ABSTRACT

Title of Document: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF AN ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PREPARATION PROGRAM ON PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

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School districts need to "build the bench" to ensure that their schools will have effective principals when vacancies arise (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Assistant principals represent a potential pool of new school leaders who are prepared to move confidently into the principalship (Oliver, 2005). Although a critical leader in schools, the assistant principal position is underutilized and under-researched (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). This lack of focus on assistant principals is concerning because they are part of the school leadership team and often advance to the position of school principal.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Bay City Public Schools' (a pseudonym) Aspiring Principals Preparation Program (AP3; also a pseudonym) on assistant principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors, as assessed by the Vanderbilt

Assessment of Leadership in Education (Val-Ed) survey. The study compared the Val-Ed scores of assistant principals who had participated in one of three cohorts of AP3 training to the scores of assistant principals who did not participate. The results indicated that participation in the AP3 had no significant impact on respondents' learning-centered leadership behaviors, as assessed on the VAL-ED instrument. This study may be useful as the district seeks to validate the effectiveness of AP3 and identify potential refinements and program modifications.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF AN ASPIRING PRINCIPALS PREPARATION PROGRAM ON PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

By

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Dedication

HALLELUJAH! I dedicate this work to my lovely wife, Monica L. Holmes, for her steadfast love and commitment as a wife, mother, and friend. I also dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Toby and the late Frances Holmes (1948-2003). Your prayers, discipline, unwavering love, and selfless sacrifices made me the man I am today. I thank God for ALL of you.

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Section 1: Introduction

President Barack Obama signed The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. This Act reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaced the No Child Behind Act, 2001 (NCLB). President Obama stated, "With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will" (US Department of Education, 2015).

While teachers are critical to the mission of improving schools, the Wallace Foundation (2013) argued that principals shape the vision that helps schools to succeed and cultivate a learning environment that sets the condition for education. In addition, the Rainwater Leadership Alliance (2010) stated that the principal is in the best position to ensure the continued quality of teaching for every child.

Despite the importance of the school principal, there is a global leadership crisis facing public schools that involves an alarming shortage of administrators who are qualified to meet the current and future needs of public school students (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). In the United States, the crisis originates from the number of school principals who leave the position due to (a) retirement and (b) disenchantment with the job caused by heavy workloads and the pressure to meet national accountability standards mandated by laws like NCLB and the Race to the Top Act of 2009 (Bush, 2011; Fink, 2011; Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, 1999; Munoz & Barber, 2011).

When principals leave their positions, district leaders become responsible for both filling the vacant positions and improving the leadership capacity of the school administrators who move into the available roles. Since the beginning of the 21st century, a global trend in education reform has focused on improving teaching and learning, which has led to an unprecedented commitment to improving principal preparation (Hallinger, 2003). According to Oliver (2005), no matter what approach a system relies upon to prepare their principals, they must ensure that candidates have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to be successful instructional leaders (Oliver, 2005).

Statement of Problem

School districts around the country are facing the challenge of identifying and developing enough quality replacements to fill the voids left principals who vacate their positions. One strategy has been to focus on developing the assistant principal to assume the job and move seamlessly into the principalship (Wallace Convening, 2014) Although there is often a natural progression from assistant principal to the principalship, this pipeline has been underutilized and under-researched (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). This study will contribute to the research on assistant principals by examining the impact of a large urban school district's (i.e., Bay City Public School (BCPS)—a pseudonym) principal preparation program on the learning-centered leadership behaviors among assistant principals.

Principal Turnover

Data on principal attrition point to the succession challenges faced by schools in the US. For instance, the Southern Regional Education Board reported that 20% of public school principals leave their jobs each year, creating more than 18,000 vacancies (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). In addition, a report released by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 78% of principals remained at their school from 2012-2013, while the remaining 22% either moved to a different assignment, left the job altogether, or their status was unknown (Goldring & Tate, 2014). Moreover, the School Leaders Network (SLN; 2014) found that 50% of new principals quit by their third year. Fink (2011) reasoned that high principal turnover was due, in part, to the fact that many millennial and other young educational professionals were reluctant to compromise their personal lives for the pressures associated with leadership roles in schools. Fink also noted that these administrators were not willing to conform to policies created by the older generation that conflicted with the new leaders' values, goals, and lifestyles.

Principal turnover in high poverty schools. The school leadership crisis is even more significant in urban and rural school districts that serve large populations of low-income students (Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011). Research indicates that schools serving high-poverty students are 50% less likely to retain a principal over six years than are schools that serve students from middle-class households (School Leaders Network, 2014).

Loeb, Kalogrides, and Honig (2010) found similar results in their study of principal preference and the uneven distribution of principals in Miami-Dade County

Public Schools (M-DCPS). Enrolling nearly 350,000 students in more than 350 schools, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is the fourth largest school district in the United States (Loeb et al., 2010). Loeb et al. examined the initial match of principals, principal attrition, principal transfers, and principal and prospective principal preferences for working in different schools. The researchers gathered data between 2003 and 2009 from administrative files, surveys of principals and assistant principals, a common core of data, and the Florida Department of Education. During the 2003-2004 and 2008-2009 school years, Loeb et al. found that 20% of schools that enrolled the largest proportion of poor students had first-year principals, compared to 11% in schools with a fewer poor students. The median tenure of principals in M-DCPS was three years; and in schools that enrolled more low-income, non-White, and/or low-performing students based on Florida's accountability standards, the principals averaged 2.2 years' tenure and served fewer years in their current school (Loeb et al., 2010).

In a similar study, Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY; 2007) examined the retention of principals in 10 low-performing middle schools in Baltimore City. ACY found that during the years 2003 and 2007, these schools had 14 principal changes. During this period, half of the schools had three or more changes in principalship. For example, 8th grade reading proficiency at one middle school ranged from 25.3% to 41.4% (ACY, 2007). The focus of education reform at the turn of the century is turning around persistently low-performing schools (ACY, 2007). Highly qualified and competent principals are necessary to lead this change.

Studies also show that the principal turnover problem is not unique to traditional public schools. In Utah, for instance, Ni, Sun, and Rorrer (2014) compared the turnover rates of principals in charter schools and traditional public schools using a quantitative longitudinal study. The study focused on principal transition patterns inclusive of moving to another school, changing positions, and leaving the system. Using two longitudinal data sets, Ni et al. analyzed schools and their principals from 2004 to 2011. The researchers obtained the first set of data from the Comprehensive Administration of Credentials for Teachers in Utah Schools (CACTUS). The data set contained demographic information (e.g., highest degree attained, license status, school assignments for current and previous districts in the state) for all educators, including those working for charter schools, who had worked in the state since 1984. The second set of data used statistics from the Utah State Office of Education Data Warehouse (USOE), which housed student enrollment, attendance, demographic, and criterion reference test data.

In order to differentiate between existing charter and traditional public schools, the researchers added an additional type of school—the "newer" traditional public schools (traditional public schools that had opened between 1999 and 2010, the years charter schools opened in Utah). In total, the study included 133 new traditional schools and 78 charter schools. On average, charter schools showed the lowest average of principal retention (2.95 years), while principals at established traditional public schools (4.09 years) and newer traditional public schools (4.26 years) tended to remain in their positions several years longer (Ni et al., 2014). Between 2004 and 2010, the annual turnover rate for charter school principals in Utah was 25.8% (Ni et al., 2014). Rates

decreased to 20% in more established traditional public schools, and 13.5% in new traditional public schools (Ni et al., 2014). Ironically, charter schools in Utah served the lowest proportion of low-income students, yet tended to retain principals for the shortest period. This finding directly contrasted those of studies that have taken place in other parts of the country.

The Preparation of Effective Principals

President Obama declared that the countries that "out-educate" the United States today would "out-compete" the nation tomorrow (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), and there is not a single case of a school improving academic achievement in the absence of an effective principal (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). More recent research has shown a relationship between the presence of an effective principal and increased student achievement scores on standardized assessments, higher student attendance rates, and higher graduation rates (Branch, Hanushek, & Riviken, 2012; Coelli & Green, 2012; Dhuey & Smith, 2012). According to Darling-Hammond et al., principals help teachers to provide effective instruction, and schools and children are unlikely to succeed unless districts address leadership capacity. Darling-Hammond et al. also argued that although there was an obvious need for highly skilled school leaders equipped to lead a school through the increasing demands of various school reforms, understanding this critical role was not a priority for U.S. policymakers in the 1980s and 1990s.

The former President of the Wallace Foundation, Christine DeVita, stated that the quality of the training that aspiring principals receive would determine whether principals

were successful in meeting the increasing demands of the job (cited in Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). At present, university teacher education programs are still the primary means by which school leaders receive their training (Mitgang, 2012**).** However, Levine (2005) found that some of the principal preparation programs offered by leading universities range from "inadequate to appalling," (p. 23) and have unorganized curriculum, low enrollment and graduation standards, inadequate clinical experiences, and weak faculties. Hess and Kelly (2007) declared that the current traditional principal preparation programs have the potential to leave aspiring principals ill-prepared for 21st century challenges. In fact, A Public Agenda survey conducted in 2001 showed that 80% of superintendents and 69% of principals think that leadership training in schools of education is out of touch with the realities of today's districts (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001).

In an attempt to improve the quality of school leaders, policymakers have developed national and state standards for licensure and accreditation that require principal preparation programs to create or revise school leadership curricula (Militello, Gajda, & Bowers, 2009). These standards, which will be discussed below, require preparation programs to address the new expectations for principals and keep pace with changing school improvement and accountability mandates related to school performance (Murphy & Orr, 2009). According to Mary Martin, an associate professor of education at Winthrop University, the demand for quality principal preparation programs has spiked over the past decade (cited by Mitchell, 2015); and in response, new and innovative alternative leadership programs have emerged. In the last decade, more than a quarter of

all states have created some form of an alternative principal preparation program (Elmore, 2008).

Preparing assistant principals for succession. As noted earlier, assistant principals represent a potential pool of quality replacements for departing principals, and in many cases, are prepared to move confidently into the principalship (Oliver, 2005). However, three decades ago, Marshall (1985) stated that even though the assistant principalship is the main entry point for administrative careers, the role has received little attention in the literature on school administration and instructional improvement. Assistant principals also rarely have the opportunities to experience the whole picture of school leadership (Pounder & Crowder, 2005). Historically, assistant principals' responsibilities primarily have included only managerial tasks. Marshall defined the assistant principal's list of responsibilities as whatever the principal wants. Bloom and Krovetz (2001) noted, "It is not unusual for assistant principals to be assigned a very narrow range of responsibilities, typically discipline or student activities" (p. 12). They may be responsible for some teacher evaluation tasks, but they often have minimal instructional leadership responsibilities, which leaves them ill prepared to assume the role of principal (Pounder & Crow, 2005). As Kwan (2009) noted, the competence of assistant principals is of prime concern, not only because they are part of the school leadership team, but also because they often eventually move into the position of school principal.

School districts need to "build the bench" to ensure that their schools will have effective principals when vacancies arise (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Yet, few

researchers have thoroughly examined this position or the programs that prepare them (Oleszewski, et. al., 2012).

The complexities of the principal's job have created a dire need for assistant principals to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional growth activities (Oliver, 2005). Schools need highly trained and skilled assistant principals that can share in a range of administrative responsibilities and assume the principal's role when changes in school leadership become necessary. To provide appropriate preparation for the principalship that allows assistant principals to share in the instructional responsibilities, their list of formal duties would need to expand to include monitoring and evaluating instruction and providing meaningful feedback to teachers. Therefore, an assistant principal's development must extend beyond managerial tasks (Marshall, 1992; Wallace Pipeline School Assistant Principal Data, 2014)

Ideally, a school principal develops other leaders and manages people, data, and processes to foster school improvement and enhance instruction (Wallace Foundation, 2013). However, one cannot assume that all principals possess the ability to help their assistant principals develop the skills necessary to take on the principalship. As such, there is a clear need to focus on the professional development of assistant principals to ensure that they are prepared to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of administrators and face the myriad challenges of school leadership (Marshall, 1992).

Oliver (2005) asserted that school districts leaders also must provide programs that develop assistant principals' ability to provide both instructional and logistical oversight (Oliver, 2005). Appropriate, job-embedded professional development is

essential and must align with the vision, mission, and goals of the district, while preparing school leaders to meet the needs of the population they must serve (Oliver, 2005). Professional development must be intentional in helping assistant principals strike a balance between managerial and instructional duties. Ultimately, programs that prepare assistant principals for the role of the principal must prepare candidates with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to be successful instructional leaders (Oliver, 2005).

National and International Alternative Principal Preparation Programs

As noted above, educational leaders have developed a number of national and international programs designed to prepare effective school leaders. Examples of these initiatives include the National Institute of School Leaders (NISL), New Leaders; the Knowledge is Power Program, and the New York City Leadership Academy (Mitgang, 2012). In addition, Maryland and BCPS have each established programs to develop effective principals. The following sections provide descriptions for each of these initiatives.

National Institute for School Leaders (NISL). The National Institute for School Leaders (NISL) Executive Development Program (EDP) trains aspiring and current principals to lead their schools to high performance (Nunnery, Yen, & Ross, 2011). The curriculum seeks to develop school leaders as strategic thinkers and instructional leaders and helps leaders to create a just, fair, and caring school culture that helps students reach high standards (Nunnery et al., 2011). Ideally, after completing NISL's EDP, school leaders are able to (a) set a clear vision that inspires the school

community to action; (b) implement a standards-based instructional system; and (c) build effective instructional programs for mathematics, English language arts, and science. Additionally, EDP participants should be able to use data to produce continuous school improvement, provide effective professional development for their school staff, and create an integrated school improvement plan that demonstrates strategic and systemic thinking (Nunnery et al., 2011).

Nunnery et al. (2011) examined the impact that NISLs EDP had on student achievement in one Pennsylvania school district from 2006 to 2011. In 2006, they matched EDP school principals in the target district with a control school that had similar performance and demographics. The sample included 136 elementary schools—68 elementary schools led by NISL-trained principals and 68 elementary school principals who were not NISL trained. The researchers matched some of the elementary schools within the same district, and paired others with schools outside of their district. The study also included 38 middle schools and 28 high schools. NISL-trained principals led 19 of the target middle schools and 14 of the high schools. The researcher matched all middle and high schools with out-of-district schools (Nunnery et al., 2011).

Nunnery et al. (2011) examined Pennsylvania State Assessment data in reading and mathematics for students at the target schools in grades 3-8 and 11 in 2006, and from 2008 to 2010. The results of their study showed that schools led by NISL principals had lower percentages of proficiency in reading and mathematics in 2006 (Nunnery et al., 2010). However, from 2008 to 2010, all schools at all levels led by NISL principals showed statistically significant gains in reading and mathematics beyond that exhibited

by their matched counterparts (Nunnery et al., 2010). The results were more significant in high school mathematics performance in 2010. High schools led by NISL-trained principals scored 12% higher than did comparison schools on the state assessment (Nunnery et al., 2010).

New Leaders. New Leaders, a non-profit organization founded by five Harvard graduate school students, opened its doors in 2001 (Gates et al., 2014). Their aim was to develop a training program that prepared a pipeline for principals of urban schools. According to Gates et al., the goal of the New Leaders initiative is "to strengthen the pipeline of school principals by providing extensive and rigorous researched based training that addressed the shortcomings of existing principal preparation programs" (p. 2). The core elements of New Leaders preparation include (a) selective recruitment and admission, (b) training and endorsement, and (c) support for principals early in their tenure (Gates et al., 2014).

In 2001, New Leaders began its initial partnership with Chicago and New York City Public Schools (Gates et al., 2014). At the time of this study, the New Leaders (n.d.) website indicated that the organization has established programs in 13 urban districts and has trained over 1600 individuals. Current active partnerships include Arlington in Texas, Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Memphis, Greater New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York, Newark, the San Francisco Bay area, Prince George's County in Maryland, and Washington D.C. Milwaukee also had a partnership from 2006 to 2011. As of 2012, New Leaders had developed 12 cohorts, which produced nearly 600 principals across the country (Gates et al., 2014).

In 2006, New Leaders contracted the RAND Corporation to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program's theory of action and implementation and assess its effect on student achievement (Gates et al., 2014). Over the next seven years, RAND researchers analyzed student achievement data, principal surveys, and principal tenure data, conducted case studies of first-year principals, and led interviews and focus groups to evaluate New Leaders. The participants included New Leaders principals in traditional public and charter schools, non-New Leader principals, assistant principals, school-based coaches, classroom teachers, and district-level personnel.

An examination of end-of-the-year state assessments in reading and mathematics across participating districts revealed slight gains in schools led by New Leaders principals compared to schools led by non-New Leaders principals with the same experience and demographics (Gates et al., 2014). The data showed greater gains in schools led by New Leaders principals for three or more years (Gates et al., 2014). Elementary schools led by New Leaders principals showed gains from 0.7 to 1.3 percentile points, and gains in high school reading achievement totaled about 3 percentile points, neither of which is statistically significant (Gates et al., 2014). However, Gates et al. did find statistically significant gains in student achievement in either math or reading in four districts: Baltimore, Memphis, Oakland, and Washington, D.C. Conversely, the researchers also found statistically significant negative effects in mathematics or reading in schools led by New Leaders principals in Milwaukee, New Orleans, and Prince George's County (Gates et al., 2014). The researchers were unable to find characteristics in districts or principal practices that could explain the different findings.

Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 to reform public education through the creation of a network of public charter schools (Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2012). In 2000, KIPP began its own principal preparation program through the KIPP Foundation (Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010). The program is guided by competencies used to prepare aspiring principals to open a new KIPP school or to be the successor of a principal at an existing KIPP school. The principal preparation initiative is part of the KIPP's School Leadership Pathways Program that prepares teacher leaders to serve as department or grade-level chairpersons and readies emerging senior leaders to serve in positions like assistant principal, dean of instruction, or dean of culture.

KIPP has defined competencies as "a cluster of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affect a major part of one's job (a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development" (Parry, 1996, p. 50). The framework focuses on the following four categories focused on role-specific competencies: (a) drive results, (b) build relationships, (c) manage people, and (d) prove the possible for students. Embedded in the four categories are three key competencies—self-awareness, instructional leadership, and cultural fit—and an emphasis on the entrepreneurial approach of resilience and the ability to deal with ambiguity (Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010).

New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA). To address the decline in the quantity and quality of school leaders, in 2003, the New York City Department of

Education (NYCDOE) created the New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA) and its flagship Aspiring Principals Program (APP; Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012). The purpose of APP was to prepare aspiring principals to lead new schools, chronically low-performing schools, or schools whose English language arts test scores were on a downward trend (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012). The APP is a 14-month program and was the largest alternative certification program for principals in the U.S. (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2012).

The APP includes three phases. Phase 1 consists of a six-week summer intensive training taught by former NYC principals and principal supervisors, where participants engage in a problem-based, action learning curriculum that simulates challenges faced by NYC principals (Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010). The second phase is a 10-month residency under the mentorship of an experienced principal, and Phase 3 involves transitional summer planning and preparation for the upcoming school year (Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010). Participants must successfully demonstrate key competencies for each phase to progress to the next one and eventually graduate. The APP had an 81% graduation rate among its first three cohorts (Corcoran et al., 2012; Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010). During the 2009-2010 school year, APP principals led 17% of NYC schools (Rainwater Leadership Alliance, 2010).

Corcoran et al. (2012) examined the APP five years after the program began. The researchers reviewed data provided by the NYCDOE for elementary and middle grades 3-8 for school years 2002-2009 to determine (a) the extent to which APP-trained principals differed from those advancing through other routes, (b) whether APP

principals served and remained in high-needs schools and, (c) the extent to which mathematics and English language arts (ELA) achievement in APP-led schools differed from that in schools led by other new principals. The study compared 109 schools led by APP principals to 331 schools led by non-APP principals that came from traditional principal preparation programs. Results indicated that compared to their counterparts, APP graduates were, on average, younger minorities, and most (69%) did not have prior assistant principal experience; whereas 83% of new principals from alternative routes had previously served as assistant principals. Further, APP graduates were all assigned to schools in the most disadvantaged of the five boroughs in New York City.

The researchers found that after controlling for principal age and school poverty level, APP principals had a higher turnover after one year than did other new principals. However, 42% of APP principals went to another NYC school, compared to less than 10% of non-APP principals leading another NYC school. Finally, schools led by APP principals performed as well as did those led by other new principals on mathematics and ELA assessments. However, both groups of schools showed a widening gap in mathematics achievement, and the ELA scores remained relatively constant (Corcoran et al., 2012).

International efforts to prepare school leaders. The focus on preparing effective principals has not been limited to the US. Over the last three decades, researchers from several countries have examined the shortage of quality school leaders. As Walker and Kwan (2009) noted, "[I]nternationally, a number of school systems are experiencing a shortfall in the number and quality of people applying for school principal

positions" (p. 591). Unlike the US, many of the countries that have initiated principal preparation programs have national educational standards and educational systems that permit a countrywide effort to prepare principals.

In Canada, for example, following a staggering prediction by Williams (2001) that more that 80% of Ontario's elementary and secondary principals would retire by 2009, education leadership commissioned the Learning Partnership (TLP)—a national organization whose mission is to strengthen public education—to conduct an investigation of succession planning in the education sector and to identify current practices and challenges (The Learning Partnership, 2008). To collect the necessary data, TLP (a) analyzed the demographic data of educational leaders; (b) reviewed literature on succession planning practices; (c) conducted surveys; (d) examined relevant historical documents; and (e) interviewed principals, supervisory officers, trustees, advisory boards from public and private sector leaders, and human resource specialists. After careful review of the resulting data for the 72 education boards in Ontario, TLP selected 20 boards to take part in the study, all of whom agreed to participate. The boards chosen were from English- and French-speaking schools and served rural, urban, public, Catholic, large, and small student populations ranging from less than 22,000 to greater than 95,000. TLP found this subgroup to be representative of the province.

The TLP research team conducted interviews with each of the selected boards to obtain information on recruitment; selection; training; and support for aspiring and current assistant principals, principals, and supervisors. The team also examined the board's policies and practices for succession planning. Further, they asked each board to

grant them permission to administer an online survey to each of their assistant principals, principals, and supervisory officers. Fifty-seven percent of school leaders responded—153 from French-speaking schools and 1,120 from English-speaking schools. The TLP team asked participants to provide a variety of demographic data, including race, age, experience, qualifications, and future aspirations. The team also asked respondents to rate the board's succession planning policies.

Finally, participants shared (a) their perceptions of factors that motivated or discouraged persons to apply for school leadership roles and (b) one thing that they would change about their jobs. In addition to interviews and surveys administered to the 20 boards and their school leaders, respectively, TLP interviewed provincial educational organizations and surveyed participants in the TLP program for Canada's Outstanding Principals.

The data obtained from the Ontario College of Teachers showed that there were qualified candidates to meet the demand for principals for the next 5 to 10 years. However, based on interviews and surveys, qualified candidates were not interested in applying for these positions because of (a) the stress associated with the job, (b) the impact on the applicants' quality of life, (c) inadequate compensation, and (d) their perception that the position focused more on managerial leadership and less on instructional leadership that built teacher capacity and improved student achievement. The researchers recommended that Ontario address future leadership shortages by engaging in the early identification of potential candidates, a major emphasis of succession planning. The data gathered further suggested the need to attract more male

candidates early. Elementary schools would see the greatest shortage of males applying for the principal position. Finally, TLP noted that the role of the principal needed to focus more on improving instructional outcomes for students and less on operational and managerial tasks if Ontario sought to attract quality leaders.

Similar to the previous study, Walker and Kwan (2009) examined a possible link among professional, school, demographic, and motivational factors that affected the desire of secondary assistant principals in Hong Kong to move into the role of principal. The professional factors that they identified involved the changing role and responsibilities of assistant principals since recent educational reform initiatives, and the school factors referred to student achievement, school size, and type. Hong Kong offers three types of schools: government (8% of secondary schools), aided (approximately 88% of secondary schools), schools run by organizations like a religious sponsoring body or a direct subsidy scheme (DSS) schools that collect tuition on top of government funding and have more autonomy with curricular choices (4% of secondary schools; p. 598, 599).

Walker and Kwan (2009) used the Yerkes and Guaglianone (1998) hierarchical model with motivational factors added as the conceptual framework for the study. The researchers developed a four-point Likert scale questionnaire that they sent to all 803 secondary assistant principals in Hong Kong, and they had a 41.2% response rate. Results showed that assistant principals between the ages of 45 and 54 were most likely to apply for the principalship. The data also indicated that a personal desire to grow and professional development that built leader and teacher capacity influenced assistant

principals' decisions to pursue the principalship. These factors rated as more important than school factors.

In another international study, Bush (2011a) compared two longitudinal studies on succession planning and leadership development. One study was conducted in England and the other one took place in South Africa. In England, Local Authorities (LA) received funding and a national succession consultant (NSC) to develop a program that addressed the shortfall of school principals. The study's methodology included pre- and post-surveys of key stakeholder groups, local authority staff, principals, NSCs appointed by the National College, and one Catholic diocese that participated in the National College Succession Planning Program. In addition to surveys, Bush interviewed LA partners, principals, and NSCs in England and reviewed LA Succession Planning documents.

Bush (2011a) found that between 2007 and 2009, the National College's Succession Programme increased the number of applicants for principal positions in secondary and primary schools, although a few problems remained for small primary schools and Catholic schools. LA attributed this increase to leadership development programs, local talent identification or "grow your own" strategies (Thompson, 2010), and some new models for leadership training developed by local authorities. For example, in seven of the 12 case studies, LAs had a clearer focus on recruitment than before and nine out of 12 LAs created leadership development programs for aspiring principals (Bush, 2011a).

In the second study, educational leaders in South Africa wanted to focus on improving the quality, rather than the quantity, of school principals, especially those that served schools in rural communities. The South African Department of Education developed the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE) program to improve the leadership and management skills of its current and future school principals. The goal was to make ACE a part of a new national entry-level requirement for future principals. Bush asserted that the initiative was a "bold and imaginative decision" by the South African government (Bush, 2011a, p. 798). The ACE program was taught at five universities around the country using standard modules. Networking and mentoring from experienced school leaders were distinctive and central components of the program.

Bush (2011a) also evaluated a national field test of the ACE program to assess the program development process, as well as the initiative's suitability and sustainability. He administered pre- and post-surveys to ACE participants and conducted 27 case studies of participants and their schools. During these case studies, Bush examined contact sessions, teaching materials, mentoring, and networking during baseline, midterm, and impact phases from 2007-2009. Results from the study of the pilot showed wide support for the program from entry-level principals in South Africa. Participants considered the program profound, applicable to real-life situations, and "good for school leadership in South Africa" (Bush, 2011a, p. 798). Eighty percent of the respondents stated that the materials were helpful to them. Two major constraints were the cost of one-on-one mentoring and the limited supply of experienced or quality mentors. Finally, Bush noted that the networks were informal and few continued after training.

Maryland Principal Preparation Programs

As in the national and international landscape, Maryland schools have experienced a principal shortage. In 1998, after surveying all 21 superintendents and 121 principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals in the state, the Maryland Association of Secondary Principals found that there were not enough qualified principals to fill the available positions. In the summer of 2000, the Superintendent of Maryland's Public Schools created the Division for Leadership Development at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE; MSDE, 2000) to build the instructional leadership capacity of current and potential school leaders and help them develop the skills needed to increase student achievement. The Division of Leadership Development created the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework to help align the professional development and coursework offered by the state, local school districts, and institutions of higher education (MSDE Division for Leadership Development, 2005). The Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (2005) produced eight research-based instructional leadership outcomes:

1. Facilitate the development of a school vision;
2. Align all aspects of a school culture to student and adult learning;
3. Monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment;
4. Improve instructional practices through purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers;
5. Ensure the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction;

6. Use technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction;
7. Provide staff with focused, sustained, researched based professional development; and
8. Engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success (p. 8)

The MSDE then launched the Breakthrough Center (also known as "the Center") to support Maryland's lowest-performing school districts and schools (L. Lowery, personal communication, January 22, 2013). The Center's services focus on three broad categories: leadership development, instructional support, and student services. School districts sign a memorandum of understanding with the Center that details mutually agreed upon outcomes. Center staff then provides professional development and technical assistance to the school system and mentoring to individual school principals and their leadership teams. The Center also offers a yearlong Aspiring Principals Institute designed to help future principals develop competencies around the Maryland Leadership Framework Outcomes in a "turnaround school" that has performed in the bottom 5% of schools in the state. The goal is to provide districts with a pipeline of principals prepared to lead turnaround schools. The MSDE and Hargreaves (2005) also developed a Succession Plan Guide designed to help frame and monitor the progress of each fellow.

Fellows participate in in-person and web-based professional development opportunities during the summer, fall, and spring. As a part of their professional growth and learning process, they also design, implement, and evaluate a project aligned with the

Maryland Leadership Framework and based on their school's improvement plan (L. Lowery, personal communication, January 22, 2013).

The Governor's Promising Principals Academy. In 2014, The Governor's Promising Principals Academy in Maryland began a program designed to train 48 assistant principals who aspired to become principals (Mitchell, 2014). Each of the 24 superintendents in the state selected two of their best aspiring leaders to participate in the yearlong training that provided coaching, mentoring, and leadership skill development provided by former principals and educational consultants. According to Mitchell, educational leaders in Maryland viewed this initiative as one of the most ambitious statewide efforts to develop its next-level leaders, deliberately tapping its assistant principal workforce as its main source (p. 6).

Bay City Public Schools' Leadership Preparation Programs

Bay City Public School (BCPS; a pseudonym) is a large urban public school system in the state of Maryland that has faced significant challenges with principal turnover. Between 2006 and 2012, BCPS had to replace more than 50% of its 203 principals (D. Jones, personal communication, 2013). Recent data have shown that the average tenure of a principal in BCPS is 4.4 years, and the average tenure for assistant principals is more than double that at 9.34 years (BCPS Human Resources, 2014). While assistant principals remain in their positions much longer than do principals, many of them are still not prepared to take the helm when principals vacate their posts (Human Resources BCPS, 2012).

The BCPS system has used different approaches to address their leadership crisis. District leaders have hired principal candidates both internally and externally from traditional preparation programs after demonstrating that they had met the state administrative certification requirements (Human Resources BCPS, 2014). BCPS has also taken advantage of the retire-rehire legislation that Maryland legislators approved for retired principals to return to duty to lead schools (D. Jones, personal communication, 2013). BCPS spent in excess of a half million dollars during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years to compensate retired principals who assumed posts vacated for various reasons, including extended sick leave, maternity leave, or demotions (Human Resources BCPS, 2014).

In 2007, the district contracted with New Leaders (formerly New Leaders for New Schools), at the average cost of $500,000 annually over four years to help prepare aspiring leaders for the principalship (BCPS Staff Development, 2014). In 2009, using another funding source, BCPS partnered with the National Institute of School Leaders (NISL) to train its executive-level leaders and central office staff in NISL's Executive Leadership curriculum. The district's goal was to train executive-level leaders to serve as certified facilitators/instructors who could provide turnkey training to assistant principals who aspired to be principals. The model ultimately evolved into the Next Step Principal Preparation Program (NSP3).

The district designed NSP3 to formalize the principal preparation program in BCPS. The program provided training for three cohorts of assistant principals from 2009 to 2012, preparing 42 participants in total to become principals (BCPS Staff

Development, 2014). Of these 42 candidates, 52% moved into the principalship, 36% remained assistant principals, and 12% did not complete the program or left the district (BCPS Staff Development, 2014). The training of instructors for NSP3 cost the district $15,000 per person.

In the two years that followed NSP3's inception, the leadership crisis in BCPS took a sharp turn that almost derailed the principal preparation efforts that were underway (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 7, 2014). Nearly 60% of executive-level leaders and central office staff who had received training as facilitators and instructors began to retire or accept positions in other districts or with national education organizations, placing the workload on fewer trained facilitators (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 7, 2014). NISL national faculty then selected veteran principals from a competitive applicant pool and trained them to serve as the new facilitators/instructors for the program (D. Jones, personal communication, 2013)

In 2011, the district reorganized its Human Resources Department and created the BCPS Office of Staff Development (BCPS-SD; Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). District leaders charged the BCPS-SD with developing the principal pipeline and providing professional development for current and aspiring principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders (Turnbull et al., 2013).

Aspiring Principals Preparation Program. In August 2011, the Wallace Foundation launched a $75 million initiative to help strengthen existing principal pipeline efforts in six school districts across the United States. All of these districts included schools that served thousands of low-income students (The Wallace Foundation

Launches Major "Principal Pipeline" initiative to Help School Districts Build Corps of Effective School Leaders, 2011). The following theory of change drives the Wallace Foundation's principal pipeline initiative: " When an urban school district and its partners provide aspiring principals with training, evaluation, and support following these specifications, the result will be a pipeline of principals able to improve teaching quality and student achievement" (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. i). In 2011, BCPS and the NISL entered into a strategic partnership to develop and conduct the Aspiring Principals Program (AP3), an initiative designed to prepare aspiring principals to lead BCPS schools to excellence (NISL, 2012). NISL and BCPS staff conducted a front-end analysis of BCPS' NSP3, aligning the current leadership standards, and the components of NISL to guide the design of the program (NISL, 2012).

The BCPS and NISL team used a hybrid of multiple leadership frameworks to develop eight leadership standards (see Appendix A) for the BCPS AP3 model. Referenced frameworks included ISLLC standards, VAL-ED, the National Board Certification for Principals Maryland's Instructional Leadership Framework, the Wallace Foundation, New Leaders for New Schools, and university principal preparation programs from Bowie State University and University of Maryland **(s**ee Table 1) (Madala, 2012). The team used the eight newly created standards to define the skills, knowledge, competencies, and dispositions that principals, assistant principals, academic deans, and special education program coordinators needed to be effective leaders in BCPS (Hughes, 2011). The standards were as follows:

- Standard 1: High Expectations for Teaching and Learning,

- Standard 2: School-Wide Instruction,
- Standard 3: Observation and Evaluation,
- Standard 4: Shared Vision,
- Standard 5: Equity and Excellence,
- Standard 6: Human Resources and Managerial Leadership,
- Standard 7: External Leadership, and
- Standard 8: Use of Technology and Data and modules that would guide the development of aspiring principals became the cornerstone of a strategically aligned system of principal recruitment, selection, training, support, practicum, and evaluation.

The AP3 is a 20-day, 10-module program that provides aspiring principals with instruction in a curriculum that helps them to answer the following overarching questions:

- What does a great school that provides high-quality teaching and learning for all students look like?
- What do leaders do to make great schools?
- How do you develop and assess your readiness to lead a great school?

The curriculum also provides participants with instruction on developing a theory of action, based on Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames of leadership: (a) principles of learning, (b) teaching and curriculum, (c) effective literacy, and (d) mathematics and science instruction (NISL, 2012). The 10 modules include the following:

- Module 1: Leading in Bay City Public Schools;

- Module 2: Supporting Adult Learning and Development- Focus on the Core;
- Module 3: Leading Effective Instruction in Literacy;
- Module 4: Leading Effective Instruction in Math;
- Module 5: Leading Effective Instruction for Diverse Learners;
- Module 6: Organizational Dynamic and Effective;
- Module 7: Using Technology and Data to Improve Student and Teacher Outcomes;
- Module 8: The Principal as Advocate and Builder of a Just, Fair and Caring Community;
- Module 9: Recruitment, Assessment and the Principals Role in Human Resource Leadership; and
- Module 10: BCPS AP3 Program Culminating Simulation.

The AP3 helps the principal to become a strategic thinker and provides instruction on (a) building a just, fair, and caring community and (b) using technology and data to improve teacher and student outcomes. The curriculum also offers a module on human resource leadership. Finally, the AP3 includes a mentoring component aligned with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) principal mentor training program. The program assigns each AP3 participant to a veteran principal who serves as his mentor. Each mentor receives national principal mentors training from the NAESP.

The first cohort of 21 aspiring principals began in August 2012. Participants included individuals who had previously applied for the principalship in 2012 but were not selected. School leadership selection committee gathered data from applicants'

Gallup Principal Insight and Strengthfinder assessment, principal exercise performance, and the panel interview (D. Jones personal communication, July 23, 2012). The second cohort of 18 participants began in August 2013, and the third cohort of 13 aspirants began in August 2014. The recruitment, and selection process was less rigorous for Cohorts 2 and 3. The new applicants had to complete an application, which required a personal reference and recommendations from their current principal and the principal's supervisor. In a re-advertised memo from Genice Spencer, Supervisor of BCPS School Leadership Development, the district recruited more participants because only 10 had responded to an initial request for participants (G. Spencer, personal communication, August 9, 2013). The school leadership selection committee selected participants for Cohorts 2 and 3 based on the following criteria:

- Unwavering belief that all students can learn and achieve
- Self-professed interest in becoming a principal in PGCPS
- Administrator II Certificate earned by December 29, 2013 (preference given to applicants who will hold an Administrator II certificate by start of program).
- Valid APC certificate
- Master's Degree
- Current Assistant principal in Bay City Public Schools with minimum of two years in the role
- Certification in framework for teaching (by Charlotte Danielson adopted by BCPS for teacher observations)

- No unsatisfactory evaluations on record
- 2 Recommendations, one must be from current principal (form available on website)
- Ability to commit to program requirements (sign MOU - Memorandum of Understanding)
- Two (2) writing samples and a video:
    - Writing Sample #1

      In 1,000 words or less please articulate how, in your practice, you have demonstrated the eight BCPS leader standards.

      Using your i-Pad, record a 3-5 minute video explaining your leadership style and how you have utilized it in your setting as an assistant principal and

      Provide a written response to that video explaining why you selected that leadership style and how effective it has been. This will be your writing sample # 2 (G. Spencer, personal communication, August 9, 2013).

According to Betty Robinson, AP3 program coordinator, as executive-level leadership changed (superintendent and CEO), changes in program instructors, curriculum, and structure also occurred (B. Robinson, personal communication, November 2, 2015). Members of Cohort 1 received instruction exclusively from NISL faculty, with observations from BCPS-trained NISL facilitators (B. Robinson, personal communication, November 2, 2015). The 10 modules took place over two consecutive

days each month with fidelity for Cohort 1. NISL faculty and BCPS faculty co-taught the 10 modules for the same amount of time for Cohort 2.

In the summer of 2013, BCPS hired a new CEO. As the district's vision, instructional focus, and structure changed, so did the structure of the program; Cohort 3 received instruction one day per month, and the original curriculum was put on "the back burner" (B. Robinson, personal communication, November 2, 2015). The participants received more instruction in district initiatives taught by non-NISL trained faculty. The topics included a stronger focus on human resources, budgeting, and the district's new theory of change. Fifty-two participants among the three cohorts completed the AP3 requirements; however, an assessment of the program has not yet taken place. Despite the lack of formal evaluation, BCPS has invested an estimated $800,000 in the initiative. This study will be the first to measure its effectiveness.

Measuring School Leader Effectiveness

The notion of principal effectiveness has gained increased focus due to new accountability requirements focused on student achievement that have emerged under state and federal legislation like the former No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the 2009 Race to the Top program (Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014; Minor, Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, & Elliott, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The focus on increasing student achievement has also raised the need to develop new measures to assess principal effectiveness.

Despite this need, Murphy (2011) explained, "Few districts have a conceptual framework based on how leaders improve student learning, nor have they been validated

for their intended use." (p. 26). Minor et al. (2014) also asserted that district leaders have not developed appropriate measures of principal effectiveness that employ an empirical or theoretical understanding of successful leadership. In a study of principal leadership evaluation practices in 63 urban school districts in 42 states and the District of Columbia, Goldring and Cravens (2007) found that districts focused on a variety of performance areas using different formats with varying levels of specificity. In another study, Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, and Cravens (2009) found that many districts did not adhere to professional standards for personnel evaluations. The only exception that they found was that more than half of the 66 instruments analyzed relied on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (ISLLC; Goldring et al., 2009).

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC standards are a set of educational leadership benchmarks developed between 1994 and 1996 and reauthorized in 2007 under a consortium associated with school leadership in the United States called the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Goldring et al., 2009). Over 40 states utilize the ISLLC standards to shape the practice of licensing educational leaders, guiding principal preparation, and establishing hiring criteria for school administrators across the U.S. (Goldring et al., 2009).

On October 22, 2015, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration unanimously approved the refreshed ISLLC standards, now called the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, CCSSO, 2015). These new benchmarks consist of 10 leader standards, in contrast to the eight

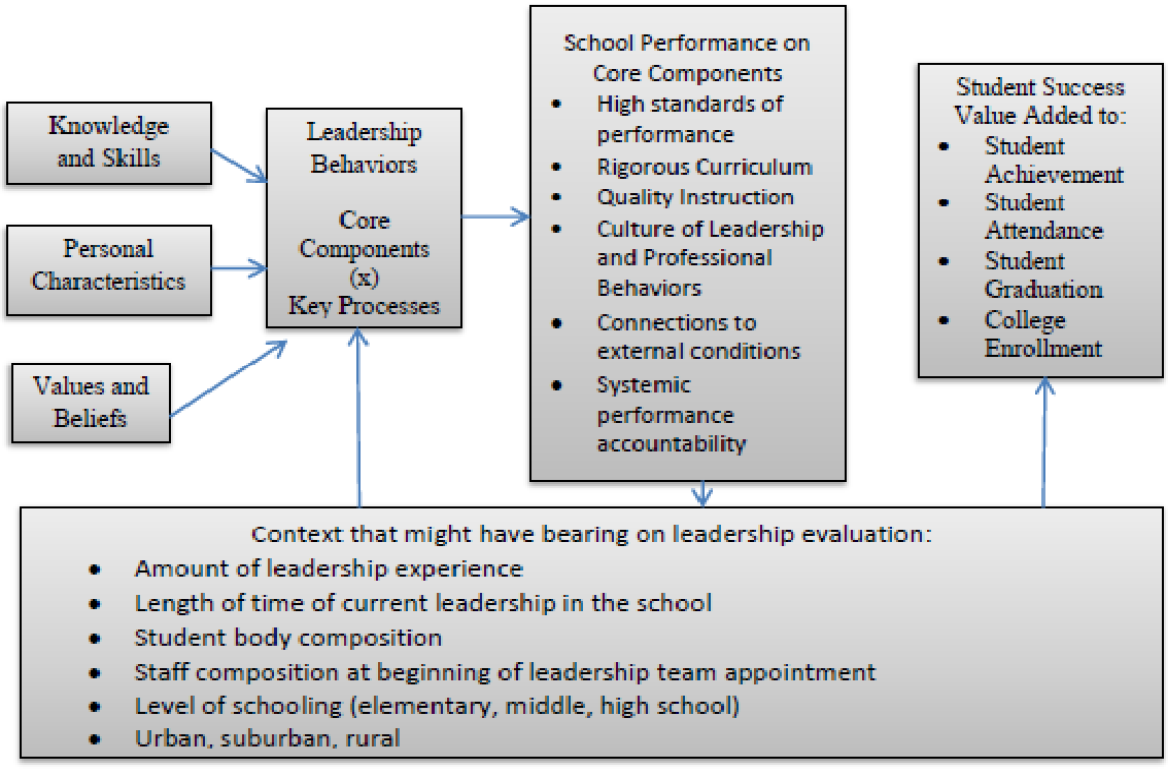
ISLLC standards. One other significant change is the addition of a standard that focuses on the ethical obligation of district and school leaders (CCSSO, 2015). Like the ISLLC standards, states, school districts, universities, and nonprofit leadership preparation programs can choose whether they will use the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders to guide the development and/or refinement of the practice, support, and evaluation of district and school leaders.

Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). In 2006, researchers from Vanderbilt University, Arizona State, and the University of Pennsylvania used ISLLC standards to develop the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), a conceptual framework designed to measure the effectiveness of school principals, assistant principals, and leadership teams (Goldring et al., 2009; Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, Elliott, & Porter, 2011). VAL-ED is a 360° multi-rater evidence-based measurement that evaluates the effectiveness of learning-centered leadership behaviors (Goldring et al., 2009; Hallinger, 2003, p. 329; Murphy et al., 2011; Porter, Polikoff, Goldring, Murphy, Elliot, & May, 2010). Learning-centered leadership behaviors have a strong, direct focus on curriculum and instruction that influences teacher performance and students' academic and social learning (Goldring et al., 2009; Hallinger, 2003; Murphy et al., 2011; Porter, Polikoff, Goldring, Murphy, Elliot, & May,

2010). Figure 1 details the conceptual framework of the VAL- ED.

Figure 1. VAL-ED Conceptual Framework. Adapted from Porter et al. (2010).

Learner-centered leadership. Learning-centered leadership is a combination of two frames of leadership: (a) leadership for learning and (b) change-oriented leadership (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter, 2006). Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2006) explained that instructionally-focused leadership, or "leadership for learning," and change-oriented leadership are two concepts commonly employed in high-performing



schools and school districts (p. 3). Knapp,

Copeland, Ford, Markholt, McLaughlin, Milliken, and Talbert (2003) defined *leadership for learning* as "creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take advantage

of these opportunities" (p. 18). Murphy et al. (2006) also noted that leadership for learning involves a principal's ability to "(a) stay consistently focused on learning the core technology of schooling: learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment; and (b) make all the other dimensions of schooling (e.g., administration, organization, finance) work in service of a more robust core technology and improved student learning" (p. 3). Change-oriented or "transformational leadership," conversely, focuses on organizational processes that involve effective methods for getting staff, students, families, and community agents to become more productive (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

VAL-ED is a multi-source feedback instrument that measures the learning-centered leadership behaviors of school principals and includes a self-evaluation for the leader and parallel evaluations for subordinates and the leader's supervisor (Goff, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014). According to VAL-ED standards, effective leaders must (a) set high standards of performance, (b) establish a rigorous curriculum delivered through quality instruction (pedagogy), (c) foster a school culture of leadership and professional behavior, (d) promote a community of collaboration by making connections to external community members, and (e) make them a partner of the established system of performance accountability (Minor et al., 2014).

High standards for student learning. Goldberg et al. (2009) asserted that to set high standards for student learning, leaders must ensure their school teams pursue clear, measurable goals that result in student learning and academic progress. This component aligns with ISLLC Standard 1, which recommends that school leaders promote success

for all students by facilitating the development, articulation, and implementation of a school vision shared by the entire school community.

Rigorous curriculum. A rigorous curriculum is one with a high level of cognitive demand (Goldring et al., 2009). This VAL-ED component aligns with ISLLC Standard 2, which focuses on the school leader's ability to promote and nurture a school culture that is conducive to student learning and the professional growth of staff.

Quality instruction and school culture. The VAL-ED core components involving quality instruction and a culture of leadership and professional behaviors also align with ISLLC Standard 2. The quality instruction (pedagogy) component measures how effectively teachers deliver a curriculum that promotes students' academic and social learning. Principals also must seek to establish a culture of learning and professional behavior that promotes a healthy environment that is conducive to student learning (Goldring et al., 2009).

Connections to external communities. By establishing connections to external communities, principals can help to develop valuable relationships with students' families and key members of the surrounding community. This component of the VAL-ED involves the advancement of academic and social learning and aligns with ISLLC Standards 4 and 6, which recommend that school leaders engage family and community and mobilize resources, while influencing the larger political, social, legal, economic, and cultural context of the school (Goldring et al., 2009).

Systemic performance accountability. Finally, systemic performance accountability measures a leader's ability to hold staff accountable for implementing

strategies that help achieve academic learning goals. This core component of VAL-ED aligns with ISLLC Standard 5, which calls for leaders to act with integrity and fairness, and behave in an ethical manner (Goldring et al., 2009).

The VAL-ED assessment focuses on six key processes that involve planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring how leaders create and manage the core components of learning-centered leadership (Goff et al., 2014; Porter et al., 2009). The six key processes are interconnected and recursive. Murphy and his colleagues (2011) explained that "to monitor teaching for high quality instruction, leaders first plan for the collection of key data; they need to communicate both the need of the data and the results. Leaders need to implement changes based on the information gleaned from monitoring, and they need to support teachers to help them improve their instruction" (p. 14).

In the spring of 2008, Porter et al. (2010) conducted a national field test of the VAL-ED assessment. The researchers collected data from 60 out of 99 school districts from all regions of the country (a 61% response rate), which included responses from 235 principals, 253 supervisors and 8,863 teachers from 109 elementary, 100 middle, and 100 high schools. According to Porter et al., "the results from the national field test show the VAL-ED is a reliable instrument that can validly measure principals' learning-centered behaviors and can be used across grade levels, regions and schools with different characteristics" (p. 310).

Minor and colleagues (2014) later examined the validity of the VAL-ED by measuring principal learning-centered leadership using a comparison of superintendents'

assessments of principals in six school districts in the southern United States. Of the six districts, two were in suburban areas, two were in mid-size cities, one district was in a rural area, and the last district was in a town. These districts' sizes ranged from 40 to over 300 schools. Minor et al. asked superintendents to place their principals into one of two categories: the top 20% or the bottom 20%. The researchers then examined VAL-ED scores from the 2010-2011 school year. The superintendents assigned 57 of the 120 elementary schools in the analytical sample to the bottom 20% and assigned 63 assigned to the top 20% (Minor et al., 2014). They placed 35 of the 70 secondary schools in the bottom 20% and 35 in the top 20% (Minor et al., 2014). Minor and colleagues found that the VAL-ED scores aligned with superintendents' placement of the target principals 70% of the time.

According to Harlin Daniel of Discovery Education, 615 school districts in 44 states have employed the VAL-ED assessment since 2009 (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). In 2012, the target district for the present study piloted VAL-ED with 50 principals, and since then, has continued to use the framework as a part of the annual evaluation for administrators (Doug Jones, personal communication July, 2012). Early analysis showed that principals needed support in involving the community in their schools. The analysis further revealed that assistant principals needed more opportunities to lead (Wallace Foundation, 2013). This researcher utilized the 2015 VAL-ED scores for assistant principals in the present study.

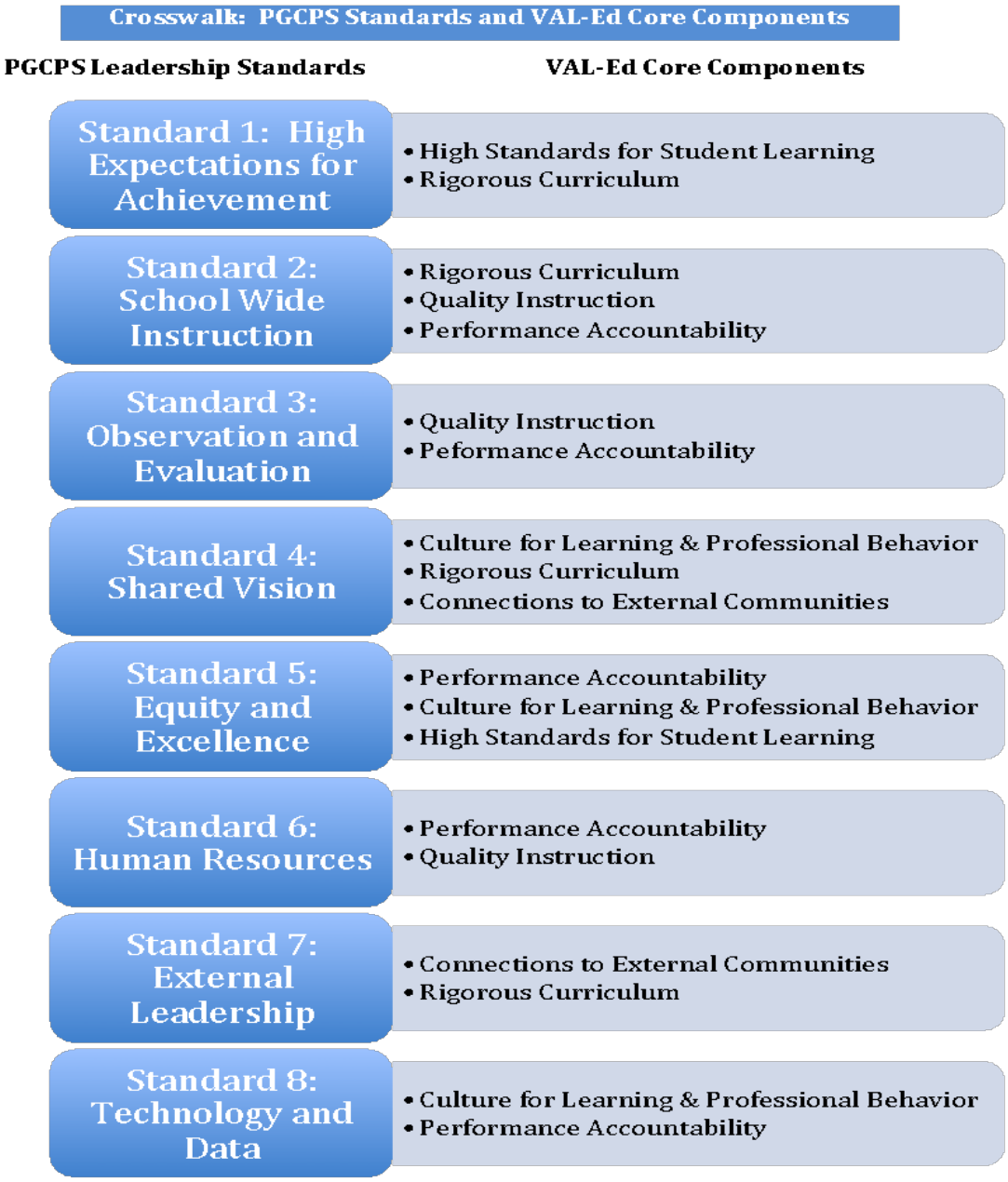
Summary and Purpose of the Study

In summary, school leaders can have a significant impact on student achievement and the retention of quality teachers. There is not a single case where schools have improved in the absence of strong leadership (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Wallace (2013) concluded that over the last decade, the important role that school districts play in identifying, training, and evaluating school leaders has become quite evident, and as a result, states and school districts have begun to overhaul their principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Goldring and Cravens (2007) many frameworks are available to assess the effectiveness of school leaders produced by principal preparation programs. However, school districts have not developed appropriate measures of principal effectiveness that employ an empirical or theoretical understanding of successful leadership (Minor, Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, and Elliott, 2014). In districts without any established professional standards, leaders often use the ISLLC standards to evaluate principals performance (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009).

Bay City Public Schools (BCPS), the district of focus for the present study, used the ISLLC standards, the Maryland State Standards, and VAL-ED to develop the eight BCPS Leadership Standards (see Figure 2). District leaders used these leadership standards to develop the Aspiring Principals Preparation Program (AP3, which provides training for assistant principals who aspire to become a principal in BCPS. The purpose

of this study was to determine the degree to which AP3 affected the leadership behaviors



of its graduates, as measured by VAL-ED.

Figure 2. PGCPS Standards and VAL-Ed Core Components Crosswalk

Section II: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the AP3 on aspiring principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors, as assessed by the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (Val-Ed) survey. In this section, I describe the specific research questions and the methodology that guided this quantitative study. I also include a description of the population, the instrumentation, and the variables and data analysis employed.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided this inquiry:

1. Do participants in AP3 have significantly higher Val-Ed mean scores on learning-centered leadership behaviors than do non-participants?
2. To what degree do school-level, Title 1 status, participant gender, and prior experience (years as an assistant principal) correlate with the mean VAL-ED scores of AP3 and non-AP3 participants?

Design and Methods

This study employs a correlational research design. The researcher selected this design to determine whether and to what degree a relationship existed between identified variables (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). Specifically, correlational research design helped the researcher to investigate this relationship and establish the degree to which a relationship existed between the dependent variable, an individual's 2015 VAL-ED mean score (learning-centered leadership behaviors) and the independent variables of school level, gender, years in the position, school's Title 1 status, and participation in AP3.

Participants

The 2015 VAL-ED scores of individuals who served as assistant principals in BCPS during school year 2014/2015 represented the dependent measure in this study. During the 2014/15 year, there were 267 assistant principals in Bay City; 168 of whom were female, and 99 were male (BCPS Human Resources, 2015). Fifty (19%) of the 267 individuals had completed the AP3 program during one of the following years: 2012, 2013, or 2014. Of the 50 AP3 graduates, 6 (12%) were serving as principals in 2014/15; the remaining 44 were serving as assistant principals (BCPS-SD, 2015). The researcher only used data from those 44 (88%) AP3 graduates who were assistant principals in this study and did not employ the VAL-ED scores for the six individuals who worked as school principals.

Instrument

As noted in Section I, VAL-ED is a multi-rater, evidence-based, normed, and criterion referenced 360° assessment (Murphy et al., 2011). The instrument is composed of a sample of 72 behaviors across the 36 domains of learning-centered leadership behaviors (Goff et al., 2014; Minor et al., 2014). As a part of the VAL-ED development, a 22-member panel of principals, teachers, supervisors, leadership researchers, and policy makers established the following cut scores values: distinguished= 4.00 and >, proficient=3.60, basic=3.29 and below basic= 3.28 and < (Minor et al., 2014). VAL-ED is administered in two parallel forms, and subjects can take the test using paper and pencil or via the web (Minor et al., 2014). Incongruent perceptions produced in multi-source instruments like VAL-ED can lead to changes that improve leadership behavior,

although the reactions vary significantly by individual and situation (Bickman, Kelly, Breda, de Andrade, & Riemer, 2011; Walker, Smither, Atwater, Dominic, Brett, & Reilly, 2010).

Teachers and supervisors provide ratings for principals and assistant principals are on a Likert scale with these descriptors: 1= ineffective, 2= minimally effective, 3= satisfactorily effective, 4= highly effective, or 5= outstandingly effective (Minor et al., 2014). Respondents must provide sources of evidence for their ratings. These sources include, "reports from others, personal observation, school documents, school projects or activities, other sources or no evidence" (Minor et al, 2014, p. 33). The instrument combines each administrator's rating with those from their teachers and supervisor to provide a single score ranging from1.0 (ineffective) to 5.0 (outstandingly effective; Porter et al., 2010).

The VAL-ED score reports include two sets of six scales (core components and key processes; Porter et al, 2010). The report combines the self-assessment and the supervisor and teacher's ratings into a mean aggregated effectiveness rating reported on each scale and displayed graphically and in a tabular form (Porter et al., 2010). Authors established national norms and performance standards to provide normed and criterion-referenced scores (Porter, Goldring, Elliott, Murphy, Polikoff, & Cravens, 2008). The report combines the scale score, norms, and the performance levels to identify areas of strengths and areas for growth (Porter et al., 2010).

BCPS HR staff administers the VAL-ED Survey to BCPS principals and assistant principals in the spring of each year as part of the annual mandatory principal and

assistant principal evaluation. Principals select a teacher on staff who receives training from a member of the human resources evaluation division to administer the assessment during a meeting that administrators are not permitted to attend. The assessment is takes place over a one-hour period. The report displays the results graphically on a color-coded grid—green represents highly effective areas, and yellow represents minimally effective and red displays areas of growth.

Principals, assistant principals, and supervisors receive a personal code that allows them to access the reports electronically. The administrator and their supervisor review the results, and the VAL-ED score counts as 4% of the administrators' evaluation. Supervisors also use the results to inform professional development decisions.

Procedures

The first phase of the study involved obtaining informed consent forms from all 267 assistant principals, which asked them to allow BCPS Human Resources representatives to release their VAL-ED scores under specific conditions. An administrator from the school district distributed the forms during a monthly systemic assistant principals meeting and via email and collected the completed forms. The administrator took on this role to avoid any potential appearance of coercion, because the researcher is a BCPS administrator, as well. In total, 98 assistant principals (37% of the 267 eligible participants) provided signed consent for the release of their VAL-ED data.

The researcher then created an Excel spreadsheet with the following fields: ID code, gender, tenure (years) as an assistant principal, school level (elementary, middle, secondary), school Title 1 designation, year AP3 was completed, and the mean VAL-ED

score from the Spring 2015 administration of the evaluation. A representative from the BCPS Human Resources and Staff Development (HR) Office, who was authorized to view individual VAL-ED data, extracted the 2014/2015 scores from the files of the 98 consenting assistant principals. The BCPS authorized human resources representative then entered the data into the spreadsheet, replacing individuals names and names of schools with codes (e.g., AP1, AP2, AP3…ES, MS, HS).

Additionally, other representatives of the BCPS HR office with authorization to view personnel records provided the number of years each of the consenting assistant principals had served in their positions with BCPS, which authorized HR staff entered into the Excel spreadsheet. Two additional persons employed by BCPS and authorized to view employee data checked the spreadsheet for accuracy.

Analysis

The researcher arranged the participants into five categories based upon their participation in one of four principal preparation program: Aspiring Principals Preparation Program (AP3), Next Step Principals Preparation Program (NSP3), New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), Combined Group (AP3+NSP3). The fifth category, labeled *other*, included those persons who did not indicate their participation in a principal preparation program. The researcher created tables that displayed the frequency of occurrence for the independent variables (gender, years as an assistant principal, school level, and Title 1 status).

The researcher analyzed the data by conducting a multiple linear regression analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The 2015 mean

VAL-ED score (dependent variable) was regressed on each of the independent variables to determine if a relationship existed. Dummy variables were created to control for years of experience, females (F), Title 1 (T1), and elementary school (ES) for all 98 records.

The low frequency of participants for NLNS (n=4), NSP3 (n=3), and the AP3 +NSPS Combined (n=8) groups did not lend itself to a determination of statistical significance. Therefore, the researcher excluded the groups and conducted another regression with AP3 participants (n=23) and subjects in the *other* (n=60) group. The second regression analysis also helped me to answer the two research questions.

Human Subject Review and Confidentiality

As mentioned previously, the researcher obtained informed consent from all assistant principals prior to accessing their personnel data (see Appendix B). Each consenting individual received a copy of the signed consent form. To protect subjects' identities, the researcher had authorized third parties to collect the data used in the analyses from existing data files in BCPS and enter it into a spreadsheet after stripping the data of identifying information. The researcher will maintain this data file in a password-protected personal computer that only he will access for three years. All findings and reports will only present the data in the aggregate form. There is a very small and unlikely possibility that an individual might be recognized based on the other data in the Excel file; however, because BCPS is a very large district with multiple schools, it is extremely unlikely that any one individual might be identified.

Section III: Results

This section presents the results of this study and details the answers to the following two research questions:

- Research Question 1. Do participants in AP3 have significantly higher Val-Ed mean scores on learning-centered leadership behaviors when compared to non-participants?
- Research Question 2. To what degree do school-level, school Title 1 status, participant gender, and prior experience (years as an assistant principal) correlate with the mean VAL-ED scores of AP3 and non-AP3 participants?

The section begins with a discussion of the response rate and sample characteristics, and then moves on to present descriptive statistics for the total sample and for the five groups (i.e., Aspiring Principals Preparation Program Only (AP3), Next Step Principals Preparation Program Only (NSP3), New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), AP3+NSP3 Combined and Other [not identifying with any of the principal preparation program]). The descriptive statistics describe the frequency of each of the independent variables: gender, number of years as an assistant principal in BCPS, school characteristics (elementary, middle, high school, and title 1 status), and the 2015 mean Val-ED scores for each of the aforementioned groups. The section then moves on to examine the correlation between variables, established through a multiple linear regression analysis, and concludes with a discussion of the results and implications of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.

Response Rates and Sample Characteristics

With the help of district staff, the investigator invited 267 assistant principals to participate in the study via systemic district meetings and email invitations. Of those 267 administrators, 98 (37% response rate) consented to give the researcher access to their VAL-ED data. Among the 98 consenting assistant principals 38 (39%) were male, and 60 (61%) were female. There were 23 (23%) AP3 graduates only, 3 (3%) of NSP3 graduates only, 8 (8%) of AP3+NSP3 combined graduates, 4(4%) NLNS graduates and 60 (61%) of other assistant principals who are not identified with any principal preparation program. Figure 3 details the years of experience held by the 98 assistant principals. The mean years of experience was 6.9 years, and the median was 5.5 years. The range was 1 to 32 years of experience.

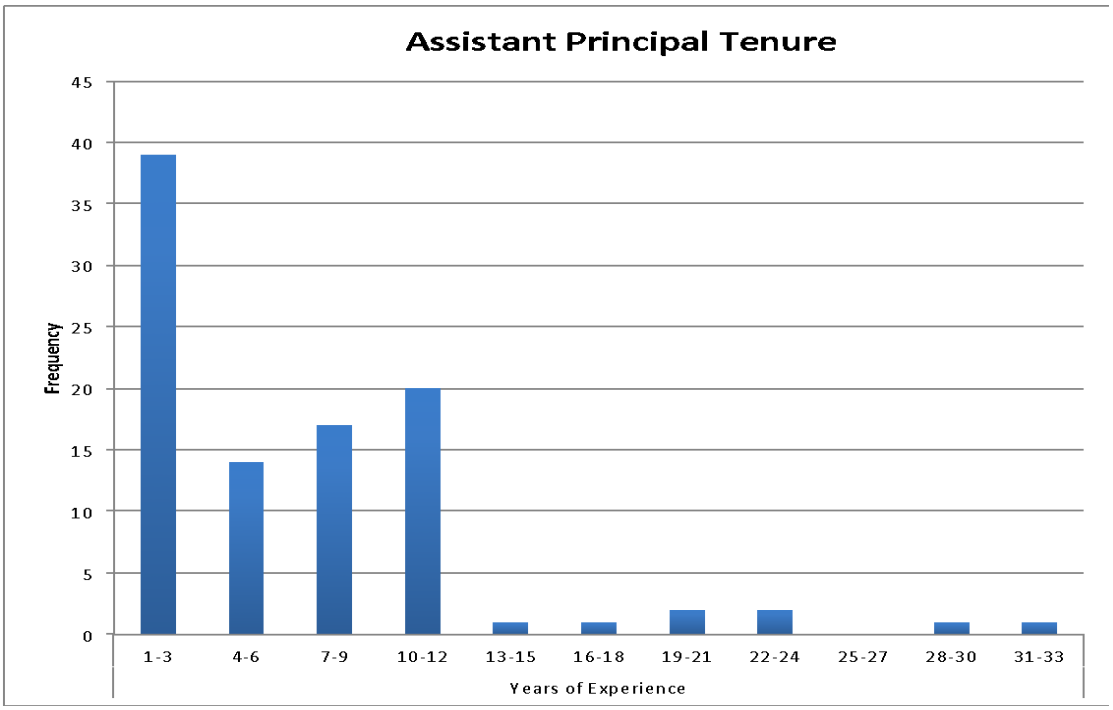


Figure 3. Assistant Principal Tenure

Mean years of experience differed across categories. Figure 4 show 23 AP3 graduates had a mean of 8 years, the 3 NSP3 graduates also averaged 8 years, the 8 AP3+NSP3 combined graduates had 11.25 years of experience, the 4 NLNS graduates had a mean of 1.75 years of experience; and assistant principals in the other category had a mean of 6 years of experience (see Figure 4).

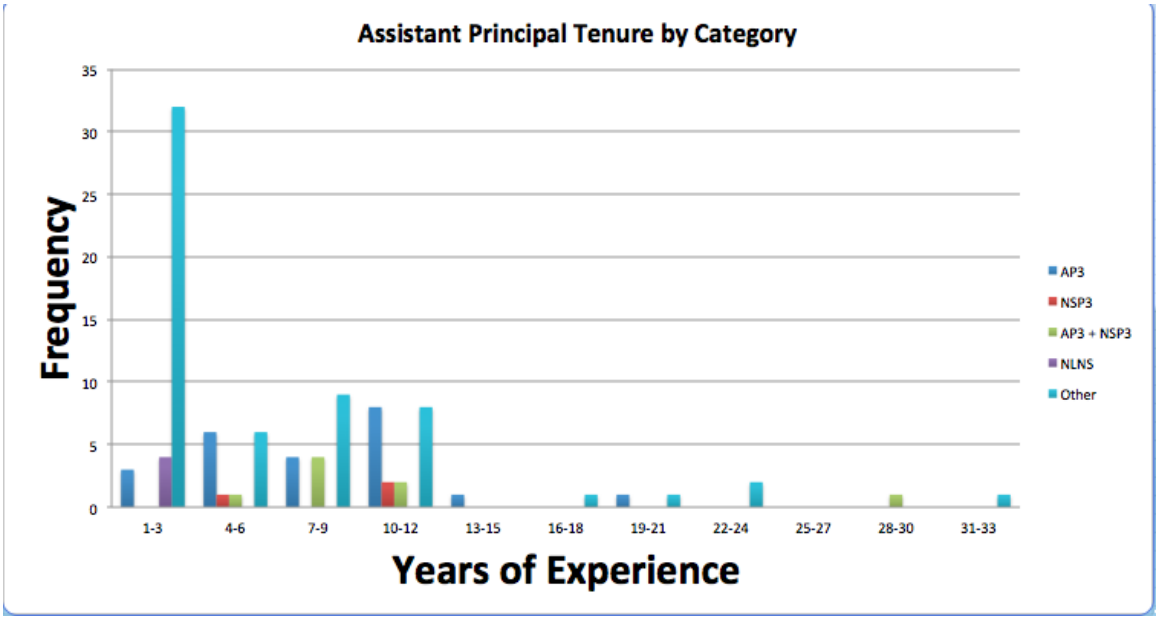


Figure 4. Assistant Principal Tenure by Category

The response rate for school characteristics shows that approximately one-third of the participants worked in elementary schools (ES; K-5 or a K-8 academy) or high schools (HS; grades 9-12), and the remaining participants worked in middle school (MS; grades 6-8). Additionally, approximately one-third of the sample participants worked in Title 1 schools (ES or MS in BCPS where > 65% of the students receive free or reduced priced meals).

Descriptive Statistics

Figure 5 details the frequency of gender for each of the independent variables within each of the five categories. The females outnumbered the males in all categories except NLNS.

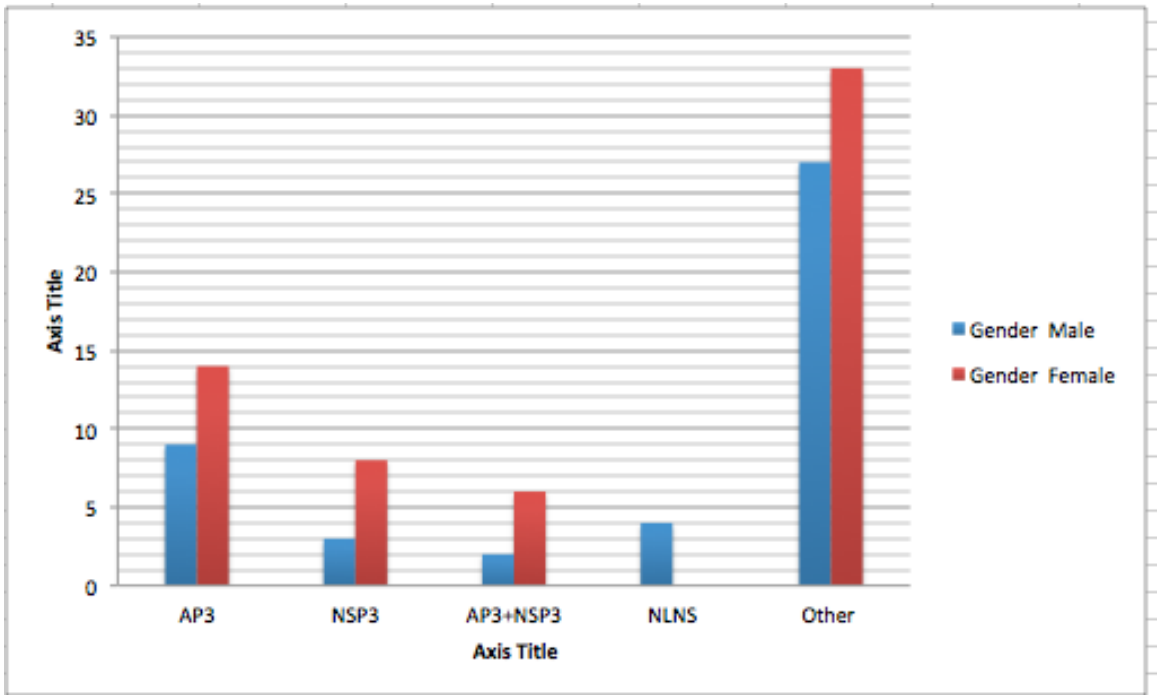


Figure 5. Gender by Category

Figure 6 shows the frequency of school characteristics across categories. According to the data, 13 (57%) **AP3** graduates worked in elementary schools, 5 (22%) worked in middle schools and 5 (22%) worked in high schools. Of that, 7 APs (30%) work in Title 1 schools. The data also showed that 1 (33.3%) of the **NSP3** graduates worked in an elementary school, and 2 (66.6 %) worked in high schools. Of the eight **AP3+NSP3 combined** participants, 3 (37.5%) worked at elementary schools, 3 (37.5%) worked middle schools, and 2 (25%) worked in high schools. Five of the AP3+NSP3

combined graduates (62.5%) worked in Title 1 Schools. One (25%) of the **NLNS** graduates worked in an elementary school, 2 (50%) worked in middle schools, and 1 (25%) worked in a high school. Two (50%) of the NLNS graduates worked in Title 1 schools. School characteristics of the 60 assistant principals in the **other** category, who were not identified with any of the principal preparation programs, were as follows: 20 (33%) worked in elementary schools, 17 (28%) worked in middle schools, 23 (38%) worked in high schools, and 20 (33%) worked in Title 1 schools.

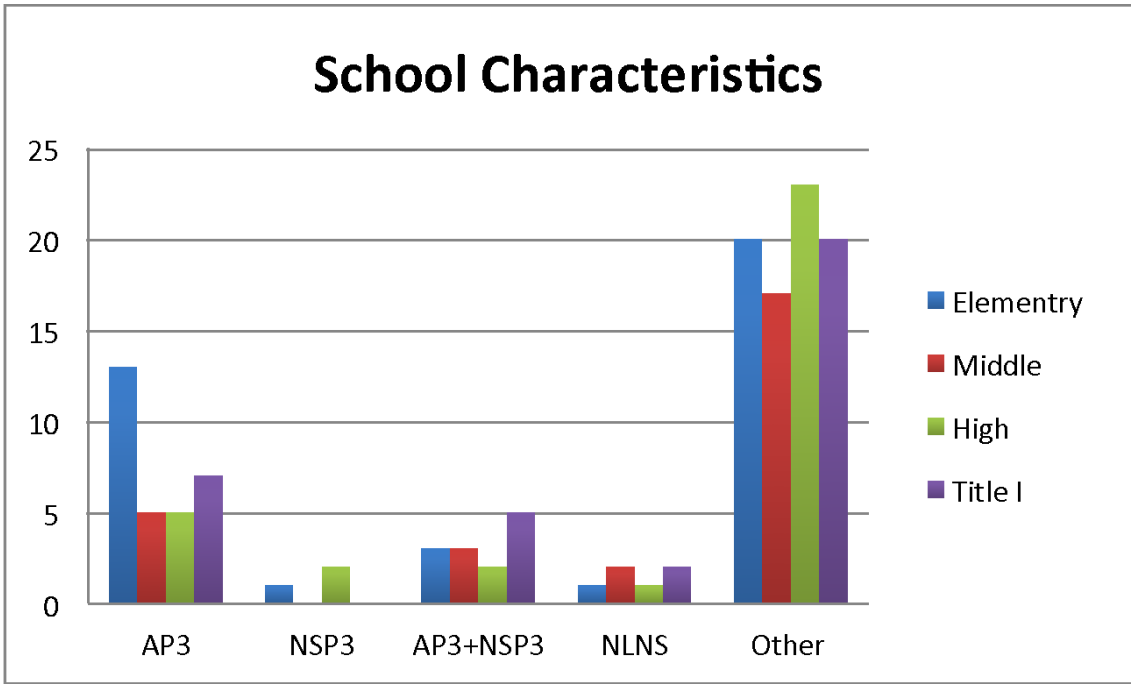


Figure 6. School Characteristics by Category

Analysis of VAL-ED scores

Figure 7 presents the mean VAL-ED scores for each of the five categories. The overall mean VAL-ED score was 3.71. The mean score for AP3 graduates only fell below the overall mean. The AP3+NSP3 combined group's mean score was the highest among

all categories, while the NLNS group had the lowest mean score. Finally, participants in the other category had a mean score that feel between the overall mean and the AP3 comparison group.

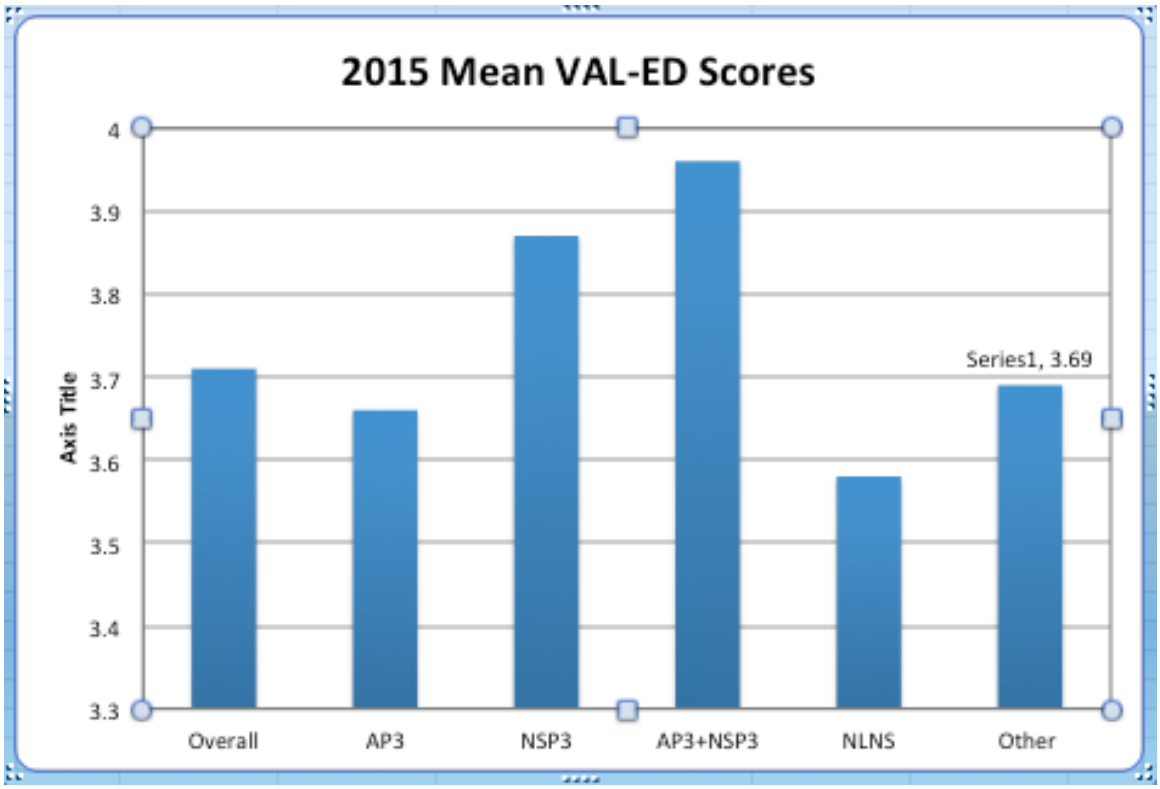


Figure 7. 2015 Mean VAL-ED Scores

Discussion of Results

Descriptive statistics aided in the analysis of data related to the two research questions that guided this study. The sections that follow discuss the relationships between the VAL-ED scores and the two queries. Each research question will be discussed and the results shared with its corresponding analysis.

Research Question 1. Research Question #1 posed the following query: Do participants in AP3 have significantly higher VAL-ED mean scores on learning-centered

leadership behaviors when compared to non-participants? As explained previously, there were five subgroups of assistant principals that took part in this study, including individuals who participated in and completed the AP3 (n=23) training program. Other subgroups consisted of assistant principals who completed the NSP3 (n=3) and NLNS (n=4) programs. The researcher also included a subgroup of assistant principals who completed both the AP3 and NSP3 (n=8) programs and a fifth subgroup comprised of assistant principals whom reported no experience with a formal principal preparation program. This fifth subgroup was labeled "Other" (n=60). The sizes of the five subgroups varied considerably, which limited options for using statistical tests (i.e. analysis of variance) in comparing group means. Rather, the researcher used descriptive measures to compare average scores for the subgroups identified in the study.

In his seminal treatise on descriptive analysis, statistician John W. Tukey posited that measures of central tendency, measure of dispersion, and graphic displays of data often proved more meaningful in research than confirmatory tests (Tukey, 1977). The researcher adopted this viewpoint with these data. Therefore, due to the small sample sizes for three of the subgroups, the researcher thought it prudent to show only the mean VAL-ED scores for the five subgroups. Table 1 contains a summary of descriptive statistics for the five sample subgroups based on their VAL-ED scores.

According to the data, assistant principals who had completed both AP3 and NSP3 had the highest mean score in the study. These eight individuals attained a mean of 3.96 on the VAL-ED instrument, with a standard deviation of .43. Their scores ranged from 3.37 to 4.66. The subgroup of assistant principals with only NSP3 experience

attained a mean score of 3.87 on the VAL-ED instrument. The scores for these three subjects ranged from 3.31 to 4.47, with a standard deviation of .58. With the highest number of subjects, assistant principals in the subgroup defined as "Other" attained the third highest mean in the study. The mean for this group of 60 subjects was 3.69, and the standard deviation was .48. The VAL-ED scores for this largest subgroup ranged from 2.02 to 4.66.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of VAL-Ed Scores by Sample Subgroups (N=98)

Independent variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Range
AP3 only (n=23)	3.66	.42	2.74 - 4.56
NSP3 only (n= 3)	3.87	.58	3.31- 4.47
AP3 & NSP combined (n=8)	3.96	.43	3.37 - 4.66
NLNS (n=4)	3.58	.33	3.29 - 4.06
Other (n=60)	3.40	.48	2.02 - 4.66

Total sample: = 3.71; *sd* = .46

The AP3 subgroup had the fourth lowest mean, with an average score of 3.66 on the VAL-ED instrument. The scores for the 23 subjects in this AP3 subgroup ranged from 3.74 to 4.56, with a standard deviation of .42. The four subjects comprising the NLNS subgroup earned the lowest mean of 3.58, with a rage of 3.29 to 4.06 and a standard deviation of .33 (see Table 1). Figure 5 provides further evidence of group differences on the VAL-ED instrument and shows that the mean score for subjects with AP3 and NSP3 experience was substantially higher than were the scores of other subgroups. The mean score for the NSP3 subgroup reached the second highest level, followed by the "Other" and AP3 subgroups. The NLNS subgroup earned the lowest mean score. For overall comparison purposes, Table 1 also provides descriptive statistics for the total sample, which produced a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of .46.

Research Question #2. Research Question #2 asked, To what degree do school-level, Title 1 status, participant gender and prior experience (years as an assistant principal) impact the VAL-ED learning-centered leadership behaviors of AP3 and non-AP3 participants? To address this query, the researcher used two multiple regression models. Due to small sample size of the three subgroups, the researcher only conducted

the multiple regression with the data records from the AP3 (23) and the "Other" (60) subgroups.

Two other independent variables also contributed significantly to the overall regression model. The Title I variable attained a β = -.23 and Seβ = .104 ($p<.05$), and the *years of experience* variable attained a β = -.21 and Seβ = .008 ($p<.05$). None of the other independent variables within the regression model shown in Table 2 demonstrated a significant relationship with the dependent variable of VAL-ED scores.

Table 2

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Across Program Type

Predictors (Constant)	β	Seβ	P Value
AP3	*−030*	*.112*	*.789*
NSP3	*.148*	*.264*	*.576*
AP3 & NSP3 combined	.440	.176	.014*
NLNS	−.191	.239	.427
Female	−.062	.098	.532
Elementary	.188	.104	.074
Title 1	−.230	.104	.030*
Years of experience	−.021	.008	.011*

Note: * p value < 0.05

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis AP3 Only

Predictors (Constant)	β	Seβ	P Value

AP3	*−.047*	*.115*	*.686*
Female	*−.081*	*.107*	*.450*
Elementary	.230	.116	.051
Title 1	−.231	.114	.046
Years of experience	−.018	.009	.056

Note: * p value < 0.05

Table 3 displays the results of the second dummy-variable multiple regression of VAL-ED scores on a series of independent variables, including AP3 training experience, gender status (i.e., female), school building type (i.e., elementary), Title 1 status, and years of experience. A multiple correlation of .35 (N=82) generated in the model, explaining 12% of the variance in the VAL-ED scores. This multiple correlation was not significant; however, one of the standardized, partial regression coefficients proved significant in the model. The Title I variable attained a β = -.23 and SEβ = .114 ($p<.05$), contributing significantly to the overall regression in this analysis. None of the other independent variables in this second regression model demonstrated a significant relationship with the dependent variable of VAL-ED scores (see Table 3).

Limitations of the study

This study involved several limitations. First, the sample sizes for the NSP3 only, AP3+NSP3 combined, and NLNS subgroups were not large enough to determine statistical significance. Secondly, AP3 program implementation varied from cohort to cohort. For example, the National Institute of School Leaders (NISL) national faculty taught Cohort 1 and implemented the newly created content with fidelity. As the original

design intended, NISL national faculty and district leaders trained as NISL facilitators co-taught Cohort 2 and taught the curriculum with relative fidelity.

As changes in executive leadership occurred within the district, structural changes in human resources and a stronger emphasis on literacy across the curriculum caused adjustments in the way district leaders staffed their schools in BCPS. These adjustments shifted the focus almost exclusively to the AP3 module on *Leading in BCPS*, which led to a change in the instructional staff. District executives and content specialists, who were not NISL-trained facilitators, taught Cohort 3. In addition, because new leadership provided additional professional development to assistant principals that mirrored principals' training options, the amount of instructional time was reduced from two days per week to one day per week.

Therefore, another important limitation involved the fact that there is little information available about the training assistant principals in the "Other" category received that could have affected their leadership. For example, respondents may have taken part in district-sponsored professional development activities; however, there were no data available on whether the administrators participated in these training opportunities.

Implications

The results of this study have several implications for policy and practice. It is clear that consistent and targeted professional development provided can have a positive impact on the learning-centered leadership behaviors of assistant principals; however, there are key factors that educational leaders and policy makers must consider.

Individuals' years of experience, the school context, structure of the professional development, the content and the training of the instructors are critically important to the development of learning-centered leaders.

The results revealed a window of opportunity for BCPS to train assistant principals who aspire to be principals. The data indicated that assistant principals in the NSP3 only and AP3+NSP3 subgroups who participated in the professional development programs after having between 5 and 10 years of experience had the highest mean VAL-ED scores. Conversely, as assistant principals became more experienced and did not receive targeted professional development, their mean VAL-ED scores decreased. Additional, persons in the NLNS program who received targeted professional development early in their careers (with less than 5 years of experience) earned scores that lagged behind those of all other groups. These results indicate that the ideal time to provide this training is when assistant principals have between 5 and 10 years of experience. This finding has implications for the requirements of the recruitment and selection process of program participants.

The data also indicate that school context has an impact on the learning-centered leadership behaviors of assistant principals. Elementary school assistant principals had a positive estimated coefficient and, hence, a positive correlation with VAL-ED scores. This finding suggests that because elementary schools tend to focus on (a) the foundational academic skills of their students and (b) academic growth, the elementary assistant principal would possess behaviors that are more instructionally-focused. However, the Title 1 schools in BCPS are either elementary or middle schools. Title 1

status had a significantly inverse effect on the mean VAL-ED scores. Although assistant principals in Title 1 schools were in settings that required a strong focus on academic growth, they had to ensure that they met the physical, emotional, and social needs of the students before they could address the students' academic needs. This need may have given the impression that the assistant principals did not demonstrate a significant focus on instruction.

The sample sizes were not large enough to explain, with any degree of certainty, the significantly higher mean VAL-ED scores for participants in the NSP3 only and AP3+NSP3 combined groups. However, [WHO?] should examine and compare the components of the programs, namely the content; the fidelity of their implementation; and the training of the instructors. These graduates received instruction for the NISL curriculum, in whole or in part, from NISL-trained facilitators for a required number of hours. Therefore, one could infer that the NISL curriculum, the training of the instructors, and the length of training had a significant impact on participants' mean VAL-ED scores.

The same components could explain why the AP3 curriculum had the reverse effect on the mean VAL-ED scores of its graduates. The AP3 graduates received a portion of the NISL curriculum. Some of them had NISL-trained facilitators, and others did not. Additionally, as the program continued across cohorts, participants spent a decreasing amount of time with the material. These changes resulted in a lack of fidelity in the implementation of the curriculum. One could infer that using untrained facilitators to teach the NISL curriculum has a significant impact on the mean VAL-ED scores of

assistant principals. A study involving a larger sample size is necessary to confirm this finding.

Recommendations

Ongoing, targeted professional development for assistant principals in BCPS is critical to building the bench of next level leaders. Assistant principals who fail to receive focused professional development throughout their career will have little effect on the academic and social growth of students or the professional growth of teachers.

Recommendation 1. BCPS should conduct future inquiries into this issue that using a larger sample that includes the VAL-ED scores of all assistant principal. This increased sample size will provide greater insight into the phenomenon of study and provide increased context for the implications and recommendations of the present study. The extended study should also include the random selection of assistant principals to participate in a focus group designed to collect qualitative data. This data could provide data that explains the decline of mean VAL-ED scores for assistant principals with more than 10 years of experience and for those who serve in Title 1 schools. Additionally, replication of the study could provide new data that would help BCPS "tap" future talent and build the bench of future principals. The district could replicate the study with all principals in the district to provide a more thorough investigation of the effectiveness of AP3 and the principal preparation programs the district used to prepare its school leaders.

Recommendation 2. BCPS must also revise the AP3 program to reflect an alignment with the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Specifically, the recruitment and selection criteria must minimally require five years of experience as an

assistant principal. The data show assistant principals with five or more years of experience and professional development that prepared them for the principalship had higher VAL-ED scores. Further, program leaders should use VAL-ED scores in the selection process. Candidates with average scores below proficient should not take part in AP3.

Additionally, instructors must be trained as NISL facilitators, must use the NISL curriculum with fidelity to train aspiring principals, and should use the amount of time required by NISL to implement the curriculum. The data imply that assistant principals trained in the NISL curriculum consistently had statistically significantly higher mean VAL-ED scores.

Recommendation 3. Assistant principals serving in Title 1 schools need must be prepare to face academic and social challenges facing students. BCPS would also benefit from strategically placing graduates of the newly structured AP3 in Title 1 schools to provide a balanced focus on both the academic and social needs of students.

Summary and Conclusions

Realizing that student achievement will not increase in the absence of a strong administrator, school reform agendas have placed a particular focus on preparing school leaders for the principalship. Like ministries of education, states, school districts, and non-profit organizations around the world, Bay City Public Schools (BCPS) has begun to develop its school leaders internally. This study was the first to examine the effectiveness of their efforts, and it revealed that graduates of the AP3 program showed almost equal

mean VAL-ED scores of persons who had not participated in any identified formal principal preparation program.

Sampling for the current study was limited to a small, target population of individuals. At the onset of data collection, the researcher established a sampling frame of 267 assistant principals, and from that sample, defined and incorporated a self-selecting group of subjects into the actual study. The resulting research sample of 98 subjects consisted of mostly female administrators (nearly two-thirds). Other key independent variables in the study had disparate sample sizes, namely AP3 only (23), NSP3 only (3), combined AP3 & NSP3 combined (8) NLNS (4), and those defined as "Other" (61). No specific training characteristics were identified for the "Other" subgroup of the study's sample and this group was the largest, comprising about two-thirds (61%) of the subjects. Nearly one quarter (23%) of the subjects was in the AP3 subgroup, with the remaining subjects (16%) comprising the NSP3, AP3 & NSP3 combined, and NLNS subgroups. The small sample sizes of three of the five subgroups did not allow for future predictions that had any degree of statistical significance. Therefore, replicating this study with all assistant principals in the district would provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the past and current principal preparation efforts offered by BCPS.

It is useful to focus on descriptive statistics for Research Question 1. The AP3 subgroup reflected nearly one quarter of the sample, and their training was a key issue in the literature undergirding the current study. Means and standard deviations were very similar for the AP3 and "Other" subgroups. However, the range values for these two

subgroups differed, which indicates that values for the AP3 subgroup were slightly lower, yet not more statistically significant than were values for the "Other" subgroup. This finding suggests that training program influences for the AP3 subgroup resulted in no difference when compared with the "Other" subgroup.

To respond to Research Question 2, the researcher generated two multiple regression models during data analysis. The resulting data helped the researcher to determine the relationships between key independent variables and the dependent variable of VAL-ED scores. For both models, the multiple correlation values were not large enough to achieve statistical significance and resulted in the retainment of the null hypothesis (see Tables 1 and 2).

The more complex regression model included eight independent variables that represented subgroup membership, Title I status, gender, building type, and years of experience. Three of the standardized, partial regression coefficients proved to be significant in the eight-variable model. Data indicated that years of experience had the highest influence on VAL-ED scores. Participation in the AP3 + NSP3 combine subgroup had the second highest influence on VAL-ED scores, followed by Title I status. It is useful to note that AP3 +NSP3 combined participation appeared prominent in the analysis for Research Question 1, with the highest mean score on the VAL-ED instrument. The conclusion herein is that AP3+NSP3 combined participation was a salient factor in learning-centered leadership behaviors within the current study.

An assistant principal's (APs) years of experience and school context also had a significantly negative impact on the mean VAL-ED scores (see Table 3). APs with the

fewest years of experience had the lowest mean VAL-ED scores, despite their participation in a principal preparation program. Conversely, APs with more than 12 years of experience demonstrated a decline in their VAL-ED scores, suggesting that there is window of opportunity for BCPS to build APs' capacity in instructional leadership. In seizing this window of opportunity, BCPS must be strategic when selecting and recruiting individuals to become future school leaders. At minimum, APs must have earned a proficient or above mean VAL-ED score, especially when they are in training to lead Title 1 schools.

Title I experience proved to have a negative influence on VAL-ED scores, as reflected in a significant p value. The researcher concluded that survey participants did not perceive that subjects assigned to Title I buildings had more learning-center leadership behaviors than did subjects not assigned to such buildings. The basic physical, social, and psychological needs of students in Title 1 schools could distract school leaders from having a stronger focus on instructional leadership behaviors that raise student achievement and build teacher capacity. Thus, leaders (principals, assistant principals) of Title 1 schools must have a dual focus on instruction and managerial leadership, and they must possess the ability to build a team that can address and manage students' basic needs.

Finally, BCPS must revise AP3 to ensure that their leadership standards align with the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Further, district leaders must control the variance in the instructional time, instructors training, and the

curriculum to make confident predictions about the effectiveness of the principal preparation program.

Appendices

Appendix A

Bay City Public Schools Leadership Standards

STANDARD 1: High Expectations for Teaching and Learning Standard I: The Principal sets high expectations for achievement based upon individualized tailoring of instruction, rigorous data analysis and evaluation of the effective instructional practices.
STANDARD 2: School-Wide Instruction Standard II: The BCPS Principal sets standards for ensuring school-wide instructional and achievement goals are met based upon implementation of effective pedagogical practices, data analysis and monitoring of research-based instructional practices
STANDARD 3: Observation and Evaluation Standard III: The BCPS Principal monitors effective instructional practices through observation and evaluation
STANDARD 4: Shared Vision Standard IV: The Principal builds a shared vision, fosters shared goals, and communicates high performance expectations leadership

STANDARD 5: Equity and Excellence

Standard V: The Principal demonstrates a commitment to excellence, equity, and innovation

STANDARD 6: Human Resources and Managerial Leadership

Standard VI: The Principal demonstrates human resource and managerial leadership

STANDARD 7: External Leadership

Standard VII: The Principal demonstrates strong external leadership

STANDARD 8: Use of Technology and Data

Standard VIII: The Principal demonstrates a commitment to the effective use of data and technology resources.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Project Title	An Investigation of the Impact of An Aspiring Principals Preparation Program on Principal Effectiveness
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by **Jeffrey Holmes** at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you were an Assistant Principal during the 2014-2015 school year. The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of Aspiring Principals Preparation Program (AP3) (pseudonym) on assistant principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors as assessed by the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (Val-Ed) survey. The study will compare the perceived learning-centered leadership behaviors of participants versus non-participants. The results of this study may be used to assist the district in validating the effectiveness of AP3 as well as identifying potential refinements and program modifications.
Procedures	Step 1. Data Collection Tool: A staff member from the districts Office of Employee Performance and Evaluation (OEPE), and Human Resources will input data into the excel spreadsheet: 2015 mean VAL-ED Score, school level (elementary, middle, and secondary), tenure (# of years in their current position), Title 1 status of the school, participation in Assistant Principal

	Preparation Program (AP3) by cohort (1,2 or 3), participation in another principal preparation program funded by the district. Prior to sending the file to the principal investigator, the staff member will remove all identifiers including names and school names. The participant's names will be replaced with a code (AP1, AP2, …AP 267). Step 2. Explore relationships between variables and compare groups through use of descriptive data and simple regression analyses. Step 3 Exploration of Data: The principal investigator will create frequency tables and PivotTables. The frequency tables will display the frequency and the percentage of the average (mean), range, and standard deviation of data collected will be calculated to help understand the data. __.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no risks from participating in this research study. Your personal identity will NOT be provided to the principal investigator
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include: The results of this study may be used to assist the district in validating the effectiveness of AP3 as well as identifying potential refinements and program modifications.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by not giving the principal investigator access to your

	personal information. If a report or article is written about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: **Principal Investigator: Jeffrey Holmes** **8000 Dyson Road, Brandywine, MD 20613 telephone: 240-619-2595, and e-mail address of Principal Investigator: theprincipal04@gmail.com or Co-Investigator: Dr. Margaret McLaughlin email: mjm@umd.edu**
Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **University of Maryland College Park** **Institutional Review Board Office**

	1204 Marie Mount Hall **College Park, Maryland, 20742** **E-mail: irb@umd.edu** **Telephone: 301-405-0678** *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*	
Statement of Consent	*Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.* *If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.*	
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT** **[Please Print]**	
Statement of Consent	**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**	
Signature and Date	**DATE**	

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