



Aspiring Principal Development in One North Texas School District

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Requirements for the Degree Doctor of
Education in
Educational Leadership K-12

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DBU

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem



Expanding Role
of the School Principal



Post-COVID-19
Challenges



Increased State and
Federal Accountability



Need for Principal
Preparation and Development

(Aladjem et al., 2021; Constantia et al., 2021)

Statement of the Problem

The Expanding Role of the School Principal

Operations and Building Management

Instructional Improvement

Hiring and Talent Management

Community Relations

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of assistant principals before and after participating in an aspiring principal program.



Perceived level of competence



Perceptions about the role of a school principal



Perceptions about the impact on current leadership behaviors

Research Questions



Is there a difference in assistant principals' **perceived level of competence** after completing the aspiring principal program?



What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the **role of the school principal** as a result of participating in the aspiring principal program?



What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the **impact** of the aspiring principal program on their **current leadership behaviors**?

Significance



Intended
program
outcomes



Program
improvements



Implications
for district
developed
leadership
pipelines

Leadership Pipeline
Assistant Principal Development

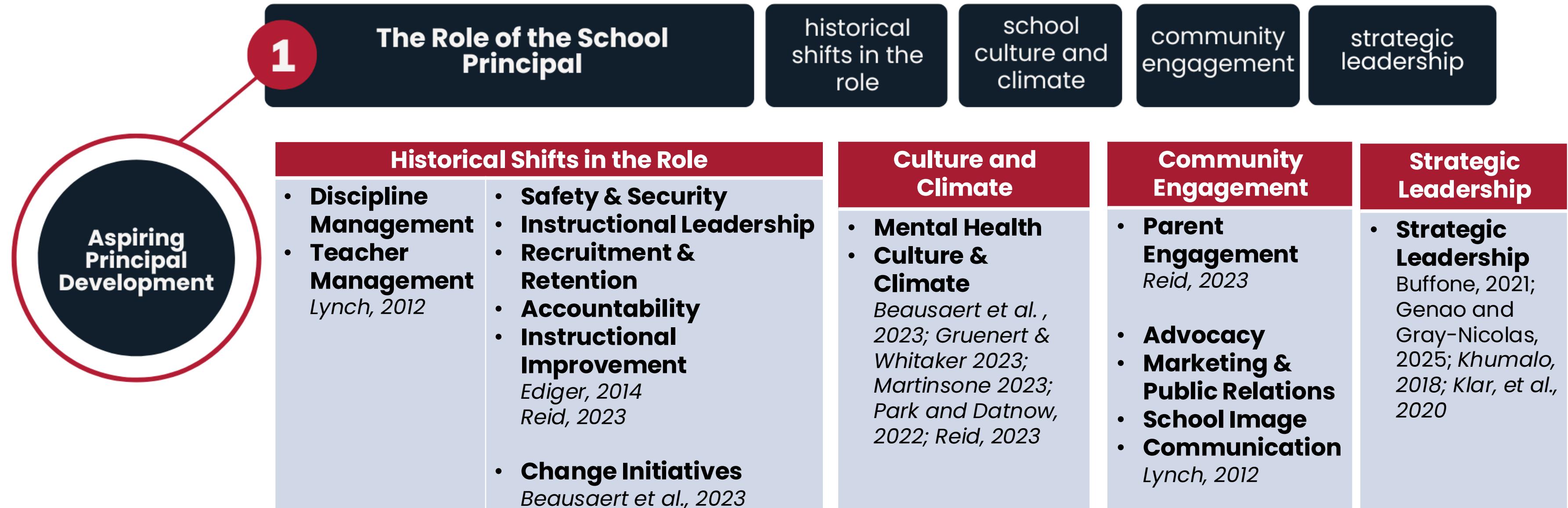
(Carpenter et al., 2022)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Review of the Literature

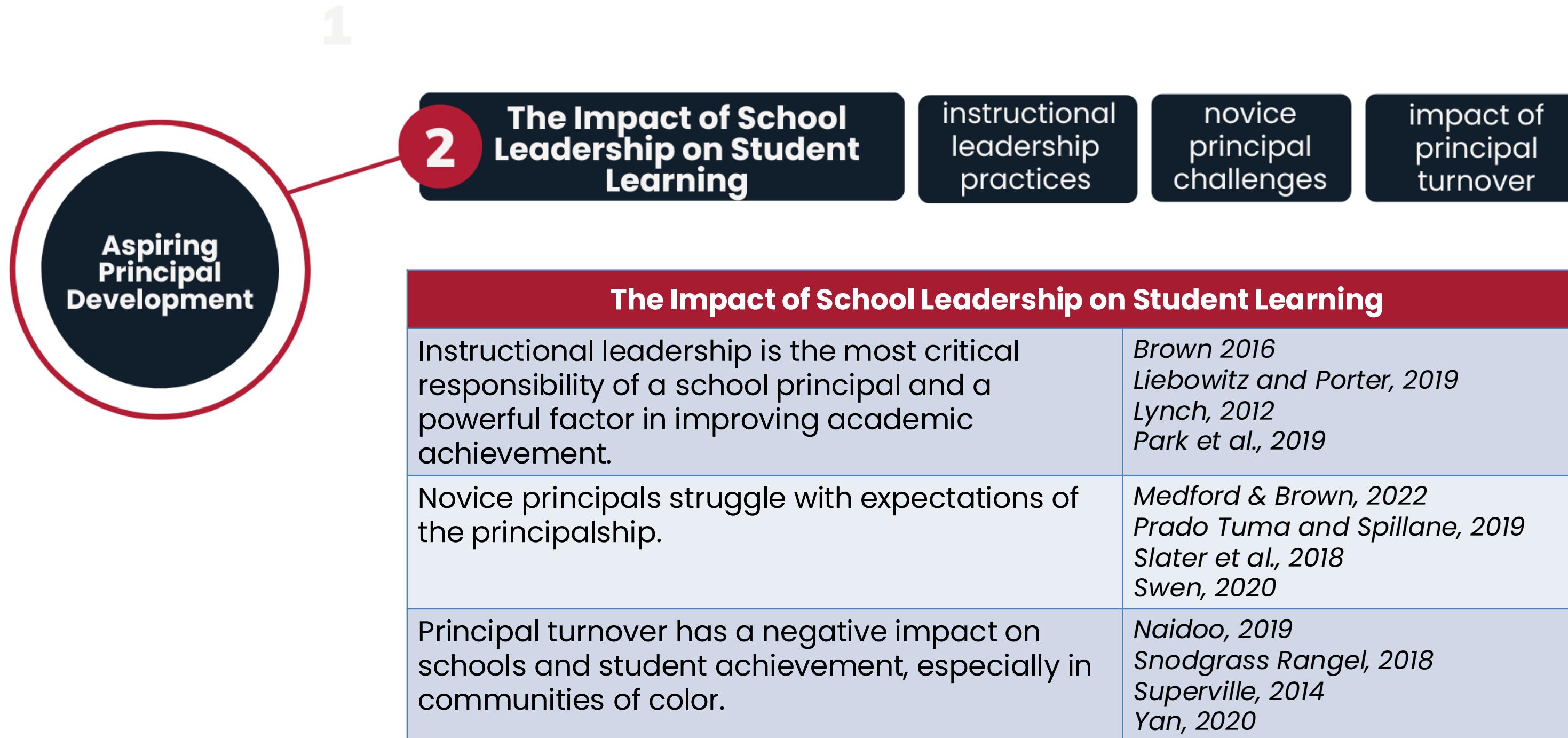


Review of the Literature

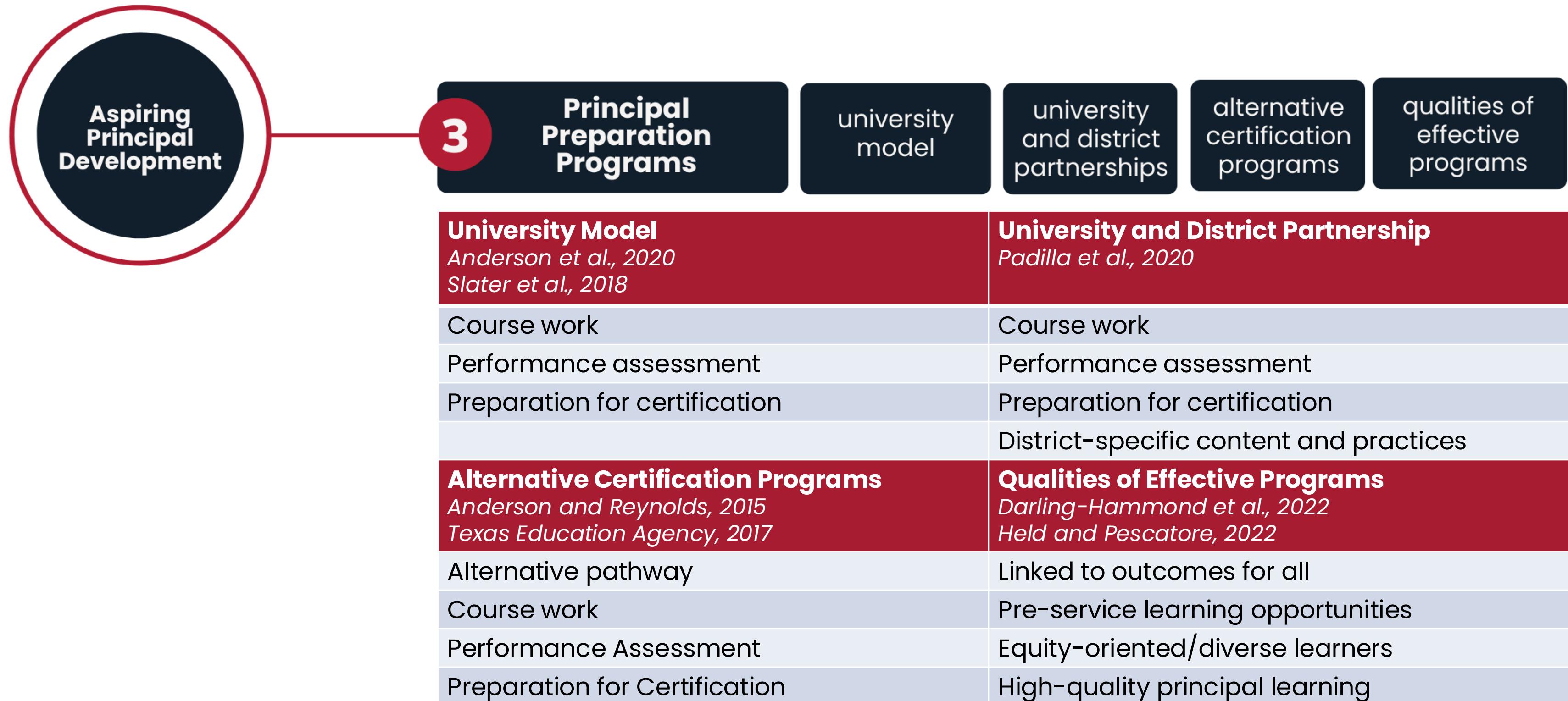


Increase in Complexity

Review of the Literature



Review of the Literature



Review of the Literature



Continuum of Supports for Principals	
Mentoring and coaching fosters resilience.	<i>Halevi and Schechter, 2023</i> <i>O'Neill & Glasson, 2019</i>
Professional learning is needed for principals to keep pace with federal and state accountability expectations.	<i>De Nisco, 2015</i> <i>Levin et al., 2020</i>
Principals need experiences and opportunities to engage in learning and collaboration.	<i>Martin and Clemensen, 2022</i> <i>Naidoo, 2019</i>
An important aspect of developing leaders is being to evaluate their current level of performance.	<i>Cooper, 2016</i> <i>Gordon, 2020</i> <i>Rico-Juan, 2022</i>

Review of the Literature



School Leadership Pipelines	
Leadership pipelines are needed to ensure a pool of qualified candidates who are prepared for the principal role.	<i>Aladjem et al., 2021</i> <i>Anderson & Turnbull, 2019</i> <i>Bush, 2018</i> <i>Doss et al., 2022</i> <i>Drago-Severson, 2012</i>
District-designed aspiring leadership programs are effective in preparing candidates for the principal role.	<i>Corcoran et al., 2012</i> <i>Welch and Hodge, 2018</i>
Grow your own leadership pipelines are effective in providing mentoring, coaching, and leadership development.	<i>Arnold, 2022</i> <i>Goldring et al., 2021</i> <i>Hayes and Burkett, 2021</i> <i>Turnbull et al., 2016</i>

5

School Leadership Pipelines

qualities of effective pipelines

advantages of pipelines

Chapter 3: Methodology

Setting and Participants



Setting

One North Texas School District

- 37,262 students
- 55 campuses
- 5,720 employees
- 108 assistant principals



Participants

Assistant principals

- 10 participants
- 23-24 school year
- All were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews

Data Collection

1

Quantitative
Data
Collection

2

Quantitative
Results
Analyzed

3

Qualitative
Data
Collection

4

Qualitative
Results
Analyzed



Sequential Mixed Methods

Data Analysis

1

Is there a difference in assistant principals' **perceived level of competence** after completing the aspiring principal program?

Quantitative Analysis

Dependent samples *t*-test to determine significant differences pre-assessment and post-assessment

Data Analysis and Verification

2

What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the role of the school principal as a result of participating in the aspiring principal program?

3

What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the impact of the aspiring principal program on their current leadership behaviors?

Qualitative Analysis

Recording and transcribing of interviews (Google Meet)

Written transcription to member check

NVivo 15 Software to identify emerging themes and further explain quantitative data

Verification panel of district experts

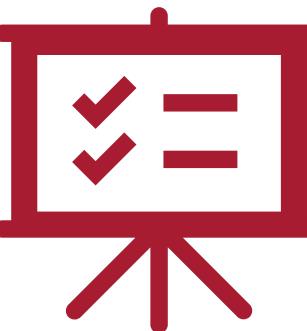
Organizing and preparing data for analysis

Coding and identifying themes

Data interpretation

Chapter 4: Aspiring Principal Program

Aspiring Principal Program



Program Outcomes

- Skill Development
- Networking and Community Building
- Personal Growth and Reflection
- Readiness for the Principal Role

Program Structure

- Team Building Activities
- Campus Visits
- Leadership Panels
- 30-60-90 Day Entry Plans
- T-PESS Learning
- Interview Practice
- Reflection

Chapter 5: Results

Research Questions



Is there a difference in
assistant principals' perceived
level of competence after
completing the aspiring
principal program?

Data Analysis

1

Is there a difference in assistant principals' **perceived level of competence** after completing the aspiring principal program?

Dependent Samples *t*-test

21 hypotheses and dependent samples *t*-test
(IBM SPSS Statistics)

Categorical ordinal variables for each competence Likert Scale 1-5

Responses analyzed as scaled values

Reliability measures using Cronbach Alpha (IBM SPSS Statistics)

Aspiring Principal Program Self-Assessment

21 Leadership Responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2005)

1. Affirmation	12. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2. Change agent	13. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
3. Communication	14. Monitor and evaluation
4. Contingent rewards	15. Optimize
5. Culture	16. Order
6. Discipline	17. Outreach
7. Flexibility	18. Relationships
8. Focus	19. Resources
9. Ideals/beliefs	20. Situational awareness
10. Input	21. Visibility
11. Intellectual stimulation	

Aspiring Principal Program Self-Assessment

21 Leadership Responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2005)

1. Affirmation	12. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment		
Responsibility	Description	Associated Practices	Current Level of Ability
1. Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systematically and fairly recognizes the accomplishments of teachers and staff.• Systematically and fairly recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of students• Systematically and fairly recognizes the failures of and celebrates the accomplishments of the school as a whole	<input type="radio"/> 1 No Level of Competence <input type="radio"/> 2 Low level of competence <input type="radio"/> 3 Average level of competence <input type="radio"/> 4 Moderately high level of competence <input type="radio"/> 5 High level of competence
2. Change			
3. Communicate			
4. Connect			
5. Cultivate			
6. Develop			
7. Flexibility			
8. Focus			
9. Identify			
10. Involve			
11. Intervene			

Description of the Quantitative Sample

Participant Number	Gender	Years Experience in Education	Years Experience as Assistant Principal	Years in District
1	F	10	4	5
2	M	14	7	5
3	F	22	8	12
4	F	26	9	15
5	F	20	4	20
6	M	22	7	11
7	F	26	3	24
8	F	22	5	7
9	F	15	4	15
10	M	19	10	10
Average		20	6	12

Findings for RQ1

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test: Pre-Assessment

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	10	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	10	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.947	21

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
79.8000	115.956	10.76827	21

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
responsibility1	3.7000	.48305	10
responsibility2	3.8000	.78881	10
responsibility3	4.1000	.56765	10
responsibility4	3.3000	.67495	10
responsibility5	4.1000	.56765	10
responsibility6	4.2000	.63246	10
responsibility7	3.7000	.82327	10
responsibility8	3.7000	.94868	10
responsibility9	4.2000	.63246	10
responsibility10	3.5000	.52705	10
responsibility11	3.3000	.94868	10
responsibility12	3.9000	.73786	10
responsibility13	4.2000	.63246	10
responsibility14	3.4000	.69921	10
responsibility15	3.2000	1.03280	10
responsibility16	4.0000	.66667	10
responsibility17	3.5000	.97183	10
responsibility18	4.2000	.78881	10
responsibility19	3.6000	.69921	10
responsibility20	3.8000	.78881	10
responsibility21	4.4000	.51640	10



Findings for RQ1

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test: Post-Assessment

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	10	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	10	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.951	21

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
89.3000	116.233	10.78116	21

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
responsibility1	4.3000	.67495	10
responsibility2	4.2000	.78881	10
responsibility3	4.4000	.51640	10
responsibility4	3.9000	.73786	10
responsibility5	4.8000	.42164	10
responsibility6	4.5000	.52705	10
responsibility7	4.3000	.67495	10
responsibility8	4.2000	.78881	10
responsibility9	4.5000	.70711	10
responsibility10	4.4000	.69921	10
responsibility11	3.6000	.84327	10
responsibility12	4.0000	.66667	10
responsibility13	4.7000	.48305	10
responsibility14	4.1000	.73786	10
responsibility15	3.6000	1.07497	10
responsibility16	4.3000	.67495	10
responsibility17	3.7000	1.05935	10
responsibility18	4.4000	.84327	10
responsibility19	4.4000	.69921	10
responsibility20	4.3000	.67495	10
responsibility21	4.7000	.48305	10



Results of Dependent Samples *t* Tests

Leadership Responsibility	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Difference	<i>p</i> Values	Sig Difference	Effect Size
Affirmation	3.7000	4.3000	.60000	.005	Y	1.16
Change Agent	3.8000	4.2000	.40000	.105	N	.57
Communication	4.1000	4.4000	.30000	.081	N	.62
Contingent Rewards	3.3000	3.9000	.60000	.051	N	.71
Culture	4.1000	4.8000	.70000	.001	Y	1.45
Discipline	4.2000	4.5000	.30000	.193	N	.44
Flexibility	3.7000	4.3000	.60000	.005	Y	1.16
Focus	3.7000	4.2000	.50000	.015	Y	.95
Ideals/Beliefs	4.2000	4.5000	.30000	.081	N	.62
Input	3.5000	4.4000	.90000	.004	Y	1.22
Intellectual Stimulation	3.3000	3.6000	.30000	.279	N	.36
Involvement in CIA	3.9000	4.0000	.10000	.591	N	.18
Knowledge in CIA	4.2000	4.7000	.50000	.015	Y	.95
Monitor and Evaluate	3.4000	4.1000	.70000	.001	Y	1.45
Optimize	3.2000	3.6000	.40000	.104	N	.57
Order	4.0000	4.3000	.30000	.193	N	.44
Outreach	3.5000	3.7000	.20000	.443	N	.25
Relationships	4.2000	4.4000	.20000	.168	N	.47
Resources	3.6000	4.4000	.80000	.003	Y	1.27
Situational Awareness	3.8000	4.3000	.52705	.015	Y	.95
Visibility	4.4000	4.7000	.30000	.193	N	.44

Leadership Responsibilities with Significant Differences

Leadership Responsibility	Marzano's Definition	Mean Difference
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.70
Knowledge in CIA	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.50
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.90
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.80
Flexibility	Adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	.60
Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.60
Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems	.53
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	.50
Monitor and Evaluate	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.70

Research Question



What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the ***role of the school principal*** as a result of participating in the aspiring principal program?

Interview Questions for RQ2

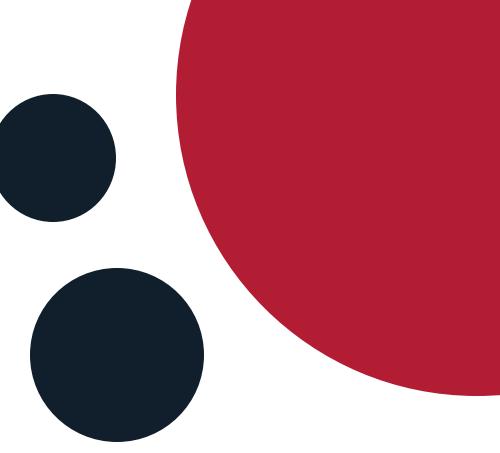
Research Question	Interview Questions
<p>RQ2: What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the <i>role of the school principal</i> as a result of participating in the aspiring principal program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you believe is the role of the principal?• Have your impressions changed as a result of participating in the program?• What leadership quality do you think is most important for an aspiring principal?• What is one area or leadership quality that you believe you needed to grow in the most? Did the program help you grow in that area? If so, how?• If you oversaw creating an aspiring principal program, what activities/lessons would you be sure to include?

Description of the Qualitative Sample

Characteristic	Value
Sample Size	9
Mean Years in Education	19
Mean Years in Assistant Principal Role	6
Mean Years in Current District	13

RQ2 Themes

Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring high quality teaching and learning• Scheduling to maximize instruction• Supporting teacher development and growth• Building a high performing leadership team	 Instructional Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connected• Collaborative• Reflective• Trusting and trustworthy	 Relationship Builder
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining positive, supportive relationships• Engaging with staff, students, parents• Communicating with stakeholders	 Culture Builder
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic decision-maker• Resilient and focused• Visionary• Time manager and master scheduler	 Strategic Leader



Theme 1

Instructional Leader

Theme 1

Instructional Leader

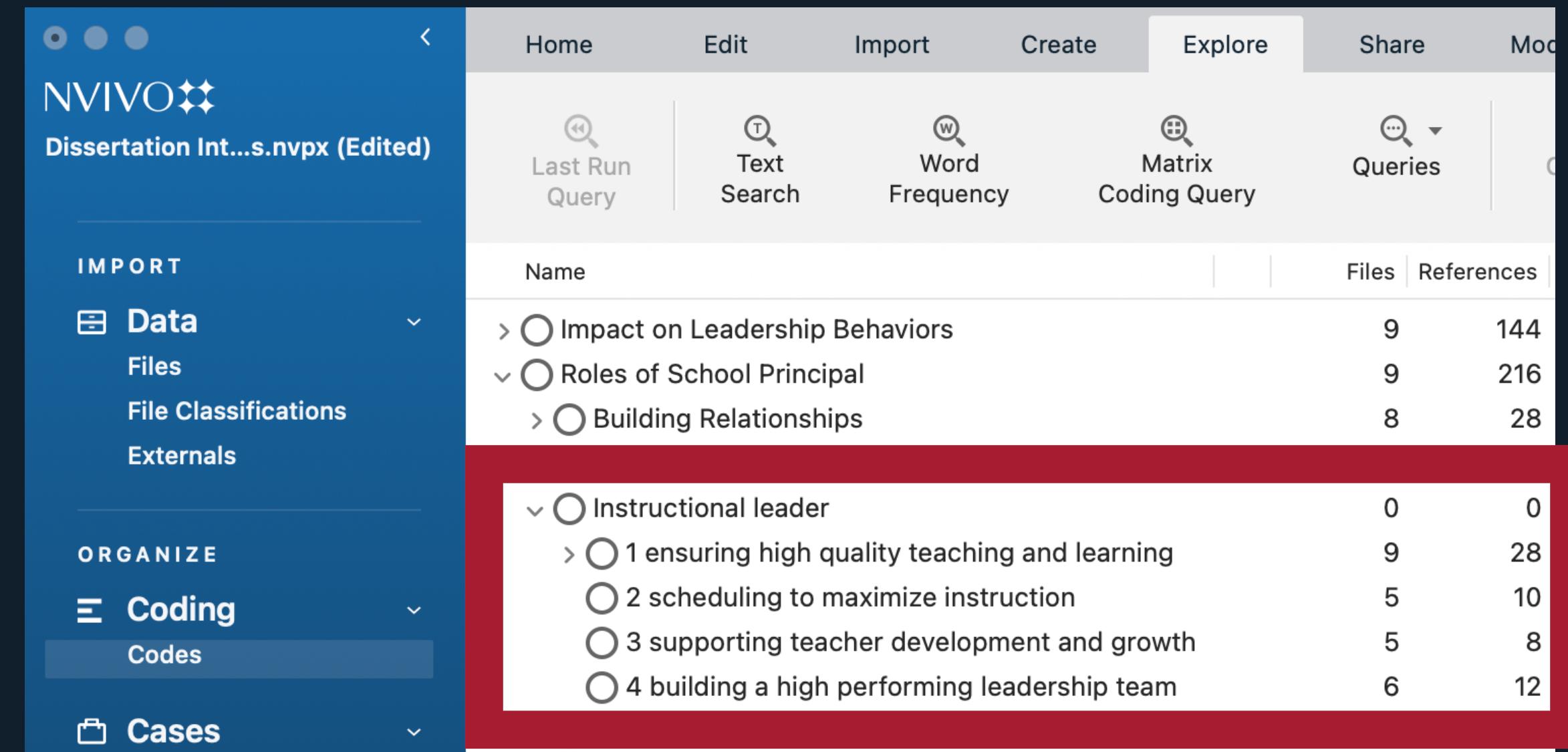
Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Themes for Instructional Leader

Key Phrases	Initial Codes	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• protecting time to be in classrooms• classroom walkthroughs• comfort analyzing and desegregating with data• connecting data with support systems• focus on instruction• guiding students in education• active in Professional learning communities (PLCs)• data driven instruction (DDI) cycles• provide quality education• set expectations for instruction• build a strong instructional leadership team• strong guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring high-quality teaching and learning• scheduling to maximize instruction• supporting teacher development and growth• building a high-performing leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• instructional Leader

Theme 1

Instructional Leader

NVivo 15



The screenshot shows the NVivo 15 software interface. The top navigation bar includes Home, Edit, Import, Create, Explore (which is highlighted in grey), Share, and Modify. Below the navigation bar is a toolbar with icons for Last Run Query, Text Search, Word Frequency, Matrix Coding Query, and Queries. The main workspace displays a table of codes under the 'Explore' tab. The table has columns for Name, Files, and References. A red box highlights the 'Instructional leader' code and its sub-codes.

Name	Files	References
> ○ Impact on Leadership Behaviors	9	144
▽ ○ Roles of School Principal	9	216
> ○ Building Relationships	8	28
▽ ○ Instructional leader	0	0
> ○ 1 ensuring high quality teaching and learning	9	28
○ 2 scheduling to maximize instruction	5	10
○ 3 supporting teacher development and growth	5	8
○ 4 building a high performing leadership team	6	12

Codes, Files, and References: Instructional Leader

Code	File	Reference
ensuring high quality teaching and learning	9	28
scheduling to maximize instruction	5	10
supporting teacher development and growth	5	8
building a high performing leadership team	6	12

Responses: Instructional Leader

Code	File	Response
ensuring high quality teaching and learning	P5	The main role of a principal is to be the instructional leader on the campus to ensure that the kids are getting good quality education every day that we are implementing procedures following all of the guidelines.
scheduling to maximize instruction	P6	The principal must work with scheduling and how it works with just the functionality and structure of how to best set up a school to maximize instruction and maximize your staff and just really getting things going from the ground.
supporting teacher development and growth	P9	Principals are empowering people, growing them , and also having difficult conversations.
building a high performing leadership team	P2	Principals build a good sense of trust with the leadership team —the people you're going to be working with—so you can be effective

Theme 2

Relationship Builder

Theme 2

Relationship Builder

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Themes for Relationship Builder

Key Phrases

- authentic connections with people
- fosters relationships with others
- shows appreciation
- gathers input from multiple perspectives
- get input from teachers, students, parents
- use the people around you
- able to receive and grow from feedback
- really reflective
- builds trust
- trustworthy

Initial Codes

- connected
- collaborative
- reflective
- trusting and trustworthy

Theme

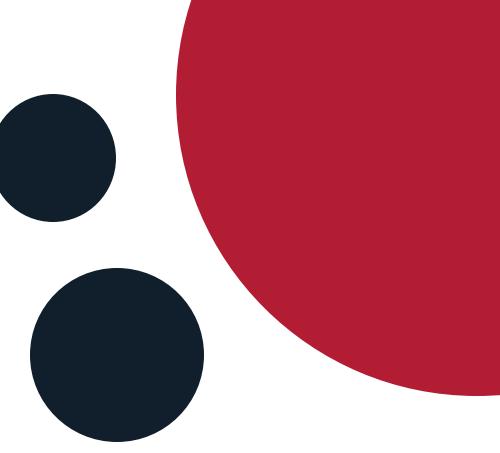
- **relationship builder**

Codes, Files, and References: Relationship Builder

Code	File	Reference
connected	9	32
collaborative	3	8
reflective	5	10
trusting and trustworthy	2	5

Responses: Relationship Builder

Code	File	Response
connected	P10	Authentic connections with people is an important role...fostering that authentic relationship to when you do have to say no, it's no, but "here's the why. I still love you. I still appreciate you, but we're going to have to go in this direction" and then keep that relationship alive.
collaborative	P5	A collaborative leader gets input from others: teachers, students, and parents.
reflective	P4	... willingness to receive feedback and then put that feedback into action ...being able to really be self-reflective
trusting and trustworthy	P2	Having the quality of being trustworthy and able to build trust with people quickly is really important, especially if you're a new principal.



Theme 3

Culture Builder

Theme 3

Culture Builder

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Theme for Culture Builder

Key Phrases	Initial Codes	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fosters positive relationships• positive and hopeful for the future• sets the school culture• positive problem-solver• works with all stakeholders to build the culture• resilient• forward movement• keep focused on the positive• developing a place of belonging• empowers teachers and students• growth opportunities• visible, public figure• maintains positive reputation of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• maintaining positive, supportive relationships• engaging with staff, students, and parents• communicating with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• culture builder

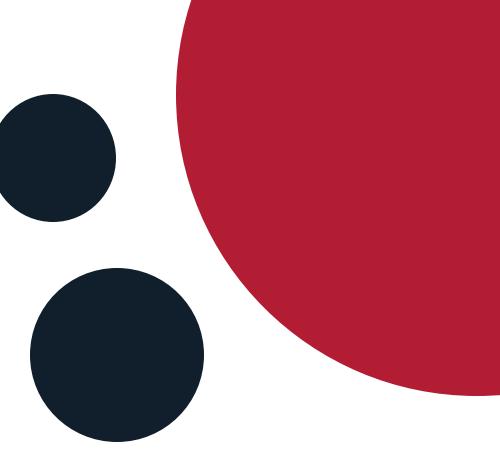
Codes, Files, and References:

Culture Builder

Code	File	Reference
maintaining positive, supportive relationships	9	47
engaging with staff, students, and parents	9	36
communicating with stakeholders	6	14

Responses: Culture Builder

Code	File	Response
maintaining positive, supportive relationships	P1	Connecting with students' families and teachers , developing a place of belonging for kids and staff, and vetting the values that will make a long impact on them empowering them to be both teachers and students role models.
engaging with students, staff, parents	P5	Getting input from teachers, from students, from the community, parents is really important.
communicating with stakeholder	P3	Communication includes any stakeholder: kids, staff, community. Communication is active and not just stagnant. Then you've got the buy-in there and it feeds into everything else...getting great communication .



Theme 4

Strategic Leader

Theme 3

Strategic Leader

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Theme for Strategic Leader

Key Phrases

- focus on best decisions
- determine campus strengths and needs
- align vision to district
- create systems
- scheduling that reflects priorities
- building in time for collaboration
- well organized campus that runs operationally
- implements procedures
- follows guidelines, policies, and laws
- continues to move campus forward
- manages time effectively
- work with teachers and teams
- effective hiring processes
- carries the burden of leadership
- remains hopeful

Initial Codes

- strategic decision-maker
- resilient and focused
- visionary
- time manager and master scheduler

Theme

- **strategic leader**

Codes, Files, and References:

Strategic Leader

Code	File	Reference
strategic decision-maker	8	36
resilient and focused	8	28
visionary	4	11
time manager and master scheduler	4	9

Responses: Strategic Leader

Code	File	Response
strategic decision-making	P2	The principal is the person the whole campus- parents, students, and staff look to for leadership, setting the tone for expectations around instruction, running a school building, making adjustments, and working with the team , either the ILT, or with district staff to ensure the campus is well organized and run operationally , and the master schedule reflects instructional priorities .
resilience and focus	P6	Principals focus on what the next choice is or the next decision . It's very easy to get caught in the microscope of what the challenging conversations are or the challenging work and sometimes lose sight of the positive impact that we're having.
visioning	P4	...remembering our why behind what we do and being able to set a clear vision and mission and being able to share that in a clear concise manner that people understand what it is that you stand for
scheduling and time management	P9	The principal has to manage time . It's really easy here to get caught up with putting out fires constantly. Calendar blocking helps with protecting your time to be in the classrooms because it's really easy to go a full week and realize that I haven't stepped in a classroom.



R2 Themes

The Role of the School Principal

- 1 Instructional Leader
- 2 Relationship Builder
- 3 Culture Builder
- 4 Strategic Leader

Research Question

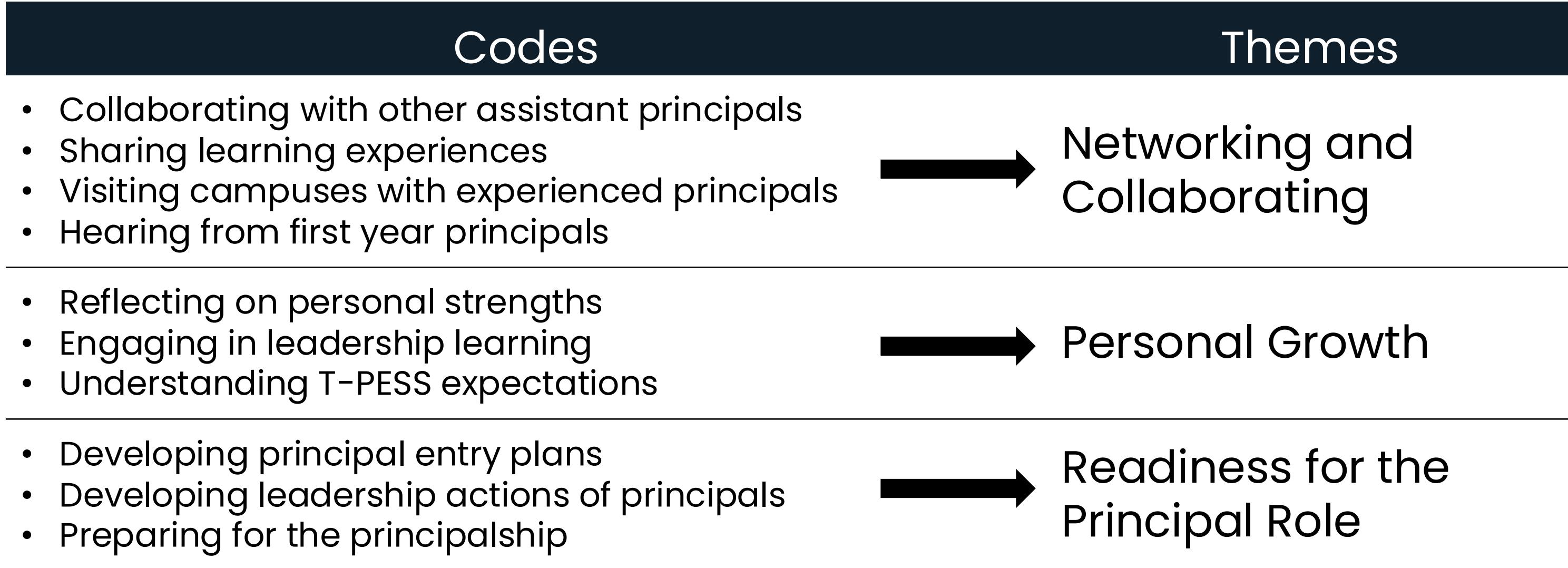


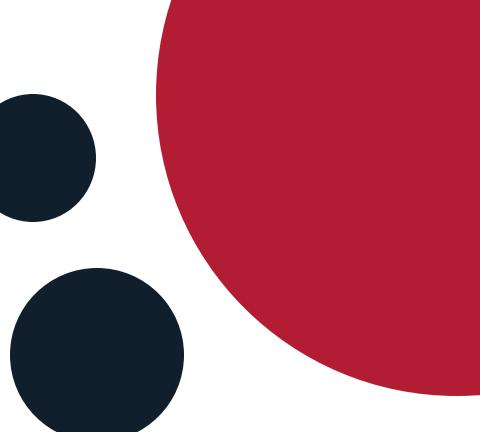
What are the perceptions of
assistant principals about the
impact of the aspiring principal
program on their *current*
leadership behaviors?

Interview Questions for RQ3

Research Question	Interview Question
<p>RQ3: What are the perceptions of assistant principals about the <i>impact</i> of the aspiring principal program on their <i>current leadership behaviors</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why did you decide to participate in the aspiring principal program?• What was the most impactful aspect of the program?• What aspect of the program was most important for you?• Reflecting on your pre-assessment and post-assessment scores, what do you think attributed to your growth or lack of growth in leadership responsibilities?

RQ3 Themes





Theme 1

Networking and Collaborating

Theme 1

Networking and Collaborating

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Theme for Networking and Collaboration

Key Phrases

- learning in a cohort
- learning from peers
- learning with other assistant principals
- sharing challenges
- sharing strategies
- having time and space to learn
- having access to campus and district leaders
- learning from experienced principals,
- sharing with thought partners
- engaging in deep analysis with peers
- reflecting with peers

Initial Codes

- collaborating with other assistant principals
- sharing learning experiences
- visiting campuses with experienced principals
- hearing from first year principals

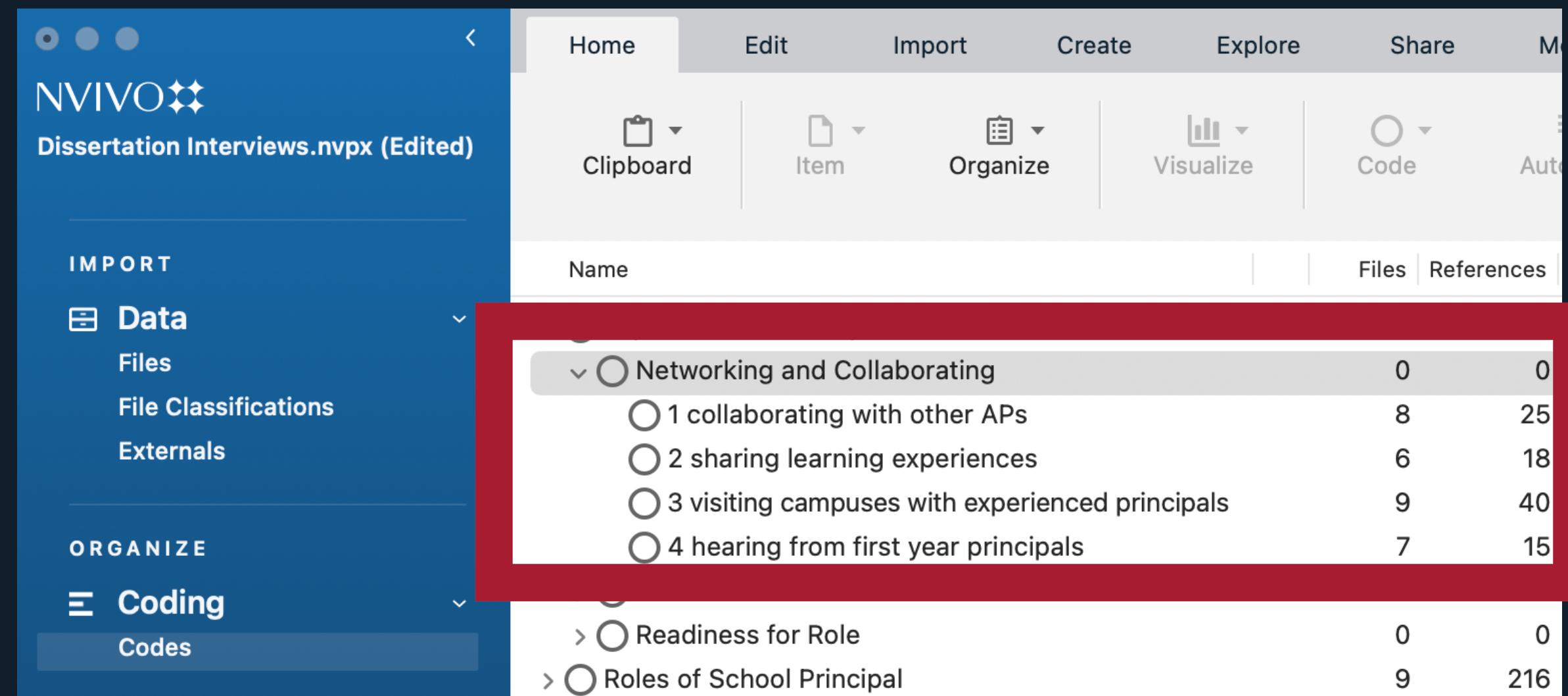
Theme

- **networking and collaborating**

Theme 1

Networking and Collaborating

NVivo 15



The screenshot shows the NVivo 15 software interface. The top navigation bar includes Home, Edit, Import, Create, Explore, Share, and More. The left sidebar has sections for IMPORT (Data, Files, File Classifications, Externals) and ORGANIZE (Coding, Codes). The main content area displays a hierarchical list of codes under the 'Networking and Collaborating' theme. A red box highlights this theme. The data is as follows:

Code	Count	Percentage
Networking and Collaborating	0	0
1 collaborating with other APs	8	25
2 sharing learning experiences	6	18
3 visiting campuses with experienced principals	9	40
4 hearing from first year principals	7	15
Readiness for Role	0	0
Roles of School Principal	9	216

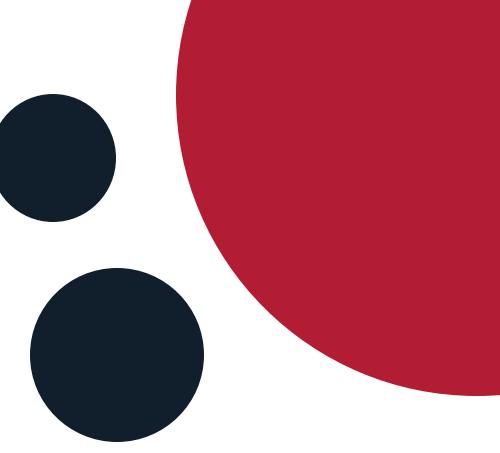
Codes, Files, and References:

Networking and Collaborating

Code	File	Reference
collaborating with other assistant principals	8	25
sharing learning experiences	6	18
visiting campuses with experienced principals	9	40
hearing from first year principals	7	15

Responses: Networking and Collaborating

Code	File	Response
collaborating with other assistant principals	P2	Having that time and space to do this learning and kind of deep analysis of what makes a great principal and doing it with other assistant principals that are aspiring to be principals was really powerful and helpful.
sharing learning experiences	P4	...the lessons that we went through, a lot of the articles that we read together and then the way we processed them together again... hearing different perspectives , different experiences and then being able to listen to our colleagues and just say “wow, okay, we’ve never tried that before, but this would be a perfect strategy for this particular situation”
visiting campuses with experienced principals	P5	Getting to hear from practicing principals about those things and getting to hear from Dr. X as a former principal and then also collaborating with other assistant principals on those topics was very beneficial.
hearing from first year principals	P1	The exposure to first year principals is what really helped me build my leadership vision.



Theme 2

Personal Growth

Theme 2

Personal Growth

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Theme for Personal Growth

Key Phrases

- self-reflecting
- applying learning
- identifying deficit areas
- developing self-awareness
- identifying growth areas
- learning about leadership styles
- understanding the Texas Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS)
- learning about leadership, and
- developing specific leadership skills and strategies

Initial Codes

- reflecting on personal strengths
- engaging in leadership learning
- understanding T-PESS expectations

Theme

- **personal growth**

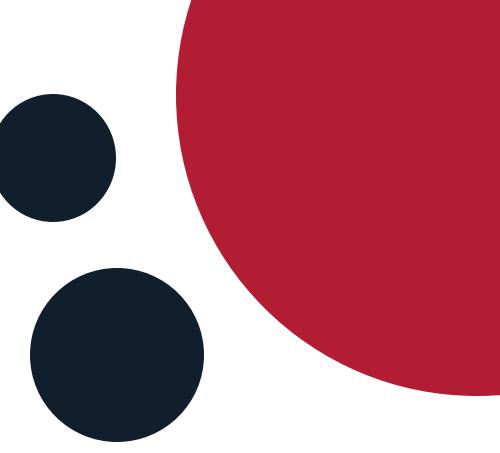
Codes, Files, and References:

Personal Growth

Code	File	Reference
reflecting on personal strengths	9	33
engaging in leadership learning	7	29
understanding T-PESS expectations	5	11

Responses: Personal Growth

Code	File	Response
reflecting on personal strengths	P4	...being able to be really self-reflective . Even though things may not be voiced to you, but you are able to see them for yourself—where your deficits may be and things that you need to grow in and then looking for ways to grow in those particular areas.
engaging in leadership learning	P10	It's opened my eyes more to the deliberate intentionality of what principals do to keep their campus going in a positive direction.
understanding T-PESS expectations	P3	We worked through the T-PESS components and built that around what we're looking for and what we need and what our actions are specific to that. That was great not only just to go through a rubric style process, but also to recognize the differences between my current role and what I need to do to level up to be able to do the next role.



Theme 3

Readiness for the Principal Role

Theme 3

Readiness for the Principal Role

Key Phrases, Initial Codes, Theme for Readiness for the Principal Role

Key Phrases

- practicing interview processes,
- interviewing
- engaging in feedback
- solving real-life scenarios
- developing discernment
- planning
- practicing feedback and action
- listening
- developing leadership skills
- developing 30-60-90 day plans
- utilizing T-PESS as a tool to plan and develop skills

Initial Codes

- preparing for the principalship
- developing the leadership actions of principals
- developing principal entry plans

Theme

- **readiness for the principal role**

Codes, Files, and References:

Readiness for the Principal Role

Code	File	Reference
preparing for the principalship	9	64
developing the leadership actions of principals	5	17
developing principal entry plans	4	11

Responses: Readiness for the Principal Role

Code	File Response
preparing for the principal role	P9 ...the interviewing part...I always want feedback when I interview for a job because I just feel like part of interviewing is (we all know we have these experiences), but really being able to hone in on them and share how they grew you as a potential principal.
developing the leadership actions of principals	P3 The discernment piece of I need to listen or I need to stop this and respond is pretty vital but it's something that has to be practiced because we don't know what we're going to be faced with each day.
developing principal entry plans	P5 They also looked over my 30 60 90 plan and gave me feedback and I felt like that was really helpful and supportive. Just going through that process was a big process.



RQ3 Themes

Impact on Current Leadership Behaviors

- ① Networking and Collaborating
- ② Personal Growth
- ③ Readiness for the Principal Role

Verification Panel: Texas Principal Standards Aligned to RQ1 Leadership Responsibilities and RQ2 Themes

Texas Principal Standards and Indicators	RQ1 Leadership Responsibilities	RQ2 Themes
Standard 1: Instructional Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rigorous and aligned curriculum and assessment• Effective instructional practices• Data-driven instruction and interventions• Maximize learning for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge in CIA• Monitor and Evaluate Resources• Discipline• Involvement in CIA• Optimize• Visibility	Instructional Leader <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring high quality teaching and learning• Scheduling to maximize instruction• Supporting teacher development and growth• Maintaining a high performing leadership team
Standard 2: Human Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted selection, placement, and retention• Tailored development, feedback, and coaching• Staff collaboration and leadership• Systematic evaluation and supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affirmation• Culture• Input• Contingent Rewards• Ideal/Beliefs• Relationships	Relationship Builder <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connected• Collaborative• Reflective• Trusting and Trustworthy
Standard 3: Executive Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resiliency and change management• Commitment to ongoing learning• Communication and interpersonal skills• Ethical behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility• Focus• Situational Awareness• Change Agent• Intellectual Stimulation• Order	Strategic Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic decision makers• Resilient and focused• Visionary• Time manager and master scheduler

Verification Panel: Texas Principal Standards Aligned to RQ1 Leadership Responsibilities and RQ2 Themes (continued)

Texas Principal Standards and Indicators	RQ1 Leadership Responsibilities	RQ2 Themes
Standard 4: School Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rigorous and aligned curriculum and assessment• Effective instructional practices• Data-driven instruction and interventions• Maximize learning for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affirmation• Culture• Input• Communication• Outreach	Culture Builder <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining positive, supportive relationships• Engaging with staff, students, parents• Communicating with stakeholders
Standard 5: Strategic Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic planning• Maximized learning time• Tactical resource management• Policy implementation and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility• Focus• Situational Awareness	Strategic Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic decision makers• Resilient and focused• Visionary• Time manager and master scheduler

Verification Panel: Aspiring Principal Program Outcomes Aligned to RQ3 Themes

Aspiring Principal Program Outcomes	RQ3 Themes
Skill Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhanced problem-solving, decision making, and critical thinkingImproved communication, collaboration, and conflict resolutionDeveloped leadership presence, emotional intelligence, and empathyThe ability to analyze data, identify trends and inform instructional decisions	Readiness for the Principal Role <ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing principal entry plansDeveloping leadership actions of principalsPreparing for the principalship
Network and Community Building <ul style="list-style-type: none">Connections with fellow aspiring principals and peer supportMentorship from experienced principalsAccess to professional networks and resourcesOpportunities for collaborative problem-solving and shared learning	Networking and Collaborating <ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborating with other assistant principalsSharing learning experiencesVisiting campuses with experienced principalsHearing from first year principals

Verification Panel: Aspiring Principal Program Outcomes Aligned to RQ3 Themes (continued)

Aspiring Principal Program Outcomes	Research Themes RQ3
<p>Personal Growth and Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarifies leadership vision and values• Self-awareness, reflection, and improvement and engage in self-awareness/emotional intelligence activities• Enhanced confidence and resilience• Commitment to ongoing learning and personal development	<p>Personal Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflecting on personal experiences• Engaging in leadership learning• Understanding T-PESS expectations
<p>Readiness for the Principal Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readiness to tackle day-to-day responsibilities• Ability to recognize complex school environments• Understanding of stakeholder relationships (teacher, parent, students)• Preparedness for high-stakes decision-making	<p>Readiness for the Principal Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing principal entry plans• Developing leadership actions of principals• Preparing for the principalship

Responses: Culture (Highest Mean Score)

Responses

I think our district has always focused on culture.

Teachers love the culture here. It's a district focus.

Our culture— it's the best district for a reason.

Our district is the best district for a reason. We have good culture and community support.

Culture is modeled for us at the district level.

Culture was a significant focus in our small group learning.

We always reflected on what we noticed about culture after campus visits.

Every administrator we visited spoke about how they built or changed the culture.

We learned principals have several roles, but culture has the biggest impact.

Principals are the biggest cheerleaders for the culture.

We know that building the culture was important to keep the staff passionate about education.

When we visited campuses, principals talked about culture as their most important job.

Several articles we read focused on culture and the T-PESS rubric supported our learning.

Responses: Optimize and Intellectual Stimulation (Lowest Mean Score)

Responses

I don't get to go to as many professional development opportunities on current research unless it's before school starts or the occasional assistant principal meeting.

We have instructional coaches that support our development with best practices and innovation.

The program did not focus on innovative practices or intellectual stimulation; however, our central leadership team make sure we are updated and implementing best practices.

I do feel like that's something that as a district we don't focus on at the campus level as much.

The district is actually doing the research and then picking the best curriculum strategies. I feel like it is done more at the district level and then instructional coaches and principals are getting that learning and then presenting it as staff rather than doing that on our own.

I can feel a much bigger focus on instruction and research-based methods and instructional data and making good decisions. I feel like I'm expected and empowered to do a lot more around those areas as an assistant principal.

Chapter 6: Discussions, Implications, Recommendations

RQ 1 Summary

Perceptions About

Perceived Level of Competence

- Culture
- Knowledge in CIA
- Input
- Resources
- Flexibility
- Affirmation
- Situational Awareness
- Focus
- Monitor and Evaluate

RQ 1 Implications Perceptions About Perceived Level of Competence

District-developed leader preparation programs support aspiring principals with the experiences they need to be successful principals (Arnold, 2022).

(Abdelrahman et al., 2022; Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Corcoran, 2012; Bush, 2018; Doss et al., 2022; Drago-Severson, 2012; Goldring et al., 2021; Welch & Hodge, 2018; Sun, 2018; Turnbull et al., 2016; The Wallace Foundation, 2016)

RQ 1 Implications Perceptions About Perceived Level of Competence

Effective principals understand that a positive school culture creates a learning environment where teachers and staff are committed to student learning (Klar et al., 2020)

(Drew, 2024; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2023; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Martinsone, 2023; Totan & Denaci, 2024)

RQ 2 Summary

Role of the School Principal



Instructional
Leader



Relationship
Builder



Culture
Builder



Strategic
Leader

RQ2 Implications Role of the School Principal

Instructional Leader

1

58
references

Instructional leadership is the most critical responsibility of a school principal and the second most powerful factor impacting the academic performance of students (Lynch, 2012).

(Bellibas et al., 2021; Brown, 2016; Cox & Mullen, 2023; Huff et al., 2018; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Lynch, 2012; Park et al., 2019; Superville, 2021)

RQ2 Implications Role of the School Principal

Relationship Builder

2

55
references

The school principal's ability to connect with all stakeholders is integral to their success in achieving student outcomes and supporting the goals and values of the school (Prado Tuma & Spillane, 2019).

(Hochbein et al., 2021; Jeynes, 2016; Mayger, 2023; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Reid, 2023)

RQ2 Implications Role of the School Principal

Culture Builder

3

97

references

Positive school culture and climate are essential for academic learning and the overall well-being of students and staff (Martinsone et al., 2023).

(Drew, 2024; Gruenert & Whitaker, 2023; Hollingsworth et al., 2018; Klar et al., 2020; Totan & Denaci, 2024)

RQ2 Implications Role of the School Principal

Strategic Leader



84

references

Strategic leadership is needed to navigate the complexity of the school principal role (Khumalo, 2018).

(Constatina et al., 2021; Beausaert et al., 2023; Buffone, 2021; Genao & Gray-Nicolas, 2025; Klar et al., 2020; Martinsone, 2023; Park & Datnow, 2022; Prado Tuma & Spillane, 2019)

RQ3 Summary

Impact on Current Leadership Behaviors



**Networking and
Collaborating**



**Personal
Growth**



**Readiness for the
Principal Role**

RQ3 Implications Impact on Current Leadership Behaviors

Networking and Collaboration

1

98
references

Novice principals often struggle with isolation and the level of complexity in their role. Understanding these challenges is important in preparing assistant principals (Slater et al., 2018)

(Prado Tuma & Spillane, 2019; Swen, 2020)

RQ3 Implications Impact on Current Leadership Behaviors

Personal Growth

2

Growth resulting from leadership has a positive impact on a first year principals' resilience (Halevi & Schechter, 2023).

73

references

(De Nisco, 2015; Martin & Clemensen, 2022; Naidoo, 2019; O'Neill & Glasson, 2019)

RQ3 Implications Impact on Current Leadership Behaviors

Readiness for the Principal Role

3

92

references

Effective principal preparation programs that focus on practical experiences and the development of essential leadership skills can help ensure a strong leadership pipeline (Doss et al., 2022).

(Arnold, 2022; Bush, 2018; Drago-Severson, 2012; Idress, 2018; Sun, 2018; Welch & Hodge, 2018)

Limitations

- The study is limited to one school district in North Texas.
- The study was limited to one cohort.
- The discoveries for the study may not account for all the perceptions and experiences of assistant principals.
- Only 9 of the 10 aspiring principals participated in the qualitative portion of the study.





Recommendations Educational Leaders

- School districts should invest in assistant principals with district-developed leadership opportunities and professional learning experiences.
- School districts should develop their own leadership pipelines to support assistant principals developing their current leadership skills and equip them for the principalship.



Recommendations

Future Research

- Systems for tracking participants to determine the number of assistant principals who secure a school principal position and track the retention of these principals
- Effective strategies for building and sustaining strong school cultures, particularly in diverse or high-need communities



Recommendations Future Research

- How principals adapt their relationship-building approaches to meet the unique needs of teachers, students, parents, and the wider community
- Support systems and professional development opportunities that can help principals navigate the complexities of the principal role while maintaining focus on advancing campus goals



Conclusion

High-quality school principals are the cornerstone of successful educational systems.

Without high-quality principals, schools risk stagnation, low morale, and diminished outcomes. District-developed aspiring principal programs ensures schools have leaders that can adapt to changing needs, implement innovative practices, and empower all students to reach their full potential.

Questions and Discussion

