of teacher and principal evaluations (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; "Race to the Top", 2010). If principals are to be evaluated in such a manner, then preparation programs must provide the necessary coursework and clinical

experiences to allow them to effect meaningful change on student achievement. Principal evaluations also must be evaluated by instruments that are reliable, tested, and adaptable to different purposes and contexts (Wallace Foundation, 2009). A principal must possess the skills and knowledge needed to impact school improvement, and as managers within the building leading the day-to-day operations of a school, it is imperative that university preparation programs promote the ability to acquire the desired knowledge and skills (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Murphy and Vriesenga (2006) noted that there needs to be more research on how principal preparation programs prepare individuals to take on this complex role. Also, Murphy et al. (2006) suggested a continued focus on how students are monitored by the university in their preparation as they participate in coursework and clinical experiences.

Changing Role of the Principal

Kafka (2009) noted that past historians often missed the distinction between building-level leader and that of the superintendent, and often lumped them together when researching school leadership, which accounts for a broader gap in early principal research. The idea of a principal teacher emerged in the late 1800s as superintendents required managers of the school to observe daily classroom lessons to ensure effective pedagogy was delivered (Pierce 1935). Theoretical research into the role of the principal began in the early decades of the twentieth century and focused mainly on the managerial and supervisory duties of the principal. In 1935, Paul Piece detailed accounts from the early 20th century that demonstrated the emergence of the position of principal. When schools began to employ more than just one teacher and the increased needs for administrative management began to emerge, these responsibilities were typically shared

among the two or three individuals that made up the school faculty. The earliest account that documents a single school person in charge of all the operations of a school dates back to the common schools of Cincinnati, Ohio in the 1830s. From here, the notion of a single school principal position grew to other burgeoning districts throughout the decades that followed (Pierce, 1935). In the 1920s Elwood Cubberly "launched" educational administration as a field of study (Hess, 2003), which brought with it an increased interest in the role of the principal.

By the 1920s, principals across the nation developed their professional associations, which lent greater credence to the position (Brown, 2015). Schools often had a single staff member, and it was not until schools grew larger that the need arose for more management structures, which led to the building role of the principal. Although it is difficult to get a solid historical characterization of the principalship (Kafka 2009) or a deeper understanding of the position (Beck & Murphy, 1992), researchers have been able to show shifting trends related to the principalship (Fredricks & Brown, 1993).

By the 1940s, compulsory attendance laws extended the number of years youth were expected to attend school and created an increased demand for the role of the principal as not only a leader within the school but also to the greater community of which schools served as an anchor institution (Tyack, 1974). The rapidly changing education environment of the twentieth century forced principals outside of the traditional role of a building manager, and to one that requires an ability to redesign schools and lead effective change based on whole-school improvement (Levine, 2005; Catano & Sronge, 2007; Mendels, 2012).

No two pieces of federal legislation have changed the landscape of the principalship more than the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* of 2004 (Lynch, 2017). *NCLB* included sweeping changes that included increased performance measures and teacher and principal evaluation systems that included student achievement results, which included students with disabilities for the first time. *IDEA* (2004) expanded the responsibility of principals to ensure students with disabilities were provided opportunities to be mainstreamed into general education classes. These responsibilities have caused principals to be more involved in special education processes and to have an increased understanding of individualized education plans to ensure students are provided an education in the least restrictive environment. As a result, principals have dedicated more time than what has been observed in the past to support the learning needs of students with disabilities (Lasky & Karge, 2006).

The intricate role of the principal as a change agent (Fullan, 1993; McLaughlin et al., 2001) within a school is not a coincidental by-product of history; rather, the position, itself, grew out of necessity as it has rested at the center of education policy and practice throughout the multitude of American education reform efforts over the past century and a half. To meet the modern demands of accountability structures at the local, state, and federal level, a principal must be able to retain and recruit highly effective teachers and support staff while providing meaningful yet results-oriented evaluations. A principal must be able to adapt to shifts in curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment methods as they serve as the instructional leader of their schools (Leithwood et al., 2004). A principal is required to appropriately allocate funding in the best interests of students and staff. He or

she must manage existing facilities and project their future needs. A principal must serve as a guide to the different personalities of the adults and children with whom they come into contact on a daily basis, most appropriately allocate funding, manage facilities, guide the personalities of adults and children, stay abreast of the changes in technology that further push our society deeper into the informational age, balance school climate with the increased focus on safety protocols and procedures from internal and external threats, and all the while focus on continuous improvement to provide all stakeholders with a sense of community, as they transform their institutions of learning suited to the best interests of students in mind (Cotton, 2004; Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005;; & Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004).

Many researchers have concluded that principals have an indirect impact on teacher retention, school climate, and student achievement (Davis et al., 2005; Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016; Waters et al., 2004). There are a variety of factors such as job stress that manifests as a result of increased workloads and accountability directly impact a principal's ability to lead his or her teachers (Johnson, 2005). Conversely, a series of meta-analysis published in the last decade and a half have been less enduring. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) described within their research that the main effect at the principal when comparing specific leadership styles related to overall student outcomes is minimal. Leithwood et al. (2004) surmised that what is less widely debated is that principals are second only to teachers on their impact on student learning (p. 3). The difficulty that arises is that the role of the principal continues to evolve with each effort of reform and the search for a model should be abandoned because "impressive evidence suggests that individual leaders actually behave quite differently depending on the

circumstances they are facing and the people with whom they are working" (p. 10). It is imperative that university preparation programs continue to evolve to prepare their course participants to meet these evolutionary demands.

Focus on Principal Leadership Styles

In their study, Hess and Kelly (2007) suggests that university preparation programs must focus on leadership styles that promote the disaggregation of data, the use of tools to manage accountability measures, promote positive school climate, and foster a culture of professionalism. As the evolution of the principalship progresses, the focus on the different leadership styles and to what extent they are exercised continue to be a focus of study for education researchers. Within university coursework and clinical experiences that prepared their students to be at the helm of schools. In Lunsford and Brown's (2016) study, criticized university leadership programs were for preparing individuals to be leaders, but not intently focusing on leadership traits, styles, and characteristics to effectively lead organizations. For decades, principals have been expected to be the instructional leader at their schools even when little clarity has been provided as to how to execute this vague expectation (Leithwood, Louis, et al., 2004). One of the growing criticisms of university preparation programs is that they have provided little coursework or experience to support the development of their students to meet this complex role as an instructional leader (Levine, 2005). In his book *Leadership*, Peter Northouse (2013) treated leadership "as a complex process having multiple dimensions" (p. 1), and outlined twelve different leadership styles and approaches that have been the focus of researchers for decades and proposed in university preparation courses such as: (a) Trait Approach, (b) Skills Approach, (c) Style Approach,

(d) Situational Approach, (e) Contingency Theory, (f) Path-Goal Theory, (g) Leader-Member Exchange Theory, (h) Transformational Leadership, (i) Servent Leadership, (j) Authentic Leadership, and (k) Team Leadership.

Northouse (2013) went on to define leadership as a "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) linked to the role of the principal as an individual "initiating" (p. 91) change for other educational professionals, as "the principal is central, especially to changes in the culture of the school" (p. 145) and the shifting between leadership styles supports a principal's ability to effect meaningful change (Day et al., 2016). As a myriad of leadership styles and approaches are developed and presented as effective within university preparation programs, principals must discern which to use based on real situations. Crossroads of ability to balance theoretical exposure and practical experience within a preparation program is precisely where the universities must focus their attention to support the development of effective school leaders (Levine, 2005). Within the coursework found at the university used for this study, students in the principal preparation program are exposed to a wide variety of leadership styles.

Dr. Debra Morris (personal communication, November 22, 2017) also identified intentional leadership as an emerging leadership style included in the course of study within the program used for this study. Kubicek (2012) proposed that although "the word intentional is not new" (p.38), the notion that organizational improvement through the development of leaders happens over time and that this intentional capacity for development must be fueled. He stated that such capacity development required a shift in mindset and the formal and informal time within any given day must be used with

intention by an individual within an organization to fuel growth. Kubicek also stated that leadership development models must focus on this intentionality component when preparing individuals for their future role as a leader.

Conceptual Framework

Actively engaged in the development of effective school principals, the Southern Regional Education Board sought to identify the factors of success from school leaders who were successful in raising student achievement within diverse populations who attended traditionally low-performing schools (Bottoms et al., 2001). From their work, they developed what they called the *13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals*. According to the SREB, their search underwent a five-step process to answer the following questions: 1) What do today's successful school leaders need to know and be able to do?, and 2) How can we prepare and develop effective school leaders? (Bottoms et al., 2001).

Initially, the Southern Regional Education Board commissioned a review of literature that focused on school improvement strategies centered on traditionally low-performing schools with recent successes in increasing student achievement. Then, the Southern Regional Eeducation Board used a sampling of successful principals from the *High Schools That Work* network to explore the two essential questions. From there, they convened a national panel to solicit feedback on the research literature review and the principal responses to the two essential questions. After that, the Southern Regional Education Board gathered groups of school leaders, university professors, business leaders, members of professional organizations and associations, and state legislators and presented their findings (Bottoms et al., 2001). At its conclusion they identified the following *13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals*: 1) focus on student achievement, 2)

develop a culture of high expectations, 3) design a standards-based instructional system, 4) create a caring environment, 5) implement data-based improvement, 6) communicate, 7) involve parents, 8) initiate and manage change, 9) provide professional development, 10) innovate, 11) maximize resources, 12) build external support, and 13) stay abreast of effective practices.

For this study, the *13 Critical Success Factors* will be used to structure a survey that seeks to solicit the perceptions of students enrolled in a Southeastern university's principal preparation program. The principal preparation program consists of three categorizations of students: 1) Aspiring Principals, 2) North Carolina Principal Fellows, and 3) Self-Selected students enrolled either part- or full-time within the program. Each student within the program is asked to complete numerous hours of coursework, observations, and clinical experiences, in addition to any of the cohort specific requirements as outlined by their program agreement. The *13 Critical Success Factors* relate directly to these characteristics of the standards-based principal preparation program and the guiding *North Carolina Standards for School Executives* the university uses as framework for its program.

Perceptional Differences of Principal Preparation Programs

As *NCLB* (2001) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 2004) changed the role of the principal and brought to the forefront new, emerging roles, educational researchers continue to provide contrasting viewpoints from which to gauge principal preparation programs. There are nearly 700 principal preparation programs across the United States (G.W. Bush Institute, 2016), which represents an increase of over 400 since 1972 (Campbell & Newell, 1973) and of over 100 since 2008 (Hackmann

& McCarthy, 2011). Numerous researchers have recommended these programs need to reevaluate how well they are effectively preparing aspiring school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; G.W. Bush Institute, 2016; Orr, 2006). Many university preparation programs have developed successful frameworks, while other preparation programs continue to award certifications and degrees using dated models of program delivery and content (G.W. Bush Institute, 2016; Levine, 2005). The goal of every principal preparation program, whether traditional or non-traditional in form, should be to effectively prepare aspiring principals to improve student achievement. They do this by leading faculty and staff toward total school improvement through data disaggregation, promoting research-based pedagogy, and training future leaders to develop the ability to evolve and respond to the ongoing shifts found within education (Davis et al., 2005; Levine, 2005). In some respects, this applied set of skills and knowledge is difficult to attain when many principals are former assistant principals who are often relegated to clinical experiences involving the supervision of student discipline, transportation, instructional supplies, and other transactional responsibilities (Quinn, 2005). However, in the principal preparation program used within this study, the university has outlined a series of clinical experience requirements that promote the development of an encompassing experience that aligns with the real, on-the-job realities of the principalship.

Each of the three types of students is required to log their collective experiences and document how these experiences align with the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives* (Dr. Debra Morris, personal communication, November 22, 2017). They must also evidence these experiences in a rubric that their university evaluator uses to indicate

how the evidence is evaluated. These documents serve as the collective cache of experiences the students self-select as important to include in their gathering of evidence processes.

Over the past two decades, organizations such as the Wallace Foundation and the University Council for Educational Administration have focused intently on the quality of university principal preparation programs and their graduates' ability to lead schools effectively. Throughout the literature, there are vast differences in opinions as to how well principals are prepared by universities and other preparation programs to lead schools effectively (Davis et al., 2005; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Levine, 2005; Quinn, 2005). The debates on how to affect this contradiction remains.

Levine (2005) and Quinn (2005) suggested that traditional educational leadership programs had the lowest admissions standards and were the weakest of all certification and degree programs offered by universities. Further, Levine (2005) and Davis et al. (2005) expressed growing discontent that universities inadequately trained their program participants to lead a school and district effectively and called for more nontraditional leadership preparation programs to step up their efforts to recruit and prepare future school leaders. Levine's (2005) critique continues as he recommended higher academic standards, financial practices that strengthen programs, and a shift in degree requirements. When calling for higher academic and financial standards with education schools, Levine questioned their outlook toward this degree field and called institutions little more than diploma mills, accusing them of offering these programs as a means to raise funds to support other university initiatives. He also surmised that the degree program themselves, with their "grab bag of courses" failed to provide prospective school

leaders with the knowledge and field experiences to become effective school leaders (Levine, 2005, p. 66). Additionally, Levine proposed eliminating the doctor of educational leadership degree (Ed. D.) because it lacks any extended benefit in the obtainment of skills or knowledge for those who want to become school principals or district superintendents. Universities should create a master's of educational administration (M.E.A.) degree. He suggested that the doctor of philosophy degree should then be "reserved for preparing researchers" (2005, p. 67) to provide a clear distinction in purpose and preparation at those two levels. Levine also highlighted non-traditional training venues such as business partnerships to provide future school leaders a different way to prepare for this complex role. Hess et al. (2007) supported Levine's idea of non-traditional preparation programs as an effective means to prepare aspiring principals. Nontraditional programs and methods are not required to align with existing university programs.

Since then, educational leadership programs have attempted to redress issues found within to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of their education leadership programs. One major point of focus has been on the role of the principal mentor and how the mentor-mentee relationship is an integral dynamic to consider when evaluating an individual's readiness to take on the role of the principal and to gauge the quality of a preparation program (Daresh & Playko, 1991; Gray, 2007; Koonce & Kelly, 2014; Schechter, 2014; Taylor-Backor & Gordan, 2015). The process of mentor selection or placement inserts the opportunity for different experiences between participants because not all mentors are qualified to take on this critical role or have the intern focus on different aspects within their experience. With nearly all preparation

programs requiring clinical experiences that include an internship experience, participants must be provided with experienced and effective mentors. These mentors should not only promote the role of an instructional leader, but also focus on school climate; culture; adherence to federal, state, and local policies; leadership of personnel; and to develop external relationships. Within the university used in this study, the participants of each of the branches within the program are required to have their mentor complete a series of rubrics and other documented evidences to show their interactions and the usefulness of those interactions as outlined by the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives.*

Standards and the *13 Critical Success Factors* that Guide School Leaders & Universities

In its brief history, the development of standards and competencies for school leaders has undergone a wrenching paradigm shift even as various stakeholders attempt to develop common frameworks from which to filter perceptions of effective leadership within schools. Beginning in the 1980s, efforts to revise and improve principal preparation have paralleled the development of comprehensive standards and competencies to guide the work of school leaders. These actions have primarily been taken on by a vast amount of universities, foundations, states, and professional organizations, while at the same time many of these stakeholders have demanded reform within university principal preparation programs. Following the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration's (NCEEA) report *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which characterized excellence within a school as setting to have "high expectations and goals for all learners, then tries in every way possible to help students reach them" (A Nation at Risk, Excellence in Education, 1). Since this report, state after state commissioned their own studies to evaluate their education systems and to provide recommendations for reform (Bell, 1993) and "began to implement standards-based

education systems" (A Nation Accountable, p. 5). In 1988, the NCEEA also published *Leaders for America's Schools*, which provided widespread criticism of school leadership and how preparation programs failed to produce adequate school leaders. From there, different education organizations raced to publish their own set of guidelines of which they believed should be adopted by school leaders to improve student learning and the organizational structures of schools. The efforts, according to Hess (2003), were led by education stakeholders to promote their notions of leadership. The most notable of these attempts was created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards were developed in 1996 by the CCSSO to provide a "powerful framework" to usher in the "forces necessary" to "redefine" change in school leadership (Murphy & Shipman, p. 205-206, 1999). In 2008, the six ISLLC standards have been revised to the following version:

- Standard 1: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
- Standard 2: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Standard 3: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- Standard 4: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Standard 5: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Standard 6: An educational leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

These six standards have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia (McCarthy, Shelton & Murphy, 2016). In their study, McCarthy et al. (2016) outlined the varying degrees of critique that have been levied against, while a limited number of studies affirm the effects of the standards have been developed by education researchers since the 1990s. A wide band of education researchers has critiqued the depth of individual standards, the gaps between them, the use of professional values and ethical principles, and the empirical evidence of their effectiveness. In another critique, Hess (2003), surmised that the efforts of ISLLC to promote standards of leadership within schools "do little to concretely establish leadership qualifications, but do a great deal to advance certain points of view" (p. 15). Additionally, McCarthy et al. (2016) provided a limited review of studies that focused on individual state adoptions, but with "very little attention" to the effects on schools (p. 225). These standards served as a reminder to states, universities, and their practitioners that student achievement must remain an integral focus, while also developing the capacity to effect meaningful change.

From these different standards, states like Virginia, Massachusetts, and North Carolina, among others, developed their standards and competencies to guide school leaders. Virginia established in 2012 and revised in 2015 the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* to serve as a document, which was required by legislative action that outlined their standards and evaluation criteria (Virginia Department of Education, 2012 & 2015). These are used by universities across the state to develop their curriculum to guide administration certificate programs and degrees in educational leadership.

In July of 2017, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education amended previous efforts from 2011 to outline professional standards for administrative leadership. Interestingly, preparation programs must first be accredited by the state of Massachusetts, and this specific approval is found as the main purpose under the provision of state law 603 CMR 7.00 (Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2017). Massachusetts also published *Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders* in 2012 to directly outline their requirements of a school leader. As such, their intended audience was not only school districts and potential candidates for administrator licensure, but also leadership program faculty and the leaders of what they called "sponsor organizations" (p. 7-8), which are the very institutions that are responsible for preparing future administrative leaders.

The state of North Carolina took a similar route, but did so a few years earlier. In 2006, the North Carolina State Board of Education approved the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*, which were revised in July 2011. In doing so, the State Board provided a framework to be used by universities and districts to guide school

leader preparation and effectiveness. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction stated that for a school executive to plan for leading their organization strategically they

> "Will create conditions that result in strategically re-imaging 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 (NCDPI, Standard I: Strategic Leadership, para. 1).

The Department of Public Instruction applied a 2003 Wallace Foundation study, *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship*, wherein researchers outlined seven critical functions of school leadership: 1) instructional leadership, 2) cultural leadership, 3) managerial leadership, 4) human resources leadership, 5) strategic leadership, 6) external development leadership, and 7) micro-political leadership, to develop their executive standards for school leaders. The state of North Carolina realigned these recommendations and produced a broad range of knowledge, skills, and practices to be used to evaluate the principals (NCDPI, 2006, 2011). Each of the seven standards are deconstructed into numerous individual elements that provided greater insight to each.

Researchers for decades have espoused the value of comprehensive school planning (Levine & Leibert, 1987; McInerney & Leach, 1992) as a mechanism to increase student achievement, and to target and execute professional development for

faculty and staff (Weller & Weller, 1998), which in turn, retains highly effective teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Brown & Wynn 2009), documents school reform efforts based on data analysis, establishes positive school culture (Sarason, 1990; Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015), and provides a clear mission and vision for the entire school community (Mendels, 2012). Wherein a series of leadership styles are espoused by researchers, the state of North Carolina decided to specifically include distributive leadership, which popularized by Peter Gronn (2000) as a "new conception" to address myriad complexities found within organizations (p. 326). According to Fry et al. (2005), only one-third of universities require participants to lead activities that involve student instruction, fewer than half include leading activities that analyze data, and about half included participants leading activities that support change through professional development. These competencies and standards found within the North Carolina instrument of evaluation also correlate to the Southern Regional Education Board's 13 Critical Success Factors that serve as the framework for the survey used to collect the perceptions of the different program participants.

The *13 Critical Success Factors* were developed by the SREB after research pertaining to how effective principals improved student achievement and are as follows: 1) focus on student achievement, 2) develop a culture of high expectations, 3) design a standards-based instructional system, 4) create a caring environment, 5) implement data-based improvement, 6) communicate, 7) involve parents, 8) initiate and manage change, 9) provide professional development, 10) innovate, 11) maximize resources, 12) build external support, 13) stay abreast of effective practices (Gray et al., 2007). Each one of these factors is also found in the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*, which

are directly aligned with the program of study used by the university to prepare their program participants to be future school leaders.

Teacher and Principal Recruitment Issues for Districts and Universities

Within this study, perceptions of those currently enrolled in a principal program will be analyzed, which is important because, as Lauder (2000) said in her research article, *The New Look in Principal Programs*, these types of programs

> "must appeal to and attract those educators with the potential and the desire to lead at the site level...include emphasis on the effectiveness and efficiency of the preparation...focus on participant's skills and the results produced, and support curricular choice based on diagnosis of individual needs" (Lauder, 2000, p. 23).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, elementary, middle, and high school principal positions are expected to grow by eight percent in the next decade starting in 2016. Each year, nearly 22% of current principals either leave or retire from the profession (School Leaders Network, 2014). Since 2010, there has been a decrease of thirty percent of new enrollments in traditional and alternative teacher education programs (Barth, Dillon, Hull, & Holland Higgins, 2016). In the University of North Carolina system, enrollment in teacher preparation programs increased by six percent in 2016, but this follows a precipitous decline of over thirty percent since 2010 (Bastian & Xing, 2016). McKibben (2013) surmised that when researching principal retention, schools and districts need to develop programs and policies to increase principal quality and to ensure low-quality schools are able to retain high-quality principals since high-quality principals "systematically use lower-quality schools as stepping stones...while low-quality principals simply transfer to low-quality schools" (p. 70). Darling-Hammond

et al. (2007, 2010) provided a variety of critical features for exemplary programs, with one element suggesting that programs which placed a high value on the recruitment of high-quality applicants with diverse backgrounds those individuals would be more successful in leading schools in high needs areas.

Ingersoll (2003) proposed that not all attrition should be viewed as negative, and in fact, low levels of attrition in any organization may indicate stagnancy. However, traditionally in the field of education, principals are often grown from among the ranks of teachers (Hill, Ottem, & DeRoche, 2016). Teachers often gain leadership experience after obtaining a teaching position by volunteering to serve on committees, take on the role as a grade or department chairperson, or volunteer for other forms of teacher leadership within a school, which requires an individual to be at a school for sufficient amounts of time to obtain these types of experiences. Teachers also take on leadership roles outside of the classroom in such positions as a coach or curriculum coordinator, which then often lead entry-level school administration jobs such as a dean of students or assistant principal, leading to his or her first school leadership position. In so much as these experiences provide an aspiring school leader with the professional experiences needed to manage a school, the increased expectations within the role of the principal as the public expects they are ready on the first day on the job (Gray, 2007).

A wide body of qualitative and quantitative studies have suggested that teachers stay at their current school because of their passion for their students and content, opportunities for growth, dedication to their profession, but most importantly the support provided by school leaders (Ingersoll 2003; Brill & McCartney 2008; Brown & Wynn 2009; Hughes et al., 2015). Davis, Gooden, and Bowers (2017) suggests there is little

quantitative research on the traditional pathways to becoming a principal (p. 209) and reports the complexity of the types of individuals who chose to pursue leadership roles within a school. If the pathways to principalship are varied but often originate as an individual becomes a teacher, it is essential to ensure a process for preparing and selecting effective teachers to become principals. The selection processes for hiring a candidate for a principalship has not changed since the 1950s (Greene, 1954). In a report published in 2008, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTF) provided statistics on the projected retirement rates of teachers and principals. They concluded that in the years following the report, districts could lose close to a third of the most experienced and qualified teachers and principals, and with more than half of the nation's teachers and principal born between 1946 and 1964 (Carroll & Foster, 2008), school districts cannot afford to continue the cycle of human resource development as they rebuild their staff.

Traditionally, principals received either a certification or degree from a university preparation program (Styron & LeMire, 2009), and from 1987 to 2012, there has been an increase of twenty-seven percent of principals who have obtained a master's degree. And, since researchers have found a general increase in the numbers of individuals securing school administration certifications or degrees, the availability of positions in schools does not meet this demand (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002). University programs can take actionable steps to prepare the next wave of school leaders effectively. With this increase in qualified candidates, researchers have suggested that there is a glut of people who are certified, but not practically qualified to be effective school leaders (Roza, 2003; Davis et al., 2005). Styron et al. (2009) proposed that university

preparation programs inadequately prepared school leaders, and districts began to experience shortages as a result. There is no national standard for principal licensure, and individual states have their requirements (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Regardless of the different means in which an individual can become a principal, many states, universities, and districts have made preparation programs an enticing form of recruitment (Davis et al., 2005).

Effective Components of Principal Preparation Programs

The quality of principal preparation programs and the effectiveness of their graduates is an intensely debated topic in the field of education research. Throughout the research, evidence indicates that school principals have an impact on the commonly identified indicators of student achievement, are pivotal in attracting, retaining, and developing effective teachers, as well as fostering a culture centered on effective teaching and doing what is best for students (Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006; & Waters et al., 2004). With the growing accountability measures implemented by states and districts all across the country, principal preparation programs have faced greater scrutiny for the quality of candidates they have produced. In reaction, university programs should continue to redesign fully integrated and aligned systems that put students through rigorous and relevant coursework, while balancing the increased calls for more clinical experiences and increased capacity to prepare future school leaders to have a positive impact on student learning. McKibben (2013) summarized research that suggests intently that formal pre-service training programs for principals, when done well, should be essential when developing and retaining effective principals. While Levine (2005) concluded there are no national model programs within the field of educational

leadership, other researchers have identified specific programs and aspects of others that have been found to be effective when preparing future school leaders.

Donmoyer, Yennie-Donmoyer, and Galloway (2012) researched one program that took many of the critiques Levine levied in 2005 and developed a leadership program that focused on blending theory, practical knowledge, and field experience. In the program outlined in the study, courses were co-taught by both university professors and school district administrators, with a commitment to treating program participants as principals primarily focused on developing instructional leaders. The instructors accomplished this goal by having participants engage teachers in data analysis, observation of instructional practices with feedback loops, and strategic initiatives to solve problems that arose from data analysis activities. Case studies were often used to analyze low-performing schools, from which they could provide recommendations for improvement. This program also identified high-achieving schools where principals displayed leadership skills that focused on instruction, collaboration and distributive processes, and pair program participants with these exemplary principals. These experiences allowed students to interact with a safe environment while gaining opportunities to work within a "variety of administrative and quasi-administrative roles" (p. 11).

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2007, 2010) have continued to expand on their previous research that focused on components of highly successful principal preparation programs. They found that effective programs that are research-based with a clear vision of leadership need to be "driven by a theory of action that locates instructional leadership at the heart of school reform" (p. 41), and have the following essential components within each: 1) highly rigorous and selective admissions process with cohort enrollment

practices, 2) develop strong partnerships between schools districts and universities, 3) strong university faculty and supervisors, 4) purposeful coursework, and 5) administrative internships coupled with quality supervision and mentoring.

In their study, Corcoran, Schwartz, and Weinstein (2012) detailed the development of the New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA). This program has been recognized by educational researchers as one of the most unique experiments to date involving principal development programs. In 2003, the New York City Department of Education developed NYCLA as one of the many efforts to transform school improvement in the over 1,500 schools they serve. This accelerated program was designed to recruit and train highly qualified personnel to take on the role of principal or strengthen skills in current principals in new and low performing schools across the district. While the selection process has many similarities to other principal preparation programs, what is unique lies in the "network of mentor principals, former graduates, and district leaders to recruit promising candidates" (p.243). The study also reported that many of the candidates in the program were more likely to be racially diverse, younger, with less teaching experience on average, and fewer worked as assistant principals before taking on the role of principal. As they completed their accelerated program, they participated in a 6 week summer intensive, 10 month school-residency (otherwise known as an internship), and a summer transition period. In all, the researchers noted considerable similarities to those who participated in traditional preparation program when analyzed against student achievement data after 3 years in the position.

Highly Rigorous and Selective Admission Process

Before an individual can participate in a university principal preparation program, he or she must first obtain program admission. Individuals who seek admissions can either be self-selected or recommended (Martin & Papa, 2008), but each must have the potential and perseverance to become effective school leaders. Martin et al. (2008) and numerous other researchers have recommended that universities allow for district recommendations of teachers or other school leaders to strengthen their pool of program participants (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; Hale & Moorman, 2003, Orr, 2006, Quinn, 2005).

Unfortunately, many universities have had to lower admission standards to place students in their programs, which has led to an imbalance faced by some students to complete the coursework while working, all of which lowers the perceived value of the school administration degree (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Levine, 2005). In contrast, Young (2008) found that when looking at principal programs and their acceptance of candidates, GRE scores and GPAs could not be used as accurate predictors of completion. In order to combat these perceptions, a number of researchers have suggested that universities can strengthen their pool of principal preparation applicants by partnering with school districts who have vetted the talents and effectiveness of individuals (Crow and Whiteman, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; Davis et. al, 2012, Martin et al., 2008).

The use of cohort enrollment when accepting new candidates to various types university programs is nothing new. In the literature, examples of its use can be found as early as the 1950s (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). A number of researchers

have identified the use of cohort grouping as an effective strategy to employ when designing a principal preparation program as a learning community (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Martin & Papa, 2008, Orr, 2006; Servais, Sanders, & Derrington, 2009), and that cohort groups have the benefit of "lagging socialization" long after the cohort has completed their preparation program (Donmoyer et al., 2012, p. 22). Although Preis, Grogan, Sherman, and Beaty (2016) referenced literature that suggested the potential drawbacks of the use of cohort models, the use of cohort enrollment practices in the highly successful district and university partnerships continues to grow in acceptance and framework (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Gordon, Oliver, & Solis, 2016).

District and University Partnerships

Within this study, the sample of participants fall within one of the three categories of students: 1) Aspiring Principal Program, 2) North Carolina Principal Fellows, and 3) Self-Selected Students. Although the North Carolina Principal Fellows and the self-selected students have previous experience within a school district and are assigned to one when completing the internship portion of his or her licensure or degree program, only the Aspiring Principal Program participants come from a program that manifested from a district and university partnership. A number of researchers have espoused the virtues of strong district and university partnerships to promote the development and sustainability of quality principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, 2010; Crow et al.,, 2016), while others have found faults in such partnerships, as they have difficulty addressing such issues as leadership turnover, enabling favoritism, and sustaining buy-in from participants within both organizations (Brooks, Harvard, Tatum, Patrick, 2010).

A series of other studies attempted to identify elements of effective partnerships. One study identified a successful focus on developing common goals, defining institutional and participant responsibilities, developing channels of authentic communication, providing evaluative feedback, and ensuring the interests of each organization are aligned with the common goals established (Kamail, Barber, Schulman, & Reed, 2012) when developing their district-coached leadership programs. Similar to the purpose of this study, Borden, Preskill, and DeMoss (2012) studied the perceptions of program participants taken from end-of-course questionnaires and evaluations and found that students found greater value from the coursework when the content was connected to practical experience related to the role of an administrator. The researchers also found that participants had increased their knowledge and skills they perceived as supporting their development to become effective school leaders.

Strong University Faculty and Program Supervisors

For a program to develop effective leaders, programs should have a balance between faculty that have practical school leadership experience and a solid theoretical framework. While there has been consistent research dating back to the 1970s on program faculty (Crow et al., 2016), recent studies suggests a trend in the increase in part-time clinical and adjunct faculty. Additionally, this increase of faculty with administrative experience has allowed programs to better focus on how well their principal preparation programs develop future school leaders to meet the increased demands of this role (Hackmann, Malin, and McCarthy, 2016). These trends directly contrast with Levine's (2005) criticism that university faculty is out of touch because they have been out of the role of school leaders far too long and that others lack the

practical experience needed to develop future school leaders. Further, there is emerging research continues to on the differences of program faculty between research universities and comprehensive institutions.

Hackmann et al. (2016) conducted a study of 755 tenure-line educational leadership faculty members and found statistical significance to the differences between faculty experiences, academic preparation, and self-identified professional strengths among research and comprehensive institutions. As cited in Crow et al. (2016), Hackmann et al. (2011) found that faculty are increasingly part-time clinical and adjunct faculty. However, there has been a slight uptick in the number of program faculty with previous administrative experiences who hold tenure-track faculty positions. Overall, there has been a steady increase in overall job satisfaction of faculty within principal preparation programs as they are wanting to support students, engage in their own research interests, and improve education overall with a positive impact on society at large. As a result of such backgrounds and experiences levels, these faculty are adept at supporting their students' progression through the coursework and internship experiences.

Purposeful Coursework

What gets taught in a principal preparation program has been debated right along with the overall debate related to the effectiveness of principal preparation programs. In Levine's (2005) widely circulated study of principal preparation programs, he stated that coursework provided to students did little to challenge them academically and that many of the participants classified their coursework as nothing more than "busy work" (p.30). However, emerging in the literature highlights the importance of university

principal programs recognizing the need to continue to improve their curricular programming to provide a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge and skills needed to become an effective school leader. To do so, the partnerships between districts and universities are required to properly vet the desired experiences and coursework to be implemented within the principal preparation programs.

In a series of connected publications, Hess and Kelly (2005, 2007) analyzed 56 programs and 210 syllabi from 31 of 56 programs. Among their many findings, they stated there are still unanswered questions as to whether or not course content matches the needs of a principal in the increased era of accountability. In 2007, Gray et al. called this question of alignment a "gap" that needed to be addressed by programs all across the country, and in 2009, Osterman and Hafner stated these programs failed to develop curriculum cohesiveness. Hess and Kelly continued by saying the courses did little to support participants in the analysis of student data in the heightened era of accountability, develop the desired technology skills needed to be effective and efficient, evaluate personnel, nor to support their ability to manage difficult choices related to personnel.

Meaningful Internship Experience with Strong Mentoring

Fry et al. (2005) stated that "the internship is the ultimate performance test, the final rite of passage before gaining initial license to practice. A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in an authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real-world consequences" (p. 3). They also found that despite their statement espousing the virtues of the internship, many current internship programs are churning out "ill-qualified, unprepared principals" (p. 5) because during their internship experience, many follow

rather than lead. Internship participants are more likely to observe and participate within a group and about one third placed interns in leadership opportunities that allowed them to develop the required skills and knowledge needed to lead change to improve student performance. They further critiqued the partnerships between districts and universities for not working together to provide program participants with the experience needed to learning alongside intern mentors who are capable of providing a rich internship experience. Even though there are variations of internship quality and design, Dunaway, Bird, Flowers, and Lyons (2010) found within their study of interns and mentors that for those interns who participated in activities that allowed for higher engagement or leadership opportunities, their reported learning increased. Additionally, Dunaway et al. (2010) suggested that if the internship was to involve interaction "along a continuum of observation/participation/leading" there needs to exist a framework that is provided by the university supervisor or mentoring principal.

Within the internship experience, the role of the mentor cannot be overlooked or overstated. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007, 2011) found that robust internships rated highly by graduates described internship experiences that lasted a full year, provided compensation, and in which they were assigned to highly-effective principal mentors. Additionally, emerging research on the topic of mentor principal continues to provide insight to the importance of this interpersonal dynamic to provide the needed leadership experiences for the mentee (Fry et al., 2005; Barnett et al., 2002).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to identify coursework and experiences in a university principal preparation program that impact the 13 Critical Success Factors for effective principals. Causal-comparative research methodology will be used to examine research questions in this study. The independent variable in this study was the type of principal preparation experience (i.e., Aspiring Principal, Principal Fellow, or Self-Selected Student) and the dependent variables are the 13 Critical Success Factors. The primary research question in this study is, what are the differences in the perception of student preparation between the different types of principal preparation programs related to the 13 Critical Success Factors? This chapter is organized by description of participants, types of principal preparation programs, sampling method, research method, instrumentation, description of procedures and data analysis.

Description of Participants

Individuals selected to participate in this study must have been accepted into the large southeastern university and enrolled in either the licensure add-on component or the master's in school administration degree track. Each participant must be a second year student who has or is currently participating in either the semester or year-long internship. Participants in each of the pathways are made up of individuals from a number of surrounding school districts from the university they attend. Each participant is classified as either a member of the Aspiring Principal Program, North Carolina

Principal Fellow Program, or are Self-Selected Students. Summarized in Table 1 are the comparisons of the principal preparation students.

Table 1

Comparing Principal Preparation Program Students: Independent Variable

Program Components, Requirements & Qualifications	**Aspiring Principals Program**	**NC Principal Fellows**	**Self-Selected Students: Add-On Licensure**	**Self-Selected Students: Master's Degree**
School District & University Partnership	√			
Selection Process in Addition to University Process	√	√		
At Least 3 Years of Successful Teaching Experience	√		√	√
At Least 4 Years of Successful Teaching Experience		√		
5 Week Summer Intensive Experience	√			
Principal or District Nomination	√	√		
Level "A" NC Teaching License	√	√		√
Current Master Degree in Education	Potentially, not a requirement	Potentially, not a requirement	√	Potentially, not a requirement
39 Credit Hour Master's Degree Program	√	√		√
21 Credit Hours			√	
Yearlong Internship	√	√		√
Semester Long Internship			√	

Note: The Aspiring Principal Program and Self-Selected Student information was taken from https://edld.uncc.edu/programs/master-school-administration-msa. The NC Principal Fellow information was taken from http://www.ncpfp.org/.

Sampling

Convenient sampling for this descriptive study was utilized to determine the research participants who are master's level graduate students in one of three principal preparation program cohorts at a southeastern state university. Additional participants from the 21 credit hour add-on licensure section of the program were included as well. The researcher chose this university because of the close proximity and direct access to program participants for use within this study. As suggested by Patten and Newhart (2017), informed consent will be obtained from the participants via the consent statement and agreement section located in the survey. Additionally, accessing the survey and submitting a response also implies consent to participate, which is explained in the introductory email.

There were 71 students enrolled in the university principal preparation program who are categorized as students who participated in the Aspiring Principal Program, North Carolina Principal Fellows, and those who are self-selected that were in their final semester within the program. There were 24 students enrolled in the Aspiring Principal Program cohort. A total of nine students were enrolled in the North Carolina Principal Fellows cohort, and the remaining 38 are students were self-selected. The participants were recruited using a scripted email draft (see Appendix F) that was sent to the individual's university email account by the department director. Statistical tables were used to organize demographic information that were collected from each participant to summarize the overall make-up of the sample population.

Research Methodology and Design

In alignment with the research purpose, the quantitative research method of causal comparative research design was chosen for this study. Within the study, the researchers attempted to compare the differences of conditions that already exist between the independent variable, the university principal preparation program, and the dependent variables, which are the *13 Critical Success Factors* outlined below. Since there were three open-ended response questions within the survey, the researchers used coding to extract themes, which is a form of qualitative data analysis.

The use of causal comparative research design allowed the researcher to explore the differences in the responses from the students in the university's principal preparation program levels. Since the participants had completed most of their coursework and the majority of their internship experience, the researcher was able to analyze the data to determine for differences in the students' experiences in the program. Even though the causal comparative research design method aligned well with the purpose of this study, it was not without threats to internal and external validity which are outlined later in the chapter.

The independent variable and dependent variables were analyzed using multiple one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). The independent variable is the university principal program which consisted of three non-hierarchical levels: 1) Aspiring Principal Program, 2) North Carolina Principal Fellows Program, and 3) Self-Selected Students. The Aspiring Principal Program students are enrolled in either the master's degree track which consists of 39 credit hours of coursework and includes a five-week simulation that begins the program and a 12 credit hour internship that concludes the

program. Aspiring Principal participants may also enroll in the university's 21 credit hour School Administrator Licensure Program that also includes the five week simulation. The North Carolina Principal Fellows must be enrolled in the master's degree track. NC Principal Fellows are required to complete 39 credit hours that are made up of coursework and a 12 credit hour year-long internship experience. Individuals who have self-selected to participate in the program have the same two track options as the Aspiring Principal Program participants, however, they do not complete the five week simulation experience. The independent variable, with its three different levels, were measured against the dependent variables, which consist of items aligned with the *13 Critical Success Factors* that were developed by the Southern Regional Education Board in 2001.

The *13 Critical Factors of Success* survey (see Appendix B) was developed by the SREB after a series of studies were performed of principals recognized for their ability to lead change in schools and pedagogy who saw increasing in student achievement scores under their leadership. The *13 Critical Success Factors* were used to examine the extent to which principal program participants perceived their preparation to successfully execute these success factors. This study included the following dependent variables:

Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement;

Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations;

Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System;

Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment;

Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements;

Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating;

Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents;

Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change;

Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development;

Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating;

Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources;

Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support;

Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices.

Independent Variable: Type of Principal Preparation Program

The type of principal preparation program served as the independent variable in this study. The three levels of programs are described in the following sections (also see Table 1).

Aspiring Principals Program. The Aspiring Principal Program was developed by the founding university in partnership with the major urban school district within the county boundaries where the university is located. According to the university's program director Dr. Debra Morris (personal communication - December 1, 2017) this partnership was created to develop a pipeline of candidates that could gain employment as a school leader within the district or to further strengthen the skills of existing school leaders. During the initial development of the program, the university and district representatives sought training from the New York Leadership Academy where they participated in a year and a half long training program before they accepted the first cohort of students. Since this initial university and school district partnership, three other private and public universities have been added to participate in this program.

The Aspiring Principal Program was established to focus on the development of high school principals. Over the past five years, the university has broadened this focus to include individuals interested in preparing to be a school principal at all levels of public school education. They have also recently decided to include a small number of interested applicants from the surrounding school districts to serve as an additional recruitment pipeline for the founding urban school district. In order for a participant to begin the university application process for this cohort experience, an individual must first be recommended by a sitting district principal who recognizes the individual as having traits that make the individual a qualified applicant to the program. There are three different types of interested applicants who obtain the principal recommendation for acceptance into the principal preparation program.

The first type of participant within the program was a current school district employee who has previously obtained an administration degree and believed the five week intensive simulation course would be beneficial to their professional growth or marketability once they applied for administrative level positions. This five week simulation experience took place over the summer months when public K-12 schools are not in session.

The second type of participants is one who has previously obtained a master's degree within education, but not in the fields of school administration or educational leadership, and will complete the 21 credit hour program to obtain an add-on licensure that will then qualify him or her to obtain a North Carolina principal license. Participants who complete this pathway start their university experience in the five week intensive simulation that counts as three credit hours in an elective course. After the summer

intensive experience, participants begin the university coursework in the subsequent fall semester. This add-on licensure programs requires each participant to complete a semester-long internship experience, as well as the evidences he or she must submit to the university and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to be reviewed before licensure will be granted.

The third type of participant are those who seek this type of intense experience, while completing the university's master's degree program in school administration. Participants enrolled in this degree track start the same way as the other two participants through the initial intensive summer simulation experience. They then move on to complete two years of subsequent coursework and clinical experiences that involve a semester-long internship. They, too, have to submit evidences to be evaluated by the university and state to receive their add-on licensure.

North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. According to Dr. Morris (personal communication - December 1, 2017) participants within the program are a very select group and represent the best of what public schools have to offer in terms of applicants interested in principal preparation programs. The state of North Carolina developed the Principal Fellows Program (PFP) in 1993 and since then, over 1,200 Principal Fellows have completed the program (ncpfp.northcarolina.edu, December 28, 2017). There are nearly 100 fellowships available each year, but roughly only 40-60 participants qualify for the program. Prospective applicants must meet an extensive set of eligibility requirements before they can be considered by the Principal Fellows Commission. Some of the more stringent requirements include four years of teaching experience, ability to provide evidence of previous leadership and management potential, and willingness to

comply with all of the program regulations that include loan stipulations, coursework, and full yearlong internship experience. Each applicant who meets the eligibility requirements must undergo an exhaustive interview experience both from the host university and Principal Fellows Commission before being officially named a North Carolina Principal Fellow.

Once accepted as a North Carolina Principal Fellow, each participant completes the program description as outlined by their host university both in terms of coursework and clinical experience expectations. Within the program used for this study, the course offerings are the same as the other two groups. A major difference among those who participate as Principal Fellows is that they are paid a stipend in the first year of coursework which is 60% of assistant principal pay and a $30,000 loan that covers the cost of tuition. This allows the participant to focus exclusively on their studies. They are then given another stipend and loan during their second year in the program when students are assigned to a mentor school within a district of their choice, to which they then complete a full-time internship experience. During this year-long internship experience, each participant is paid a salary commensurate with that of an acting assistant principal. Once a Principal Fellow has completed all the program requirements in the two years, the Fellow must serve four qualifying years as an assistant principal or principal within the state of North Carolina during a six year span following successful completion of the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program.

Self-Selected Students. Participants who are classified as self-selected are individuals who are not a member of any qualifying district program or fellowship, and have identified themselves as having the required experience and the characteristics and

demeanor to take on the role of a school administrator. Participants may be in-state or out-of-state applicants who chose to complete the program on campus or from one of the three distance education sites accredited by the university. Each student must have three years of successful teaching experience, have an undergraduate GPA from an accredited university of 2.75 or higher on a 4.0 scale, have met the qualifying score within the past 5 years on either the GRE or the MAT, have a Class A North Carolina teaching license or relevant experience with documentation, and submit three letters of recommendations from current or past school administrators. In addition to these basic requirements and submissions, individuals must also participant in an interview with program faculty. During the interview process, each participant is also asked to submit a brief writing sample from a prompt given by the interview committee.

Once an applicant is accepted into the program, they complete a series of coursework and clinical experiences designed to prepare them to become a future school leader. The coursework consists of 39 credit-hours of courses and a yearlong internship experience. The courses are designed to provide individuals with relevant theoretical and practical knowledge and skills that will help each successfully complete an E-portfolio that has taken the place of a licensure exam to be reviewed to determine whether or not the student has fulfilled the requirements of the coursework and internship experience in order to receive a principal's license.

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this quantitative study, the researchers used SurveyShare, an internet-based software (see Appendix B) to organize the questions and to disseminate the survey. The 5-point Likert-type survey was modified from the Southern Regional

Education Board's *Survey of Principal Internship Program* that was published in the 2005 report, *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right* (Appendix H). Creswell (2013) states that survey designs provide a "numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 155). The use of this survey allowed the researchers to identify attributes of a large population within a university's principal preparation program (Fowler, 2009).

The researchers gained approval via email correspondence to use and modify the survey on October 24, 2017, from the SREB by Jonathan A. Schmidt-Davis, who serves as Director for the Learning-Centered Leadership Program (See Appendix D). Additionally, the researchers gained approval via email correspondence from Dr. Phyllis M. Jones, who used the same survey in her own dissertation research, to use and modify her version of the same survey on November 22, 2017 (See Appendix E). Dr. Jones modified the survey from its original form that served as a framework of activities for aspiring principals to one that measured the perceptions of principals related to their university preparation as determined by the *13 Critical Success Factors*. The researchers modified this survey even further to measure the perceptions of principal preparation program students on how well their university had prepared them to take on a future role as a school leader.

The researcher provided the sample population with the survey, which includes a confidentiality statement and consent agreement section, a series of 51 statements, three open-ended response questions related to coursework, clinical experiences, the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator, and demographics and work experience questionnaire. The confidentiality statement and

consent agreement section is brief in nature and outlined for the participants the steps the researcher would take to ensure confidentiality as well as provided the participants with a statement outlining consent to participate in the study. The 51 statements are to be rated by the participants using a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). The three open-ended response questions are as follows:

1. What experiences in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?
2. What courses in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?
3. Do you feel you have the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator?

Following the three open-ended response questions, the participants were given six questions asking them to identify their level of program within the university, gender, age, race/ethnicity, level of education attained, and number of years of work experiences as a teacher. Table 2 summarizes the item numbers related to each of the *13 Critical Success Factors.*

Table 2

Dependent Variables – Southern Regional Education Board 13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals and Survey Question Alignment

13 Critical Success Factors	Survey Question Alignment
Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement;	2, 3, 4, 5
Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations;	6, 7, 8
Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment	16, 17, 18, 19
Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements	20, 21, 22
Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating	23, 24
Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents	25, 26
Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change	27, 28, 29
Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development	30, 31, 32
Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating	33, 34, 35
Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources	36, 37, 38
Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support	39, 40, 41, 42
Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices	43, 44,

Traits of Measures

The instrument, *Survey of Principal Internship Program*, was developed by Dr. Tom Glass of the Southern Regional Education Board in 2005. He developed this survey to study the perceptions of principal internship experiences. The original survey used the following response options for the participants to answer each question: 1) No application and practice (NR), 2) Moderate application and practice (O for observed; OP for observe and participate; and P for participate), and 3) Intense application and practice (OPL for observe, participate and lead; PL for participate and lead; and L for lead). Instead of the response options provided in the original survey, the researcher has chosen to use the Likert-response options of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA) to organize and analyze the data responses to the survey questions.

The open-ended response questions were formatted to allow the participants to respond in either narrative form or any other type of organizational methods they desire at the time of response. The open-ended responses were coded to extract themes, commonalities, and differences that may arise from the individual responses. This form of data analysis is supported by a wide range of researchers (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Evidences of Reliability and Validity

Although no formal analytics were completed by the original researcher, this instrument has been recognized by other scholars, accepted in peer reviewed journals, was developed by a respected member of a respected organization, and has been used in dissertations. Dr. Phyllis Jones used this survey in her own dissertation and went through a series of steps to increase validity of her modified survey. She recruited a panel of

three (3) education content experts to review her modified survey and received numerous pieces of feedback and recommendations to strengthen the survey. After these revisions, Jones performed a Content Validity Index analysis based on their rankings to the appropriateness of each of the survey questions. Jones reported a CVI of 1.00 after several revisions were made based on the content experts' recommendations and feedback.

Description of Procedures

Since the study involved the use of human subjects, the researcher completed all the requirements as outlined by the university and gained approval to conduct the study before any data was collected. The researcher submitted all the required forms as outlined by the university. The submission to the university's Institutional Review Board ensured that all aspects of the study protected the participants and adhered to sound ethical practices while they conducted the research (Marsolo, 2012).

After IRB approval, the researcher provided the program director with the introductory email that included the survey link (see Appendix F). The program director had access to the university-provided email addresses for each of the participants. Each participant received an initial, introductory email, which included a brief introduction to the researcher, the research purpose, a brief description of the significance of the study, a detailed explanation of how to accurately complete the survey, and how to re-submit to the researcher.

To provide a timely reminder to the potential participants who wished to participate in the study, one email communication (see Appendix F) was sent to the entire sample population approximately two weeks following the initial introductory email sent

by the program director. The use of reminders has been found to increase response rates of studies (Creswell, 2013). The survey link was left open from the date of the initial, introductory email and was closed on March 20, 2018. The university's program director also agreed to provide reminders during class meeting sessions. To incentivize participation, the researcher purchased four $25 Amazon gift cards that were randomly drawn for individuals who responded via email once they completed the survey and expressed their interest to be included in the drawing.

The researchers did not track any of the email addresses or internet provider information. These steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants to promote participation and trustworthiness within the survey. The lack of tracking also helped to ensure none of the sample population can be identified as either participating or not.

Analysis of Data

The researchers used SurveyShare to collect the data. The collection of survey data was downloaded into IBM SPSS (Version 24) computer software program. The quantitative data were analyzed using IBM's SPSS (Version 24) computer software program. The use of one-way ANOVA allowed the researchers to identify differences between the three principal preparation programs on the dependent variables (i.e., 13 Critical Success Factors). A .05 alpha level was used to determine statistical significance and no adjustments are being made due to the reduction in statistical power – Cohen's *d* was used to determine effect size within the items that were statistically significant. There is an increase in a type II error rate, and this was discussed in the results section.

The open-ended response questions were coded to identify themes and to examine the similarities and differences across the three groups of program participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that this form of data analysis is a complex process and that "assigning codes to pieces of data is how you begin to construct categories" (p. 206). The researcher will employ the use of axial coding to group the categories together (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) and report the findings.

Threats to Validity

Inherent within causal comparative design, threats to internal and external validity are recognized by the researcher. Since the researcher analyzed perceptions of principal preparation program students within survey responses regarding experiences that have already taken place, consideration has been given when interpreting the results. Additionally, caution should be considered as the researcher will be able to identify relationships from the responses to the independent variable and dependent variables, but establishing causation will be difficult. Furthermore, the members found within the university program have already been formed, which presents as another threat to internal validity. The survey itself has been modified twice, and with no formal analytic from the original developer available, and the addition of three open-ended response questions from the modified survey used by Dr. Jones, the researcher must also acknowledge these threats. Also, due to the narrow characteristics of participants in the study, the researcher cannot generalize to individuals who have not participated in other principal preparation programs.

Summary

In this chapter, the researchers outlined quantitative research methodology and design that was used for this study, including the description of participants, sampling, threats to validity, the independent and dependent variables, instrumentation, traits of measures, evidence of reliability and validity, a description of procedures, and analyses of data. Creswell (2013) stated that causal-comparative analysis allows the researcher to test their research questions by examining the differences among the independent variable with the dependent variable. Specifically, the university principal preparation programs, which consists of three levels of participants, 1) Aspiring Principal, 2) Principal Fellow, and 3) Self-Selected Students serves as the independent variable, and the dependent variables consist of the *13 Critical Success Factors* (see Appendix A) that were developed by the Southern Regional Education Board in 2001.

Overall, this research will provide the perceptions of current principal preparation students, which will lend useful insight to the university as to how well their students believe they are being prepared for a future role as a school leader.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of survey responses collected from those who volunteered to participate in this research study and are organized by the 13 Critical Success Factors for effective principals, the program qualities, and by the open-ended response questions. The *13 Critical Success Factors* served as the dependent variables for this study and include: 1) focusing on student achievement, 2) developing a culture of high expectations, 3) designing a standards-based instructional system, 4) creating a caring environment, 5) implementing data-based improvements, 6) communicating, 7) involving parents, 8) initiating and manage change, 9) providing professional developing, 10) innovating, 11) maximizing resources, 12) building external support, and 13) staying abreast of effective practices. The research question examined was, are there differences in the perception of their preparation between the different types of program participants related to the *13 Critical Success Factors*?

In the following sections, the researcher provides a description of the participants, descriptions of the items, general demographic information, the research question, and an overall summary of the chapter. This chapter also contains information on data analysis procedures and the accompanying results. Further, this chapter highlights the qualitative procedures to analyze the three open-response questions as well as a summary of the information found in the responses.

Description of Participants

Each of the participants who volunteered to participate in this study is a member of a principal preparation master's degree or add-on licensure program in a large, urban university located in the southeastern region of the United States. Within the overall program, the participants are grouped into one of the three following categories: 1) Aspiring Principals Program, 2) North Carolina Principal Fellows Program, and 3) Self-Selected Students (see Table 1 for a description of the differences between the programs). Found in table 4 is the summary of the total number of participants by group, total invitations to participate by group, and their respective percentages. The initial invitation to participate in this study was sent to 71 students enrolled in the principal preparation program. Of the 71 students who received the invitation, 49 agreed to participate and responded to the survey questions, which equates to a 69% response rate. As a group, 18 out of 24 Aspiring Principals volunteered to participate in this study, which equates to 75% response rate among the group. The North Carolina Principal Fellows accounted for 7 of the total respondents to the survey. There are a total of 9 North Carolina Principal Fellows enrolled in the program used in this study and the overall response rate was 77.7%. Lastly, 24 out of 38 Self-Selected students volunteered to participate in this study, which equates to a 63% response rate.

Table 3 shows the participants by program type within the principal preparation program. As shown, Self-Selected Students had the highest level of participation at 49% (n= 24), while Aspiring Principals had the next highest participation rate at 36.7% (n= 18). The North Carolina Principal Fellows, who are also the smallest group in the

program, had a participation response rate of 14.3% (*n*= 7), and it is important to note that the Principal Fellows have a total of nine students in the program at this university.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Participants by Program Type

Program Type	Frequency	Percent	Total Invitations	Response Rate Percent
Aspiring Principals	18	36.7	24	75
NC Principal Fellows	7	14.3	9	77.7
Self-Selected Students	24	49	38	63
Total	49	100	71	-

Note: There are a total of 71 participants in the entire program who met the criteria for this study.

Summarized in Table 4 are the descriptive statistics for the participants' age, education, race, and years of service as a teacher. Over half of the participants had ages that fell within the 31-40 years old category with a 57.1% response rate (*n*= 28). The next largest response rate was 22.5% (*n*= 11) by those who fell in the 41-50 years old age range. The under-30 years old category accounted for 14.3% (*n*= 7) of the sample, while 51-60 years old category made up 6.1% (*n*= 3) of the sample. There were no participants who were 61 years of age or older. Of the 49 completed responses, and as indicated in the table, females represented a large majority of the sample at 69.4% (*n*= 34). Their male peers accounted for a 30.6% (*n*= 15) participation rate. A large majority of those who responded identified themselves as White at 75.7% *(n*= 37). Those who identified themselves as African-American constituted 18.4% (*n*= 9) of the sample, while 6.1% (*n*= 3) of the sample identified themselves as Hispanic, non-White. The majority of respondents (*n*= 28 or 57.1%) stated they held a master's degree. A total of 38.8% (*n*= 19) of the participants stated they have earned a bachelor's degree, and this number is sure to increase as some of the participants completed this survey during their final

semester of a master's degree principal preparation track within the program. Lastly, 4.1% (*n*= 2) of the respondents have earned a doctoral degree. The number of years each of the participants has served as a teacher in some capacity varies greatly. The results indicated that the principal preparation program students were most likely between 7-10 years teaching and 11-15 years teaching as both categories have matching frequency and percent responses (*n= 15* or 28.6%). The next largest response rate fell within the 4-6 years of teaching category with 18.3% (*n* = 9). After that category, 10.2% (*n*= 5) of the participants reported they had 21-25 years of teaching. About 8% (*n*= 4) of the participants stated they had 4-6 years of teaching, while 4.1% (*n*= 2) claimed to have over 25 years of teaching and one participant had the least amount of previous teaching experience (n= 1 or 2.0%).

Table 4

Descriptive Characteristics of Program Participants

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Under 30 Years Old	7	14.3
31-40 Years Old	28	57.1
41-50 Years Old	11	22.5
51-60 Years Old	3	6.1
61 Years or Over	-	-
Gender		
Male	15	30.6
Female	34	69.4
Education		
Bachelor's	9	38.8
Master's	28	57.1
Doctorate	2	4.1
Race		
African American	9	18.4
Hispanic, non-White	3	6.1
White	37	75.5

Table 4 Continued

Years as a Teacher		
1-3 Years Teaching	1	2
4-6 Years Teaching	9	18.3
7-10 Years Teaching	15	28.6
11-15 Years Teaching	15	28.6
16-20 Years Teaching	4	8.2
21-25 Years Teaching	5	10.2
Over 25 Years Teaching	2	4.1

Table 5 summarizes the various leadership roles the participants identified as having held prior to their participation in the survey. The results indicate the participants in this study were most likely to have served a grade chair (n= 33) and to have served as a teacher mentor (n= 28).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Previous Leadership Experience

Previous Leadership Experience	Frequency
Grade-Level Chair	33
Lead Teacher	18
Instructional/Curriculum Coach	11
Teacher Mentor	28
Assistant Principal	2
Dean of Students	-
Central Office Leadership Position	1
Member of School-Based Committee	26
Member of District-Level Committee	14
Member of State-Level Committee	3
Member of Professional Association/ Organization Committee	8
EC Program Specialist	1
United Federation of Teachers Chapter Chair	1
Professional School Counselor	1
Coach	1

Descriptions of the Items

Summarized in Table 6 below are the descriptive statistics that detail the combined mean score and standard deviation for each of the three groups who participated in this study. Each statement is categorized by the *13 Critical Success Factors* and the *Qualities of an Educational Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section in the survey. It should be noted that for the vast majority of the statements in each of the two sections, the combined mean scores for the three groups in the program were relatively high. Over 80% of the mean scores for each statement are above 4.0 (n= 42).

There are two questions with the same mean score of 4.59. The first is question 6, under *Critical Success Factor 2: Develop a Culture of High Expectation*, and is as follows: communicate that the focus is on student learning by visiting classrooms, attending grade level and collaborative instructional meetings in order to support instructional practices and to provide teachers with feedback. The other was question 49, which asked if their program cohort participation was a defined group of participants who began and ended the program together. This statement is found in the *Qualities of an Educational Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section of the survey. The third highest was question 46 with a mean score of 4.54. This statement was related to their program, including a supervised internship that provided opportunities for the participants to work directly with a principal on tasks typical of a school leader. The fourth highest was question 43 in *Critical Success Factor 13* with a mean score of 4.51 and asked if participants felt prepared to collaborate with colleagues on ideas and best practices to improve leadership.

Conversely, there were statements with mean scores that fell below the AGREE rating level (4). The lowest, at 3.61, was question 14 under *Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System*. This statement was related to how prepared they felt to monitor and support teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The second lowest was also in *Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System,* with a mean score of 3.67. Question 13 asked participants how well they felt prepared to monitor and assess the implementation of an adopted curriculum. The next two had the exact same mean score of 3.71. Question 27 is found in *Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change*. This was related to how well the participants felt prepared to develop appropriate improvement plans for marginal staff based on school performance goals. Question 36, which is found in *Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources*, involved how well they felt prepared to allocate the available money, space, time, and people to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs.

Table 6

D*escriptive Statistics for All Combined Groups*

Questions	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Critical Success Factor 1		
Q2	4.35	0.52
Q3	4.22	0.59
Q4	4.35	0.78
Q5	4.20	0.74
Critical Success Factor 2		
Q6	4.59	0.50
Q7	3.88	0.82

Table 6 Continued

Q8	4.41	0.64
Critical Success Factor 3		
Q9	4.35	0.66
Q10	4.20	0.79
Q11	4.33	0.77
Q12	3.82	1.03
Q13	3.67	0.94
Q14	3.61	0.98
Q15	4.02	0.92
Critical Success Factor 4		
Q16	4.42	0.68
Q17	4.44	0.62
Q18	4.40	0.61
Q19	4.46	0.50
Critical Success Factor 5		
Q20	4.19	0.85
Q21	4.19	0.94
Q22	4.23	0.75
Critical Success Factor 6		
Q23	4.33	0.66
Q24	4.31	0.72
Critical Success Factor 7		
Q25	4.16	0.69
Q26	4.33	0.56
Critical Success Factor 8		
Q27	3.71	0.98
Q28	3.92	0.99
Q29	4.02	0.90
Critical Success Factor 9		

Table 6 Continued

Q30	4.08	0.61
Q31	4.37	0.67
Q32	4.23	0.69
Critical Success Factor 10		
Q33	4.27	0.70
Q34	4.29	0.74
Q35	3.90	0.80
Critical Success Factor 11		
Q36	3.71	1.02
Q37	3.98	0.83
Q38	3.86	1.00
Critical Success Factor 12		
Q39	4.18	0.64
Q40	4.42	0.74
Q41	4.10	0.69
Critical Success Factor 13		
Q42	4.06	0.75
Q43	4.51	0.55
Qualities of Effective Programs		
Q44	4.12	0.90
Q45	4.29	0.79
Q46	4.54	0.62
Q47	4.31	0.55
Q48	4.59	0.79
Q49	4.20	0.87
Q50	4.24	0.83
Q51	4.02	0.99
Q52	4.14	0.84

Note: Each of the question statements can be found in Appendix B.

Among the total participants in the principal preparation program, the students felt most prepared to create a caring environment, which is *Critical Success Factor 4*, and involves an ability to guide stakeholders through the educational processes that support students in meeting higher standards (Bottoms, et al, 2001). This was followed by *Critical Success Factor 13*, which is staying abreast of effective practices. Thirdly, the students felt most prepared to design a standards-based instructional system, which is *Critical Success Factor 1*. Conversely, the students felt least prepared to maximize resources, which is *Critical Success Factor 11*, to which was then followed by *Critical Success Factor 8: initiate and manage change.*

Data Analysis Summary

Taken from the SurveyShare website, the survey data were extracted in the form of an SPSS file and imported in SPSS (Version 24). The quantitative survey data were coded and analyzed in SPSS. Before the data could be tested, the initial responses found in the SPSS had to be coded in numerical form in order for the various tests to be performed. From there, a series of one-way ANOVAs (analyses of variance) were performed on each of the questions found within the *13 Critical Success Factors* for Effective Principals, and for the demographic data were pertinent - the specific questions are provided below. Because of the small sample size, which results in low statistical power, no statistical adjustments were made for conducting multiple statistical tests. There is a high likelihood of an inflated Type I error rate in this study.

Additionally, the three open-ended response questions responses were downloaded from the SurveyShare website. From there, the open-ended questions were coded to extract common themes and key pieces of information related to each of the

questions. The remaining sections of this chapter outline the quantitative analysis for each of the survey questions related to the *13 Critical Success Factors*, the qualitative analysis, and the demographic analysis; all of which address the research question associated with the study.

In Table 7, descriptive statistics for the mean score by program groups is summarized. On average, the Aspiring Principals had the highest mean score (n= 4.53), which was then followed by the Self-Selected Students (n= 4.38). The NC Principal Fellows reported the lowest mean scores of the three (n= 4.21).

Table 7

Overall Mean Score by Participant Group

	Mean Score
Aspiring Principal	4.53
NCP Fellows	4.21
Self-Selected	4.38

Note: This is the total mean score for all responses.

Research Question

The first research question for this study asked, "Are there differences in the perception of their preparation between the different types of program participants related to the *13 Critical Success Factors*?" To address this research question, a series of one-way ANOVA tests were computed for the various questions that are aligned within the 13 Critical Success Factors. As indicated in the results provided below, each of the response scale indicators was used (e.g., Likert-type Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). The mean for each item (on the five-point scale) was the dependent variable.

Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement

The four items that examined the focus on student achievement are reported in Table 8. There was not a statistically significant difference found in questions 2 (teachers implement curriculum that produce student achievement), 3 (methods to make substantial gains in student achievement and closing the gap), and 4 (best practice based on current research), but there was a difference for question 5 (feedback to teachers during observation). A Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the Self-Selected groups with large differences between the two groups (Cohen's $d = .83$).

Table 8

Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 2	4.50	0.51	4.14	0.38	4.29	0.55	1.47	0.24
Question 3	4.17	0.71	4.00	0.00	4.33	0.57	1.01	0.37
Question 4	4.56	0.51	4.29	0.49	4.21	0.98	1.05	0.36
Question 5	4.56	0.51	4.00	0.58	4.00	0.83	3.60	0.04

Note. NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 2, implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement. Question 3, identifying and using various methods to make substantial gains in student achievement and closing achievement gaps. Question 4, working with the faculty and their administrative team to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision. Question 5, prepared them to provide feedback to teachers during observation conferences as well as classroom walkthroughs, meetings, and conversations with teachers regarding classroom instruction.

Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations

The three items that examined developing a culture of high expectations are reported in Table 9. There was not a statistically significant difference found in question 6 (communicate that the focus is on student learning by visiting classrooms, attending grade level and collaborative instructional meetings in order to support instructional

practices and to provide teachers with feedback), but there was a difference for questions 7 (organize academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate students' success at all levels of ability), and 8 (developing, articulating, and implementing a shared vision for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center). For question 7, a Tukey's post hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows with a large difference between the groups (Cohen's $d = 1.06$). In regards to the difference found in question 8, a Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows with a large difference between the groups (Cohen's $d = 1.26$)

Table 9

Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 6	4.72	0.46	4.71	0.49	4.46	0.51	1.75	0.18
Question 7	4.17	0.71	3.29	0.95	3.83	0.78	3.32	0.05
Question 8	4.67	0.49	4.00	0.58	4.33	0.70	3.32	0.05

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 6, communicate that the focus is on student learning by visiting classrooms, attending grade level and collaborative instructional meetings in order to support instructional practices and to provide teachers with feedback. Question 7, organize academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability. Question 8, developing, articulating, and implementing a shared vision for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center.

Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System

The seven items that examined designing a standards-based instructional system are reported in Table 10. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 10

Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 9	3.44	0.98	3.71	1.11	3.83	0.87	0.88	0.42
Question 10	3.61	0.92	3.57	1.40	3.63	0.92	0.01	0.99
Question 11	4.11	0.90	4.00	1.16	3.96	0.91	0.14	0.87
Question 12	4.11	0.90	3.57	1.13	3.67	1.09	1.19	0.31
Question 13	3.44	0.98	3.71	1.11	3.83	0.87	0.88	0.42
Question 14	3.61	0.92	3.57	1.40	3.63	0.92	0.01	0.99
Question 15	4.11	0.90	4.00	1.16	3.96	0.91	0.14	0.87

Note: Question 9, use of a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school. Question 10, facilitating opportunities for teachers to observe one another's classrooms and collaborate on changes to improve teaching and learning. Question 11, understanding of content standards and their central place in teaching, learning, and assessment. Question 12, working with teachers to "unpack" adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards. Question 13, monitoring and assessing the implementation of an adopted curriculum (pacing guides). Question 14, monitoring and supporting the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Question 15, demonstrating knowledge of curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.

Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment

The four items that examined creating a caring environment are reported in Table 11. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 11

Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 16	4.39	0.61	4.43	0.79	4.43	0.66	0.03	0.98
Question 17	4.39	0.61	4.43	0.79	4.48	0.59	0.10	0.90
Question 18	4.28	0.58	4.33	0.82	4.52	0.59	0.84	0.44
Question 19	4.50	0.51	4.29	0.49	4.48	0.51	0.48	0.62

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 16, collaboration

with staff to meet the unique needs and interests of all students. Question 17, initiating activities designed to increase parental involvement. Question 18, involving families in educational plans for their children's education. Question 19, fostering a healthy and inviting learning environment.

Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements

The three items that examined implementing data-based improvements are reported in Table 12. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 12

Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 20	4.29	0.69	3.50	1.38	4.29	0.75	2.41	0.10
Question 21	4.41	0.71	3.57	1.51	4.21	0.83	2.10	0.14
Question 22	4.24	0.44	4.00	1.16	4.29	0.81	0.40	0.67

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 20, analyzing school and individual data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine instructional activities, set instructional goals, and measure school's progress. Question 21, disaggregating data to share school's progress with faculty and other stakeholders. Question 22, developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.

Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating

The two items that examined aspects of participants' perceptions on school communication are reported in Table 13. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 13

Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 23	4.56	0.51	4.00	1.27	4.25	0.53	2.05	0.14
Question 24	4.44	0.15	3.86	1.07	4.35	0.65	1.79	0.18

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 23, communicating a school's progress and achievement to teachers, parents, and staff. Question 24, communicating effectively both oral and written, with the school board, parents, staff, and students.

Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents

The two items that examined aspects of participants' perceptions involving parents are reported in Table 14. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 14

Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 25	4.17	0.71	3.71	0.95	4.29	0.69	1.99	0.15
Question 26	4.22	0.55	4.29	0.49	4.43	0.59	0.75	0.48

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 25, empower teachers to establish meaningful relationships with parents and involve parents in their children's education. Question 26, establish meaningful relationships with parents to encourage them to be involved in their children's education.

Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change

The three items that examined the focus on initiating and managing change are reported in Table 15. There was not a statistically significant difference found in questions 28 (ability to induct and/or mentor new teaching staff) and 29 (lead the change process for major initiatives and change efforts to improve teaching and learning), but there was a difference for question 27 (develop appropriate improvement plans for

marginal staff based on school performance goals). A Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference between the two groups (Cohen's $d = 1.51$).

Table 15

Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 27	4.11	0.58	2.86	1.07	3.67	1.05	4.87	0.01
Question 28	4.06	0.94	3.29	0.95	4.00	1.00	1.75	0.19
Question 29	4.28	0.83	3.43	1.13	4.00	0.83	2.38	0.10

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 27, appropriate improvement plans for marginal staff based on school performance goals. Question 28, induct and/or mentor new teaching staff. Question 29, lead the change process for major initiatives and change efforts to improve teaching and learning.

Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development

The three items that examined the focus on providing professional development are reported in Table 16. There was not a statistically significant difference found in questions 31 (design, guide, and lead professional development activities for faculty that positively impacts student achievement) and 32 (identify teachers in need of support and professional development, and then provide the resources needed to help those teachers improve), but there was a difference for question 30 (facilitate study groups, problem-solving groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement). A Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows groups with a large difference between the two groups (Cohen's $d = 1.30$). Additionally, a Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Self-Selected group also had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference between the two groups (Cohen's $d = 0.46$).

Table 16

Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 30	4.22	0.43	3.43	0.79	4.17	0.57	5.71	0.01
Question 31	4.44	0.51	4.14	0.38	4.38	0.67	0.51	0.61
Question 32	4.24	0.56	4.00	0.58	4.29	0.81	0.47	0.63

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 30, facilitate study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement. Question 31, design, guide and lead professional development activities for faculty that positively impact student achievement. Question 32, identify teachers in need of support and professional development, and then provide the resources needed to help those teachers improve.

Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating

The three items that examined the focus on innovating are reported in Table 17. There was not a statistically significant difference found in questions 33 (schedule adequate collaboration time that will allow teachers to operate within the context of a professional learning community) and 35 (schedule and organize intervention classes to provide struggling students with an opportunity for extra support), but there was a difference for question 34 (create professional development time for continuous improvement of the school). A Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference between the groups (Cohen's $d = 0.97$). Additionally, a Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) also indicated that the Self-Selected group had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference a small difference between the group (Cohen's $d = 0.08$).

Table 17

Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 33	4.33	0.59	4.00	0.58	4.29	0.81	0.59	0.56
Question 34	4.33	0.59	3.57	0.98	4.46	0.66	4.59	0.02
Question 35	3.89	0.90	3.86	0.69	3.92	0.80	0.02	0.98

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 33, schedule adequate collaboration time that will allow teachers to operate within the context of a professional learning community. Question 34, create professional development time for continuous improvement of the school. Question 35, schedule and organize intervention classes to provide struggling students with an opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small-group instruction, and extended-block time).

Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources

The three items that examined aspects of maximizing resources are reported in Table 18. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 18

Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 36	3.89	0.76	3.00	1.41	3.79	1.02	2.14	0.13
Question 37	3.94	0.80	4.00	0.82	4.00	0.89	0.03	0.98
Question 38	3.94	0.94	3.14	1.22	4.00	0.93	2.21	0.12

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 36, allocate the available money, space, time, and people to meet the instructional goals and support teacher needs. Question 37, secure community support to provide new and needed resources for student needs. Question 38, work with faculty to build community support for the school and students through strong public relations.

Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support

The four items that examined aspects of building external support are reported in Table 19. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 19
Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 39	4.33	0.49	3.86	0.90	4.17	0.64	1.46	0.24
Question 40	4.56	0.51	3.86	1.35	4.48	0.59	2.56	0.09
Question 41	4.06	0.42	3.67	1.03	4.25	0.74	1.84	0.17
Question 42	4.11	0.47	4.00	1.00	4.04	0.86	0.07	0.93

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 39, work with faculty to build community support for the school and students through strong public relations. Question 40, form positive relationships with teachers to create a collaborative learning organization. Question 41, improve and sustain parental participation in school and home-based activities to support their children's education. Question 42, partner with the community to build collaboration and support school success.

Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices

The two items that examined aspects of participants' perceptions of staying abreast of effective practices are reported in Table 20. There was not a statistically significant difference found in any of the questions.

Table 20

Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 43	4.61	0.50	4.14	0.69	4.54	0.51	2.02	0.14
Question 44	4.00	0.84	4.29	0.49	4.17	1.05	0.30	0.74

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 43, collaboration with colleagues on ideas and best practices to improve leadership. Question 44, network with professional groups and associations dedicated to improving teaching and learning.

Summarized in Table 21 is the ranking of Critical Success Factors by mean score as answered by the Aspiring Principal students. The only similarity between three groups of participants in the top four rankings is Critical Success Factor 4, which is creating a caring environment. Additionally, two factors rank in each of the lists bottom four, which are Critical Success Factor 11, maximizing resources, and Critical Success Factor 8, initiating and managing change.

Table 21

Ranking of Critical Success Factor by Mean Score: Aspiring Principal Students

Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations
Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating
Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement
Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment
Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements
Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices
Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development
Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support
Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents
Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating
Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change
Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System
Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources

Note: Critical Success Factors 5 and 13 had identical mean scores and were provided in rank order by number.

Additionally, Table 22 ranks the Critical Success Factors by mean score for the North Carolina Principal Fellow students.

Table 22

Ranking of Critical Success Factor by Mean Score: NC Principal Fellows

Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment
Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices
Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement
Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations
Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents
Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System
Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating
Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development
Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support
Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating
Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements
Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources
Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change

Note: Critical Success Factors 2 and 7 had identical mean scores and were provided in rank order by number.

Table 23 ranks the Critical Success Factors by mean score for the North Carolina Principal Fellows students.

Table 23

Ranking of Critical Success Factor by Mean Score: Self-Selected Students

Critical Success Factor 4: Creating a Caring Environment
Critical Success Factor 13: Staying Abreast of Effective Practices
Critical Success Factor 7: Involving Parents
Critical Success Factor 6: Communicating
Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development
Critical Success Factor 5: Implementing Data-Based Improvements
Critical Success Factor 12: Building External Support

Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating
Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement
Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations
Critical Success Factor 3: Designing a Standards-Based Instructional System
Critical Success Factor 11: Maximizing Resources
Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change

Note: Critical Success Factors 1 and 2 had identical mean scores and were provided in rank order.

Qualities of an Educational Leadership/Principal Preparation Program

The eight items that examined the focus on the qualities of an education leadership/principal preparation program are reported in Table 24. There was not a statistically significant difference found in questions 45 (provided opportunities for me to communicate with colleagues outside the school to learn and share ideas and best practices to improve my leadership skills), 46 (included a supervised internship that provided opportunities for me to work directly with a principal on tasks typical of a school leader), 47 (included faculty that were knowledgeable and competent instructionally), 48 (required student cohort participation = a defined group of participants that began and ended the program together), and 50 (paired me with an exemplary mentor that worked with me regularly, offering advice, modeling, and feedback), but there was a difference for questions 49 (program included coursework that was adequately sequenced, beneficial, and connected to the day-to-day realities that principals face), 51 (program included opportunities for them to participate in high-quality professional development to support my endeavor to one day become a successful principal), and 52 (program included a rigorous enrollment process and high admission standards).

Within question 49, A Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference between the groups (Cohen's d =1.44). Additionally, a Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Self-Selected group had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group (Cohen's d = .3).

As for question 51(program included opportunities for them to participate in high-quality professional development to support my endeavor to one day become a successful principal), a LSD post hoc ($p<.05$) indicated the differences were between the Aspiring Principals and NC Principal Fellows (NCP Fellows) groups with a moderate difference between the groups (Cohen's d = 0.3).

As for question 52 (program included a rigorous enrollment process and high admission standards), a Tukey's post-hoc ($p<.05$) indicated that the Aspiring Principals had a higher mean score than the NC Principal Fellows group with a large difference between the groups (Cohen's d = 0.94).

Table 24

Qualities of an Educational Leadership/Principal Preparation Program

	Aspiring		NCP Fellows		Self-Select			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*Sig*
Question 45	4.33	0.69	3.71	0.95	4.42	0.78	2.31	0.11
Question 46	4.44	0.71	4.57	0.54	4.61	0.58	0.36	0.70
Question 47	4.39	0.50	4.14	0.69	4.29	0.55	0.51	0.60
Question 48	4.72	0.46	4.57	0.54	4.50	1.02	0.40	0.67
Question 49	4.56	0.51	3.29	1.25	4.21	0.78	6.72	0.003
Question 50	4.56	0.62	3.86	0.90	4.13	0.90	2.41	0.10
Question 51	4.44	0.71	3.43	1.13	3.88	1.04	3.49	0.04
Question 52	4.50	0.71	3.57	1.27	4.04	0.69	3.81	0.03

Note: NCP Fellows = North Carolina Principal Fellows. Question 45, provided opportunities for me to communicate with colleagues outside the school to learn and share ideas and best practices to improve my leadership skills. Question 46, included a

supervised internship that provided opportunities for me to work directly with a principal on tasks typical of a school leader. Question 47, (included faculty that were knowledgeable and competent instructionally. Question 48, required student cohort participation = a defined group of participants that began and ended the program together. Question 49, program included coursework that was adequately sequenced, beneficial, and connected to the day-to-day realities that principals face. Question 50, paired me with an exemplary mentor that worked with me regularly, offering advice, modeling, and feedback. Question 51, program included opportunities for them to participate in high-quality professional development to support my endeavor to one day become a successful principal. Question 52, included a rigorous enrollment process and high admission standards.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In addition to the quantitative-based approach to this research study, three questions included in the survey instrument asked each of the participants to provide open responses. Question 53 asked, "What experiences in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?" Question 54 asked, "What courses in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?" Question 55 asked, "Do you feel you have the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator?" For each question, the researcher developed preliminary codes and categories after reading each of the open responses. Then, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in order to create structure among the responses (Denscombe, 2010).

Question 53 (what experiences in your principal preparation did you learn the most from?) had a total of 42 of a possible 49 responses, which equates to an 85.71% response rate. When coded based on the different responses, specific themes and similarities emerged. The vast majority who responded to the question provided that the internship experience allowed them to develop an understanding of real-life experiences they would face in their future role as a school administrator. From that experience, they were able to gain experience analyzing data, leading initiatives, scheduling, supporting

school discipline and managing student behavior, shadowing various stakeholders, dealing with parents, and school budgeting. They also stated that having courses led by former principals added value to their ability to ask questions, interact within scenarios, and to have supportive program supervisors with personal experience in and knowledge of the roles in which they are preparing to take on in the future.

Question 54 (what courses did you learn the most from?) had a total of 41 of a possible 49 responses, which equates to an 83.67% response rate. Since the different groups had various credit hour requirements, the answers varied in level of detail, name, and impact, but a few specific courses emerged. Courses that focused on such things as school law, curriculum and instruction, organizational leadership, and an introduction to the principalship were most commonly cited. Further, for many who were members of the Aspiring Principals group, the summer workshop was referenced. Each of these courses was referenced as having an impact on their preparedness for the internship experience, as they allowed the participants to explore concepts related to policy, school structures, supporting teachers, and gaining a sense of why things happen the way they do in schools.

Question 55 (do you feel you have the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator?) had a total of 42 of a possible 49 responses, which equates to an 85.71% response rate. Thirty-nine of the 42 responses (92.85%) had direct answers that were interpreted as confirmation that respondents felt they have the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator. Found within these 39 responses are statements that range from simple one word responses such as "yes" and "absolutely," to those that expressed an overall agreement that they feel

prepared, but also a general sentiment that they have more knowledge and skills to develop to become and effective school leader. Three of the 42 responses (7.14%) were non-committal in language that could not be taken as a definitive yes or no. One response recommended two additional classes without answering the initial questions; another expressed having learned a great deal, but provided no definitive statement; while the last expressed an appreciation for the experience, but did not say yes or no.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Following the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, school principals were faced with a wide-ranging set of demands that required additional academic achievement measures be placed squarely on the shoulders of school leaders, which has only served to increase the pressures associated with this position (G.W. Bush Institute, 2016). In schools, principals are second only to teachers in the impact of student achievement (Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2012). With the growing demands of the job, principal preparation students continue to seek programs that will prepare them for this future role, which is vital to the functions and success of schools. The need for well-trained, effective principals to ensure the future success of our public education systems is paramount. For this purpose, the perceptions of principal preparation students at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States were investigated within this research study to add to the existing body of educational research related to principal preparation.

The following chapter concludes this study. A brief summary of the research is presented, in addition to the findings, and recommendations for future studies are provided. As stated in the other sections within this study, it is difficult to generalize the data across various principal preparation programs across the country; however, the subsequent sections provide insight as to how the statistically significant factors related to the existing education research related to principal preparation programs.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research is to identify coursework and experiences that impact the SREB's *13 Critical Success Factors*. The perceptions of university principal preparation students were investigated for this study through the use of a survey instrument that asked the principal preparation participants to rank themselves against a series of statements in each of the *13 Critical Success Factors*.

Research Question

The following research question was addressed in this study.

1. What are the differences in the perception of student preparation between the different types of principal preparation programs related to the *13 Critical Success Factors*?

In this study, a causal comparative research design was chosen. The *13 Critical Success Factors* were used to gauge the perceptions of principal preparation program students on how well they believed their coursework and clinical experiences prepared them to be a school leader. The *13 Critical Success Factors* are as follows: 1) focus on student achievement, 2) develop a culture of high expectations, 3) design a standards-based instructional system, 4) creating a caring environment, 5) implement data-based improvements, 6) communicate, 7) involve parents, 8) initiate and manage change, 9) provide professional development, 10) innovate, 11) maximize resources, 12) build external support, and 13) stay abreast of effective practices. For statistical analysis, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to identify differences in the participants' responses followed by a series of post hoc tests that included, but were not limited to Tukey HSD. Then, coding was used to create structure among the three open-

ended response questions where themes were identified to categorize the responses. The survey was sent to 71 university principal preparation program students, of which, 49 volunteered to participate in the study.

Summary of the Findings

The perceptions of the three different principal preparation groups were examined for this study. It is interesting to note that overall, the Aspiring Principals groups had a higher overall mean scores for most of the *13 Critical Success Factors* than did the NC Principal Fellows and the Self-Selected Students. Additionally, the Self-Selected Students also had a higher overall mean score as compared to the NC Principal Fellows. Further, the lowest mean scores from the combined group related the most to instructional leadership components found in the research literature detailed in chapter 2.

The results of one-way ANOVA indicated nine items were found to have statistically significant differences in the effect size as reported using Cohen's *d*. Of the nine total questions that resulted in statistically significant differences in effect size, six were from statements from the *13 Critical Success Factors* and three were from statements in the *Qualities of an Effective Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section of the survey. The first can be found in *Critical Success Factor 1: Focus on Student Achievement* statement relating to participants providing feedback to teachers during observations. In this statement, the Aspiring Principal group had a higher mean score when compared to the NC Principal Fellows. The second and third statistically significant differences were found in *Critical Success Factor 2: Developing a Culture of High Expectations*. The Aspiring Principal group had higher mean scores against the NC Principal Fellows related to organizing academic recognition programs that acknowledge

and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability and developing, articulating, and implementing a shared vision for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center. The next statistically significant difference comes in *Critical Success Factor 8: Initiating and Managing Change*. Here, the Aspiring Principal group had higher mean scores than did the NC Principal Fellows regarding their ability to develop appropriate improvement plans for marginal staff based on school performance goals. In *Critical Success Factor 9: Providing Professional Development*, the Aspiring Principals and Self-Selected group had higher mean scores than did the NC Principal Fellows related to their ability to facilitate study groups, problem-solving groups, problem-solving sessions, and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement. The last statistically significant difference within the factors is found in *Critical Success Factor 10: Innovating*. Within this factor, the Aspiring Principal group had a higher mean score than did the NC Principal Fellows related to their abilities to create professional development time for continuous improvement of the school. The final three statically significant differences were found in the *Qualities of an Effective Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section.

Within the *Qualities of an Effective Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section, statements 49, 51, and 52 yielded statistical significance in terms of effect size as reported in chapter 4. These statements delved into the perceptions of students related to their principal program course offerings and clinical experiences. In all three, the Aspiring Principal group had higher mean scores than did the NC Principal Fellows and are as follows: 1) belief that their preparation program included coursework that was adequately sequenced, beneficial, and connected to the day-to-day realities that principals

face; 2) belief that their preparation program included opportunities for them to participate in high-quality professional development to support their ability to one day become a successful principal; and 3) belief the program included a rigorous enrollment process and high admission standards.

Although many educational researchers have been critical of principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, Davis et al., 2005, Hess & Kelly, 2007, Levine, 2005, Lunsford & Brown, 2016, Orr, 2006, Quinn, 2005), many of the participants believed that their principal preparation program and collective experience has prepared them to develop the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator. While it should be acknowledged that participants have their own opinions and life experiences related to their overall preparation both within and outside of a principal preparation program, the vast majority of the participants had positive perspectives related to their peers in the program, their mentor principals, and the university professors with whom they were engaged with in the program as teachers and/or supervisors.

Implications

The results reported in this study provide specific insight related to the experiences and perspectives of principal preparation students who have recently completed their coursework and clinic internship experiences. While limited by sample size in total and within specific program sections, there are a number of pragmatic implications for educational researchers and university principal preparation programs. In the nearly two decades since the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* came into law, the increased demands on students, teachers, and school administrators have created high

stakes environments that have placed rigorous accountability standards on student achievement as well as teacher and principal achievement. Widely acknowledged are the findings that teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Glazerman, Protik, Teh, Bruch, & Max, 2013; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008) and principals second (Cotton, 2004; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; McCarthy, 2002; Murphy, 2002; O'Day, 2002; Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009), future school leaders need to be prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively lead schools. A wide body of education research has surmised that in order to be an effective school principal, each candidate must be equipped with the skills to lead effective change, be confident instructional leaders who support teachers, communicate with all stakeholders, manage change and innovate where needed, and implement data-based decision making as they stay abreast of emerging research and best practices to lead school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Levine, 2005; Kamail, Barber, Schulman, & Reed, 2012). However, the participants in this study felt the least prepared by the university principal preparation program to maximize resources, initiate and manage change, design instructional systems, and be innovative.

Within each of the university's principal preparation groups, there is evidence that the program is incorporating numerous characteristics of effective preparation programs as evidenced in the literature provided earlier in the study to build their candidates into effective school leaders. The university itself, in partnership with school districts and the state of North Carolina, has developed rigorous admission standards and selection processes. As indicated by the participants, the university is employing highly-qualified

professors and other faculty. Further, the university has components of a cohort model, quality mentors, good communication, strong professional development, and high-quality internship methods.

Additionally, there are other implications related to the differences found in the coursework and clinical experiences that must be reviewed. The Aspiring Principal group mentioned repeatedly their positive experience related to the summer coursework and simulations that were provided to those specific participants. The direct, immersive internship experience forced them to step outside of their comfort zones, participate in simulations and other field-practices not offered in the other two groups within the university's program, which may account for the higher mean scores. It should also be noted that this district and university partnership aligns with the different studies that find effective principal preparation programs foster this direct relationship between the two different organizations. While the NC Principal Fellows have an elevated admissions process above what the university processes are, similar to the Aspiring Principal program, there are differences that may lend insight into the statistically significant differences presented in this study.

Before further implications are discussed, the researcher must acknowledge the limited sample size found within the NC Principal Fellows group. Generalizations cannot be projected onto this entire program based on the sample (n= 7), however, distinctions should be discussed as to the noticeable differences in the findings presented within this study. First, Aspiring Principal program candidates go through a series of interviews before they are recommended for the program. Each candidate completes four, thirty-minute interviews. The NC Principal Fellows participate in one thirty-minute

question session and a then a regional interview that follows the same structure as the question session. But once in the university program, the NC Principal Fellows are together for an entire year completing their required coursework, similar to the cohort models suggested by other educational researchers (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000, Orr, 2006; Martin & Papa, 2008; Servais, Sanders, & Derrington, 2009; Davis and Darling-Hammond, 2007 & 2010).

Once in the program, the Aspiring Principals participate in a variety of additional activities that are not found in the NC Principal Fellows nor the Self-Selected Students coursework or clinical experiences. For example, the Aspiring Principals participate in a five-week summer simulation experience that allows them to gain additional, practical experiences found in many of the aspects of the program that were rated lower by the NC Principal Fellows cohort.

The racial breakdown of the participants should also be noted here. The vast majority of the participants in this study and the overall principal preparation program identify as white. This demographic preponderance is incongruent with the current demographic make-up of schools across the nation. According to the most recently reported data by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2014, 50% of students enrolled in K-12 public schools are identified as white. Nearly 80% of the participants for this study identified as white, which represents a disproportionality of racial diversity within the program. Additionally, while only 6.1% of the participants identified as Hispanic, non-White, 25% of students fall within this identification. This demographic is also predicted to grow to 29% of students by the year 2026. Coincidentally, the number of participants who identified as African-American (n=9, of 18.4%) is consistent with the

statistics reported for students who identified as African-American in K-12 public schools (16%) (McFarland, Hussar, & de Brey, 2017, p. xxv).

Through extensive internship experiences and coursework sequences found in this program, students are developing the required knowledge and skills to be effective school leaders. Further, the results provide valuable insight for education schools by providing perceptions of the consumers of their products (i.e., coursework and clinical experiences). It allows these institutions to consider their course sequences and to possibly restructure clinical experiences to include more simulations and scenario-based opportunities in a controlled setting before students have to integrate fully in a real-world setting.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The following is a list of recommendations for future studies related to potential research on university principal preparation programs:

- Future research should be conducted to replicate this study to increase sample size as it could potentially allow for generalizability.
- Additional research should be conducted to follow-up with participants of this study to analyze their perceptions once they become school leaders against the *13 Critical Success Factors* and their perceptions outlined in this study. It may be helpful to conduct this study after year one and after year three of their experience to measure against initial perceptions after their first year and then after three years of experiences to see if perceptions change within that timeframe to provide an in-person introduction to the research before sending emails through the university program director seeking their participation in the study.

- Overall, candidates were satisfied with their preparation at this one southeastern university, however, more research is needed to further clarify the potential reasons why the NC Principal Fellows had lower mean scores overall and within the nine statistically significant statements under the four *13 Critical Success Factors* – this could be done in the form of semi-structured interviews of the participants to gain additional data that may inform as to why they had a lower mean score compared to the other two groups.
- Future research should be conducted to identify perceptions of principal preparation candidates who complete their coursework and internship experiences in rural, suburban, and urban universities to the type of school he or she may become an assistant principal or principal – this may lend insight to the preparation provided to meet the needs of different communities.
- It would be helpful for anyone replicating this study to provide an in-person introduction to the research before sending emails through the university program director seeking their participation in the study.

Closing Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to research the perceptions of university principal preparation students based on how well they believed their programs prepared them to become future school leaders. The perceptions of three program groups (i.e., Aspiring Principals, NC Principal Fellows, and Self-Selected Students) were gathered through the use of a survey that asked each participate to rate their level of agreement to how well they were prepared for different functions in the form of statements that were aligned with the *13 Critical Success Factors*. As a result, the findings were clear – the

vast majority of program participants believe their university program has effectively prepared them for the job as a school leader. They also believed, based on the highest mean score, that they felt most prepared to create a caring environment in their future role as a school leader.

The results of this study also revealed that while the majority of the participants felt prepared for this future role, there were statistically significant differences found in nine statements when analyzed between groups. On average overall, the NC Principal Fellows had a lower mean score as compared to the Aspiring Principals and Self-Selected Students. In total, six statistically significant differences were found in statements from the *13 Critical Success Factors* and three arose in statements found in the *Qualities of an Effective Leadership/Principal Preparation Program* section of the survey.

To conclude this study, the results of this research indicate that effective preparation results in more confident program students as they embark on their journey to become future school leaders. The results of this study can be used by university principal preparation programs to detect current strengths and weaknesses in their programs in order to develop effective future school leaders. These results can also be used by districts to analyze their current leadership pathways and partnerships with universities, or to research the importance of developing district and university partnerships to develop a training pipeline. Further, colleges of education can use the results of the experiences of one group to determine if practices for one could be useful for another group who does not get similar experiences based on their cohort grouping. The results can also be used by policymakers to create or adjust existing parameters that

guide colleges of education and university partnerships to work toward solutions to prepare future school leaders.

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APPENDIX A: SOUTHER REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD 13 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PRINCIPALS

Southern Regional Education Board: 13 Critical Success Factors for Principals

Competency I: Effective principals have a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement.

CSF 1. Focusing on student achievement: creating a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.

CSF 2. Developing a culture of high expectations: setting high expectations for all students to learn higher-level content.

CSF 3. Designing a standards-based instructional system: recognizing and encouraging good instructional practices that motivate students and increase their achievement.

Competency II: Effective principals have the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement continuous student improvement.

CSF 4. Creating a caring environment: developing a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult.

CSF 5. Implementing data-based improvement: using data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and in student achievement.

CSF 6. Communicating: keeping everyone informed and focused on student achievement.

CSF 7. Involving parents: making parents active partners in their students' educations and creating a structure for parent and educator collaboration.

Competency III: Effective principals have the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.

CSF 8. Initiating and managing change: understanding the change process and using leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.

CSF 9. Providing professional development: understanding how adults learn and advancing meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that leads to increased student achievement.

CSF 10. Innovating: using and organizing time and resources in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.

CSF 11. Maximizing resources: acquiring and using resources wisely.

CSF 12. Building external support: obtaining support from the central office, from community leaders, and parents for the school improvement agenda.

CSF 13. Staying abreast of effective practices: continuously learning from and seeking out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Perceptions of Principal Preparation

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on students' preparations of their leadership/principal preparation programs. Your feedback is important because this research is expected to yield insight on effective solutions for preparing school leaders, which in return, will have a positive influence on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. This survey should take about 20-25 minutes of your time. Participation in this study in completely voluntary. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Tim Taylor at ttaylo93@uncc.edu or call (704) 791-2466.

1) Do you agree to the consent form that is attached to this email?

Yes No

The following statements are based on the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 13 Critical Success Factors for effective principals. Please indicate your level of agreement by clicking on the most appropriate letter(s) that reflects your opinion about each statement.

The letter(s) on the scale represent the following:

SD = Strong Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

CSF 1: School leaders are able to create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.

2) My Leadership/Preparation effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

work with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school.

3) **My Leadership/Preparation effectively prepared me to** SD D N A SA

identify and use various methods to make substantial gains in student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

4) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

work with the faculty and my administrative team to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.

5) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

provide feedback to teachers during observation conferences as well as classroom walkthroughs, meetings, and conversations with teachers regarding

classroom instruction.

CSF 2: School leaders are able to set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content.

6) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

communicate that the focus is on student learning by visiting classrooms, attending grade level and collaborative instructional meetings in order to support instructional practices and to provide teachers with feedback.

7) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

organize academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability.

8) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

develop, articulate, and implement a shared vision for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center.

CSF 3: School leaders are able to recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that innovate and increase student achievement.

9) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

use a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school.

10) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

facilitate opportunities for teachers to observe one another's classrooms and collaborate on changes to improve teaching and learning.

11) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

understand content standards and their central place in teaching, learning, and assessment.

12) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

work with teachers to "unpack" adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.

13) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

monitor and assess the implementation of an

adopted curriculum (pacing guides).

14) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

monitor and support the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.

15) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

demonstrate knowledge of curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.

CFS 4: The school leader is able to create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult.

16) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

collaborate with staff to meet the unique needs and interests of all students.

17) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

initiate activities designed to increase parental involvement.

18) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

involve families in educational plans for their children's education.

19) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

foster a healthy and inviting learning environment.

CSF 5: The school leader is able to use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.

20) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

analyze school and individual data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine instructional activities, set instructional goals, and measure school's progress.

21) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

disaggregate data to share school's progress with faculty and other stakeholders.

22) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

develop schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.

CSF 6: The school leader is able to keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement.

23) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

effectively communicate school's progress and achievement to teachers, parents, and staff.

24) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

communicate effectively both oral and written, with the school board, parents, staff, and students.

CSF 7: The school leader is able to make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.

25) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

empower teachers to establish meaningful relationships with parents and involve parents in their children's education.

26) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

establish meaningful relationships with parents to encourage them to be involved in their children's education.

CSF 8: The school leader is able to understand the change process and have the leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.

27) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

develop appropriate improvement plans for marginal staff based on school performance goals.

28) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

induct and/or mentor new teacher staff.

29) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

lead the change process for major initiatives and change efforts to improve teaching and learning.

CSF 9: The school leader is able to understand how adults learn and knows how to advance meaningful change through quality sustained professional development that benefits students.

30) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

facilitate study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement.

31) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

design, guide and lead professional development activities for faculty that positively impact student achievement.

32) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

identify teachers in need of support and professional development, and then provide the resources needed to help those teachers improve.

CSF 10: The school leader is able to organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.

33) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

schedule adequate collaboration time that will allow teachers to operate within the context of a professional learning community.

34) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

create professional development time for continuous improvement of the school.

35) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

schedule and organize intervention classes to provide struggling students with an opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small-group instruction, extended-block time).

CSF 11: The school leader is able to acquire and use resources wisely.

36) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

allocate the available money, space, time, and people to meet the instructional goals and support teacher needs.

37) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

secure community support to provide new and needed resources for student needs.

38) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

make staffing changes based on staff skills and student needs to ensure the "right staff" are teaching the "right students".

CSF 12: The school leader is able to obtain support from the central office and from community and parent leaders for their school improvement goals.

39) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

work with faculty to build community support for the school and students through strong public relations.

40) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

form positive relationships with teachers to create a collaborative learning organization.

41) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

improve and sustain parental participation in school and home-based activities to support their children's education.

42) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA

partner with the community to build collaboration and support school success.

CSF 13: The school leader is able to continuously learn and seek out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices.

43) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA
collaborate with colleagues on ideas and best practices to improve leadership.

44) My leadership/preparation program effectively prepared me to SD D N A SA
network with professional groups and associations dedicated to improving teaching and learning.

Qualities of and Educational Leadership/Principal Preparation Program

Please read each statement relating to the qualities of your educational

leadership/principal preparation program. Indicate your level of agreement by clicking on the most appropriate letter(s) that reflects your honest opinion about each statement. The letter(s) on the scale represent the following:

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

45) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

provided opportunities for me to communicate with colleagues outside the school to learn and share ideas and best practices to improve my leadership skills.

46) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

included a supervised internship that provided opportunities for me to work directly with a principal on tasks typical of a school leader.

47) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

included faculty that were knowledgeable and competent instructionally.

48) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

required student cohort participation = a defined group of participants that began and ended the program together.

49) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

included coursework that was adequately sequenced, beneficial, and connected to the day-to-day realities that principals face.

50) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

paired me with an exemplary mentor that worked with me regularly, offering advice, modeling, and feedback.

51) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

included opportunities for me to participate in high-quality professional development to support my endeavor to one day become a successful principal.

52) My leadership/principal preparation program SD D N A SA

included a rigorous enrollment process and high admission standards.

The following questions are open-ended response questions. You may choose to answer these questions in whatever format you deem appropriate (e.g., narrative,

bullet points, free write).

Please provide honest responses that capture your perceptions of your preparation within the program.

53) What experiences in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?

54) What courses in your principal preparation did you learn the most from? And, why?

55) Do you feel you have the knowledge and skills needed to take on the role of a school administrator?

Demographic Questions: Please select the appropriate response for each question.

56) Which type of educational leadership/principal preparation program are you currently a participant?

Aspiring Principal Program NC Principal Fellows Self-Selected Student (not a member of Aspiring Principal Program or NCPF)

57) What is your gender?

Male Female

58) What is your age?

Under 30 years old 31-40 years old 41-50 years old 51-60 years old

61 years old or over

59) What is your race/ethnicity?

Black of African American American Indian/Alaskan Native White Asian Hispanic, non White Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Multi-Racial

60) What is the highest degree you have earned?

Bachelor's Master's Specialist Doctorate

61) How many years have you worked as a teacher?

1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years Over 25 years

APPENDIX C: REQUEST TO USE SURVEY – SREB

From: Timothy Taylor <ttaylo93@uncc.edu>
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2017 12:04 PM
To: Paula Egelson
Subject:

Dr. Paula Egelson,

My name is Timothy Taylor and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina, located in Charlotte, North Carolina. The reason for this correspondence is to seek approval to reproduce, potentially modify to fit my sample population, and use "The SREB Survey of Principal Internship Programs" that was applied within the SREB report, "The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?" written by Dr. Tom Glass from the University of Memphis.

The purpose of my study is to investigate the perceptions of university program participants of how well their programs prepared them to develop the skills and competencies needed to one day take on school leadership roles following their completion of the program.

Additionally, if approval is granted, I will need the formal psychometric analysis for the instrument. The SREB, itself, will be acknowledged throughout and within the instrument, dissertation, and any potential future publications resulting from its use in my study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for approval. If you are in need of any additional information, please feel free to email me or contact me at (704) 791-2466.

Respectfully,

Timothy Taylor
Coltrane-Webb STEM Elementary School
61 Spring St. NW
Concord, NC 28025
(704) 791-2466

APPENDIX D: SREB SURVEY APPROVAL

From: Paula Egelson <paula.egelson@sreb.org>
To: Timothy Taylor <ttaylo93@uncc.edu>, "Jonathan A. Schmidt-Davis"
<Jonathan.Schmidt-Davis@SREB.org>
Subject: Re: Request to Use a SREB Survey Instrument
Date: Mon, 2 Oct 2017 18:03:00

Hi Timothy,
Thank you for contacting us about your dissertation study and your request to use a survey instrument that is found in the SREB *The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?* publication. I am sending your request to my colleague Jon Schmidt-Davis who is the director of our School Leadership program at SREB. His team developed the document and he will be able to answer your questions. (Jon, please see Timothy's message below.)
Best wishes,
Paula

Paula E. Egelson, Ed.D.
Research Director
Southern Regional Education Board
592 Tenth Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
404-875-9211 ext. 248

From: "Jonathan A. Schmidt-Davis" <Jonathan.Schmidt-Davis@SREB.org>
To: Timothy Taylor <ttaylo93@uncc.edu>
Subject: RE: Request to Use a SREB Survey Instrument
Date: Tue, 24 Oct 2017 16:45:49

Tim,

Thanks for reaching out to me about this. Yes, you have permission to use the survey instrument from The Principal Internship publication, with attribution.

I've reached out to SREB staff members who were working at SREB at the time of the publication in 2007, and unfortunately there was no formal psychometric analysis of the results conducted, and we do not have any more information at this time about the data that were collected beyond what was reported in the publication itself.

I would be very interested in seeing the results of your work when you are finished, and I wish you all the best in your studies.

Thanks, Jon

APPENDIX E: DR. JONES SURVEY REQUEST

Date: Wed, 22 Nov 2017 13:13:12 -0500
Delivered-To: ttaylo93@uncc.edu
Subject: Survey Request
From: Timothy Taylor <ttaylo93@uncc.edu>
To: pjones1@scsk12.org

Dr. Jones,

I hope this message finds you doing well. I have come across your 2011 dissertation and have found it quite useful.

I am a doctoral student at The University of North Carolina, at Charlotte, and I am developing my proposal that focuses on the perceptions of principal preparation students. I am also a principal of a STEM school outside of Charlotte, North Carolina.

I have received permission from the SREB to use and modify their Internship Survey in my study. I noticed that in your survey, you modified this, too, and included a number of additions I believe may be beneficial to gain well-rounded data sets from my participants.

May I use and modify the survey that you developed to include the useful additions you provided to your research? My modifications would include demographic information and a few open-ended responses that would allow participants to provide more context to their answers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Tim Taylor

APPENDIX F: DR. JONES SURVEY USE APPROVAL

From: "PHYLLIS JONES" <JONESP1@scsk12.org>
To: Timothy Taylor <ttaylo93@uncc.edu>
Subject: Re: Dissertation Survey Permission Request
Date: Wed, 22 Nov 2017 18:40:53

Good afternoon Mr. Taylor,

Yes, you have my permission to use and modify my survey. Please feel free to contact me again if you have questions. Good luck with your study.

Dr. Phyllis Jones, Principal
Dexter Middle School
6998 E. Raleigh LaGrange Road
Cordova, TN 38016
Phone: 901-416-0360
Fax: 901-416-0358

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." ~ Gandhi

APPENDIX G: EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear UNCC Principal Preparation Student,

Congratulations on your success thus far within the university's principal preparation program!

I am inviting you to participate in a study on students' perceptions of their principal preparation program. As a fellow student and one-time aspiring, I can relate to the balancing act you are currently facing.

Given the current demands that pull on us personally and professionally, I know you are extremely busy, but I hope that you will take the time to participate in this study.

By accessing the link below, you will be redirected to a user-friendly survey that should be able to be completed in approximately 20-25 minutes. Within the survey, you will find an additional consent agreement check box that also repeats the assurance that all responses are confidential and no tracking of any kind will be performed. I encourage you to be honest and reflective in your responses as no one, not even me, will be able to track or identify any one at any time.

If you choose to participate in the study and would like to email me once completed, your name will be entered into a drawing for one of four $25 Amazon gift cards.

http://www.surveyshare.com/s/AYASXNA

Sincerely,

Tim Taylor
UNCC Doctoral Student
Principal – Coltrane-Webb STEM Elementary School

APPENDIX H: REMINDER EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Dear UNCC Principal Preparation Student,

A couple of weeks ago, I sent you an email inviting you to participate in my study that focuses on the perception of principal preparation students related to their university program.

I know you are extremely busy, and I would greatly appreciate your time and participation. Your participation is vital to the success of this study. The survey will close on March 20, 2018.

To take the survey, click on the following link:

http://www.surveyshare.com/s/AYASXNA

I have sent this message to everyone in the original sample population. I am not collecting any personal data as the survey responses are confidential, thus, I am unable to determine whether or not you have already participated in the study. I apologize if you have and this message is redundant. If you haven't, please do, as it may take only 20-25 minutes of your time. And, remember, be sure to email me if you would like to be entered into a drawing for one of four $25 Amazon gift cards.

Thank you again for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Timothy Taylor
University of North Carolina, at Charlotte
Doctoral Candidate