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## The Perspectives of First-Year Principals Regarding Their Experiences with Mentors and the Mentoring Process Within the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program

Sabrah Helms Kingham  
*University of New Orleans*

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The Perspectives of First-Year Principals Regarding Their Experiences  
with Mentors and the Mentoring Process  
Within the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Educational Administration and Leadership

By

Sabrah Helms Kingham

B. A. McNeese State University, 1987  
M. ED. McNeese State University, 1992  
ED. S. McNeese State University, 1994

December, 2009

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This dissertation is dedicated to my Granny,  
Darles Beatrice Magehee Helms.  
You have been my earliest mentor, teaching me  
all of life's most important lessons.  
I love you, Granny.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This professional journey is a testimonial of what faith and love can accomplish. God has placed many people in my path to prepare, support, and build leadership within me. I want to give Him all the glory and honor for His grace and mercy and for placing angels in my life to guide and direct me when I was uncertain of my way. For Philippians 1:3 says, “Every time I think of you, I thank God.” The following people are those angels and I want to take this opportunity to thank them all for lifting me up, prodding me, pushing and pulling me, and yes, at times, carrying me when needed. I am forever indebted to you all. Since Preparation, Support, and Leadership were the 3 pillars in which my research findings were reported, I thought it appropriate to reference each mentor in my life and how they have impacted my life.

### *Preparation*

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Granny, for she has been my most treasured mentor. She has taught me more about life through her life experiences than any other person in my life and prepared me both personally and professionally. Her gentleness and kindness are her greatest attributes. She is the voice in my head encouraging me to “get after it,” supporting me by keeping me focused, and celebrating with me at every milestone. Granny, we made this one together! Thank you for pushing me to pursue another degree. I think this is it shah bet. I love you!

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiv
Abstract .....	xv
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Historical Context of the LELI Program .....	3
Role of the Program .....	4
Role of the Mentor .....	7
Conceptual Framework .....	9
Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction Program .....	10
Mentors and the Mentoring Process .....	10
<i>Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana</i> .....	11
Transformational Leadership Theory .....	12
Statement of the Problem .....	12
Purpose of the Study .....	14
Research Question .....	14
Significance of the Study .....	15
Scope of the Study .....	15
Definition of Terms .....	16
Delimitations and Limitations .....	17
Summary .....	18
Chapter 2 Literature Review .....	19
Introduction .....	19
Transformational Leadership: A Theoretical Framework .....	19
Standards of Leadership .....	23
Role of School Principal .....	27
Empirical Works on Mentoring .....	28
Benefits of Mentoring .....	33
Induction Programs .....	35
Mentoring: The Elements Within .....	38
Mentor Characteristics .....	39
Mentor Skills .....	42
Mentor Attributes .....	42
Relationships Between Mentor and Mentee .....	43
Summary .....	49

Chapter 3 Methodology .....	50
Introduction.....	50
Research Question .....	50
Statement of the Problem.....	51
Purpose of the Study .....	52
Qualitative Research Design.....	53
Rationale for Using a Qualitative Approach.....	53
Phenomenology.....	54
Role of the Researcher .....	55
Sampling Procedure .....	57
Description of Respondents .....	58
Interview Protocol Testing.....	61
Data Collection .....	61
Data Analysis .....	63
Trustworthiness.....	64
Summary .....	66
Chapter 4 Research Findings .....	67
Introduction.....	67
Louisiana Educational Regions.....	68
Mentoring: A Key Component of LELI .....	70
Researcher's Perspectives Regarding Interviews .....	73
Elementary Participants .....	74
Principal Anderson.....	74
Principal Covington .....	76
Principal Elliott .....	78
Principal Henderson.....	80
Principal Istre .....	81
Principal King .....	84
Principal Nixon .....	86
Principal Oliver.....	88
Secondary Participants.....	90
Principal Broussard.....	90
Principal Denton .....	92
Principal Franklin.....	94
Principal Grant .....	96
Principal Jackson .....	97
Principal Landry.....	99
Principal Miller .....	100
Principal Pearce .....	101
Emerging Themes .....	102
Revised Mentoring Conceptual Diagram.....	105
Pillar 1: Preparation .....	106
Theme 1A: Assistant principal participation in the LELI Program.....	107
Theme 1B: Excessive time requirement .....	108
Theme 1C: Need for more on-site visitations.....	109

Pillar 2: Support .....	111
Theme 2A: Benefits of networking sessions .....	112
Theme 2B: Interpersonal attributes of the mentor .....	114
Pillar 3: Leadership .....	116
Theme 3A: Practical application of the <i>LA Standards for Educational Leaders</i> .....	118
Theme 3B: Using mentor feedback .....	119
Theme 3C: Using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making .....	121
Summary of the Findings .....	122
Chapter 5 Discussion .....	124
Introduction .....	124
Overview of the Study .....	124
Discussion of Findings .....	126
Pillar 1: Preparation .....	126
Theme 1A: Assistant principal participation in the LELI Program .....	127
Theme 1B: Excessive time requirement .....	129
Theme 1C: Need for more on-site visitations .....	131
Pillar 2: Support .....	134
Theme 2A: Benefits of networking sessions .....	134
Theme 2B: Interpersonal attributes of the mentor .....	136
Pillar 3: Leadership .....	138
Theme 3A: Practical application of the <i>LA Standards for Educational Leaders</i> .....	138
Theme 3B: Using mentor feedback .....	141
Theme 3C: Using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making .....	143
Summary .....	144
Limitations .....	145
Study Implications .....	146
Recommendations for Future Research .....	147
Conclusion .....	149
References .....	153
Appendices .....	166
Appendix A: Interview Protocol .....	166
Appendix B: Permission to Contact Participants Letter .....	167
Appendix C: Participant Request to Participate Letter .....	168
Appendix D: Research Study Consent Form .....	169
Appendix E: IRB Approval Notice .....	171
Appendix F: Human Participants Protection Education for Research Completion Certificate .....	172
Vita .....	173

## List of Tables

Table 1:	Transformational Attributes and Standard Alignment .....	21
Table 2:	Abbreviated <i>Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders</i> .....	24
Table 3:	Characteristics, Performances, and Dispositions of Effective Mentors .....	43
Table 4:	Demographic Information for Elementary Respondents .....	59
Table 5:	Demographic Information for Secondary Respondents .....	60
Table 6:	Louisiana’s Educational Regional Demographics .....	68
Table 7:	Pillars and Themes .....	103

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Mentoring Conceptual Framework .....	10
Figure 2: Louisiana Educational Regions .....	58
Figure 3: Revised Mentoring Conceptual Diagram .....	105

## **Abstract**

Are new school administrators prepared for the surprises, obstacles, and opportunities they are likely to encounter during the first-year in their new role? Sadly enough, too many new leaders do not feel prepared to meet the challenges of their new role as an administrator. In 2006, the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) reported that there were 95,726 administrators in the U. S. Within this pool of administrators, approximately 127 were new hires in the state of Louisiana (LDE, 2006). In an effort to find ways to support, guide, and retain new principals, the Louisiana Educational Leaders Network, under the direction of the Louisiana Department of Education, developed the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) program in 1994. The LELI Program was designed to build administrative, instructional, and professional knowledge and skills of first-year principals and assistant principals with the assistance of a team mentor.

Perspectives from elementary and secondary principals regarding their mentoring experiences within the LELI Program during their first year as principals were investigated. Two research participants from each of the eight Louisiana educational regions were selected through stratified random sampling techniques and interviewed. The research question guiding the one-to-one interviews was, “What are the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and the mentoring process within the LELI Program?”

Data from the interviews provided insight about the mentoring elements most crucial to the preparation, support, and leadership of first-year principals. This research study substantiated the belief that mentors and the mentoring experiences of new principals are vital to their survival during their first year. The need exists for continued research that examines the relationship between the mentor and the mentee in creating and sustaining successful schools. Overall, the qualitative results



of this exploratory study promoted understanding of the importance of mentors and the mentoring experiences within the LELI Program for first-year principals. Mentoring is a vital component for preparing, supporting, and building leadership in first-year principals, and this study yielded findings organized around eight themes that focus on necessary elements within the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

Mentors, mentees, mentoring, induction programs, LELI Program,  
new administrators, *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, leadership

## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

The role of the effective principal has motivated some districts and states to provide a support system or lifeline to new principals during their first year of induction. Induction is the process for guiding people new to a profession to the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances essential to performing their roles and responsibilities in an effective manner (Rogus & Drury, 1988). The primary focus of induction programs is to provide assistance to interns in internalizing their role, and to provide them with a clearer understanding of their new job. Duke (1988) suggests that new school leaders go through a transformational process within the first weeks and months of their principalship. This transformational process should include acclimation to the school's vision and goals, learning the community, and understanding the dynamics between the school and the supporting district. New administrators should be provided with guidance so that they can build open lines of communication between the school and parents, ensuring that both entities work to support the students as they progress toward their goals of academic achievement. Induction programs can provide opportunities for novice principals to collaborate and network with other veteran principals, learning the best methods for improving administrative leadership skills.

Administrator induction programs are being developed by many school districts and states as the means for providing assistance and support to new principals. It is necessary to understand how induction programs contribute to building transformational leadership, and in the following paragraphs, specific induction programs will be discussed.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) catapulted the need for school improvement initiatives. State and local agencies enacted

policies to address reform issues such as educational standards, requirements for professional certification, and increased accountability. The U.S. Department of Education (1987) reported that an estimated 275 state and local task forces were developed and began working on educational issues, reforms, and initiatives within a year of issuing this report. According to Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1992), these early reform activities were based on the belief that administrators had become unmotivated and that increased supervision and regulation would improve the effectiveness of schools. Due to the critical leadership role that administrators have within their schools, many states addressed this issue by creating and mandating principal induction programs. California, Utah, and Arizona were among the first states to develop a principal induction program (Barnett & Mueller, 1987). Sixty-two principals participated in the Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) program in these three states. The results of the program showed that on-going support by veteran principals was needed during novice principals' first years so that the new principals could develop skills necessary for becoming instructional leaders (Barnett & Long, 1986).

Although new principals today are expected to assume the roles and responsibilities of both instructional leader and school manager, that was not always the case. Before *No Child Left Behind* (2001), commonly referred to as NCLB, there was no alignment in the accountability of education. Each state had its own accountability system. With the introduction of NCLB guidelines nationwide, the development and alignment of state-wide induction programs has increased in answer to the changing roles and responsibilities of new principals. This has caused a shift in the way new principals are held accountable, how schools are ranked, and how teachers are assessed. The bottom line is school performance as indicated by increased student achievement. (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). New principals, guided by veteran

principals through a mentoring process, can reach the standards established by NCLB and guide their schools toward academic excellence.

NCLB's goal was to increase the standards of accountability for states, schools, and districts to improve the performance of U.S. schools and school students. Consequently, educational leaders were required to confront the weaknesses of school leadership through the efforts of NCLB (2001). In order to reach the accountability standards established by the NCLB Act, attention was focused on the areas of teacher quality, student achievement, and scientific-based research strategies in the classroom and on professional development for staff members. NCLB (2001) has required educational leaders to confront the weaknesses of school leadership.

Although school leadership requires self reflection, Hale and Moorman (2003) stated that in order to improve student achievement, principals must be prepared to provide instructional leadership. School leaders need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances for supporting and improving schools. Furthermore, leaders need to be provided with mechanisms of support such as those offered through mentoring programs to offer guidance and assistance (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Louisiana's response to this call for preparing, supporting, and developing leadership capacity in first year principals is the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program (LELI, 2008).

### **Historical Context of the LELI Program**

In 1993, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) developed state criteria for the evaluation of principals due to their critical leadership role (BESE, 1993). The Principal Evaluation Committee, consisting of BESE personnel, researched principal effectiveness and evaluations nationwide. The committee outlined components on which school districts were encouraged to place emphasis when evaluating principals. The components are

school improvement, professional growth and development, and accountability. As a result of the reformation of the evaluative process of Louisiana principals, the development of the Louisiana Principal Induction (LPI) Program in 1994 (LDE, 1994) now referred to as the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program occurred.

The mission of the LELI Program is to build the administrative, instructional, and professional knowledge and skills of new principals. The LELI Program is currently part of the Division of Leadership and Technology under the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE). The Louisiana Principal Induction (LPI) program was renamed the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) program as a result of the change in standards that addressed only school principals. The program is responsive to the needs of district leaders who wish to engage in ongoing school improvement discussions and increased student achievement (WestEd, 2006). The focal point of this program is to build the capacity of new building-level principals, providing leadership to their schools in both instructional and administrative areas (*LELI HB*, p. 5). The LDE mandates that all new principals and assistant principals participate in the LELI Program (LELI, 2008), which provides opportunities for educators to network statewide and regionally with other first-year administrators through the use of Blackboard, regional orientations, and ongoing email correspondence between the new principal and the state-assigned team mentor.

### *Role of the Program*

There are three pillars that serve as the foundation of the mentoring component within the LELI Program: preparation, support, and leadership (LELI, 2008). New principals are prepared for the roles and responsibilities of being a school administrator through their participation in this program. The mentoring process of the LELI Program lasts for the first nine months of their new

role as school principal. Ongoing support and guidance is afforded to first year principals by an assigned team mentor who is paid a stipend through the LELI Program. The support and assistance are integrated in the LELI Program requirements which are specifically designed to provide professional development opportunities to assure that novice principals become effective school leaders. The LELI Program builds leadership capacity through its activities which provide opportunities for participants to reference and apply the principal standards to day-to-day operations.

The *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* are the basis for the professional development activities that are directly aligned with the *ISLLC Standards*. The standards are used for building leadership skills of new principals, supporting the three pillars of the mentoring component within the LELI Program. The professional development activities are embedded within the nine components of the LELI Program that all first-year administrators are required to successfully satisfy averaging 2 hours per week during the nine month mentoring period. The alignment of the LELI Program components with the *ISLLC Standards* is represented below:

(1)Regional orientation meeting addressing *Standard 4: Collaborative Leadership*; (2) Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Training (LaTAAP) addressing *Standard 3: Organizational Leadership*; (3) eight hours of technology training addressing *Standard 3: Organizational Leadership*; (4) activities designed for online professional development and learning opportunities using the LDE's Blackboard addressing *Standard 2: Instructional Leadership*; (5) three team meetings led by team mentor addressing *Standard 4: Collaborative Leadership*; (6) one school visit to a higher performing school addressing *Standard 3: Organizational Leadership*; (7) an electronic professional portfolio addressing *Standard 5: Ethical Leadership* and *Standard 6: Political Leadership*;

(8) the sharing of ideas and strategies with both mentor and team mentees electronically and face-to-face addressing *Standard 2: Instructional Leadership*; and, (9) the End-Of-Year conference addressing *Standard 4: Collaborative Leadership*.

The LELI Program is a professional development program of the Louisiana Educational Leaders Network (LELN). LELN is supported in part by The Wallace Foundation, which seeks to support and share ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. In 2004, under the leadership of Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Louisiana received a \$3.6 million grant from The Wallace Foundation to support LELN as part of the State Action for Educational Leadership Project (LDE, 2007). Louisiana was one of 16 states selected to lead a national effort to develop educational leadership at all levels--from statehouse to schoolhouse. LELN was designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the recruitment, induction, and ongoing support of educational leaders within Louisiana. With this goal in mind, the Blue Ribbon Commission for Educational Excellence was created to bring together state leaders, k-12 schools, higher education, and individuals from school communities to collectively identify strategies for transforming education in Louisiana. This historic partnership served as a continuation and opportunity for reform of many educational initiatives, including Louisiana's School and District Accountability System, PK-16+ Councils, the Louisiana's Teacher Quality Initiative and LELN.

The LELI Program addresses induction and builds upon existing state leadership initiatives as well as research-based models designed to build capacity of first-year administrators (LDE, 2007). The major components of the program focus on school improvement processes, and school accountability, and link leadership proficiencies to productivity and enhanced student achievement.

### *Role of the Mentor*

A principal mentor is assigned by the LELI facilitator to all new principals. A principal mentor usually works with several new principals within one of the eight educational regions established by the LDE when the first-year principal enters the LELI Program. The team mentor serves as an advisor, teacher, role model, and advocate for the new principals. A network is developed which provides new principals with an ongoing support and guidance. Mentors are nominated by their district superintendent and selected according to the following criteria: (a) must serve in a leadership position in their school district; (b) must have at least 3 years of experience in school leadership; (c) must have experience with online professional development; (d) must have developed a professional portfolio in alignment with the *Standards for School Principals in Louisiana*; and, (e) must be regarded as an effective leader (*LELI HB*, 2006, p.15).

The team mentor's major roles and responsibilities for the LELI (*LELI HB*, 2007, p.15) are to:

- Participate in the planning and delivery of the regional orientation meeting.
- Monitor each team member's activities related to completion of the core curriculum and selected electives as evidenced by documentation of the team members' participation and attendance.
- Conduct three team meetings, one for the purpose of providing Blackboard training for team members and the other two to provide technical assistance, professional development, guidance on the development of the portfolio, and mentoring as needed.



- Facilitate the team members' participation in a leadership learning community, both real and electronic, as evidenced by use of the Blackboard course and team meetings.
- Review and evaluate each team member's professional portfolio based on the rubric designed for this activity.

The major roles and responsibilities of the mentor are broad, yet purposeful in assisting mentees in gaining the necessary skills for their new role and responsibilities as the school administrator. Mentoring sets the stage for transforming the leadership capacity of the mentee, ensuring successful school leadership.

Transformational leadership is defined by Burns (1978) as an association with someone in a higher position as supporting (mentor) and will result in people following that leader (mentee) by working collaboratively rather than individually. Since the mentoring component of the LELI Program is based on transformational leadership, a mentor is assigned in an effort to create effective leaders statewide. One experienced principal (mentor) assists novice principals (mentees) in building their leadership skills and performances within the LELI program, ultimately resulting in a transformation of the new principal's leadership skills and abilities. In order to meet the mandates of NCLB, the LELI Program has incorporated opportunities for the mentors to assist the mentees in becoming more informed, better practiced, and more confident in their new roles. Mentors support and assist first-year principals in completing the LELI Program requirements and in becoming effective school leaders.

Specifically the LELI Program requires mentors to: (1) develop the leadership skills of beginning principals as aligned with the *LA Standards for Educational Leaders*; (2) lead the mentees through best practices and research related to school improvement; (3) assist in connecting networks and communities of administrators statewide; (4) understand the

relationship between leadership and training; (5) assist administrators in the development of the school's improvement plan; and (6) assist new school leaders in the development of a professional portfolio (LELI, 2008). Through face-to-face interaction and the guidance provided by experienced mentor, mentees are asked to reflect and continue to build characteristics that are important to becoming effective school leaders. All six components have been identified by educational researchers as having a substantial effect on building instructional leadership (LELI, 2008).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The mentoring aspect of the LELI Program was investigated in this research study. New principals shared their perspectives regarding preparation, support, and leadership during mentoring utilizing the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* and transformational leadership theory components. Figure 1 simplistically outlines the conceptual framework for this study. The figure depicts the all encompassing LELI Program with the mentoring component as the sole target for this research study. As shown in the diagram, there are two possible outcomes - the first being effective leaders who utilize the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* in their daily practice and the second being ineffective leaders who do not meet that same criteria. Depending on the results of this research study, the figure may be changed to highlight the complexities of the mentoring process as understood by the research participants. The following paragraphs within this section address the LELI Program, mentoring, LA standards, and transformational leadership theory.

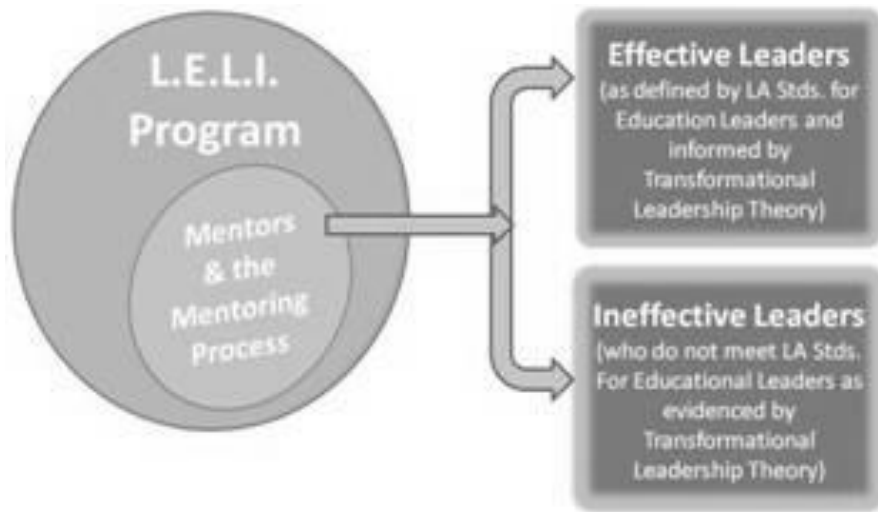


Figure 1 *Mentoring Conceptual Framework*

#### *Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction Program*

The LELI Program is a state mandated program for first-year principals. The LDE created the program to empower first-year principals to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances. This program pairs first-year principals with mentors who (1) currently serve as principals, (2) have proven themselves as effective school leaders, and (3) embody the qualities all principals should emulate. Mentors for the LELI Program are expected to provide both face-to-face and online support by sharing proven practices and experiences with their mentees, guiding the mentee toward professional excellence. The state-led LELI Program began in 1994 and continues today.

#### *Mentors and the Mentoring Process*

Rogus and Drury (1988) defined mentors as guides to assist new administrators in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential to carrying out their role effectively. Daresh and Playko (1992) identified the mentoring process as the foundation for the success of new administrators. Mentors and the mentoring process are melded together in this

study to create a single, central focus on the induction of new principals. The focus for this study was to gain the insights from second-year principals within the LELI Program regarding mentoring and its connection to their development as transformational school leaders.

A key component of the LELI Program is for mentors to assist in the development of new principals who will exhibit effective leadership. Mentees conduct on-site visits with their mentors in the mentors' school, providing the mentee with the professional opportunity to observe proven leadership in action in real school settings. Mentors are expected to assist the mentee in learning about best instructional practices, effective communication skills, and efficient school operational procedures. This study examined the mentoring experiences of first-year principals and how they perceived those experiences as affecting their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances. The following section provides an overview of the standards.

#### *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana*

*Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana* contain seven components, including; (1) vision; (2) teaching and learning; (3) school management; (4) school improvement; (5) professional development; (6) school-community relations; and, (7) professional ethics. Educational leaders are expected to possess and demonstrate certain knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances while executing their duties as leaders. These four elements are set forth in the seven *Standards for Educational Leaders* in Louisiana ensuring that educational leader candidates, those individuals preparing for school leadership roles or those individuals new to school leadership roles, must know and demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances necessary to help all students learn and to nurture a school environment conducive to the success of all individuals in that environment (LDE, 2007). The mentoring process pairs new administrative candidates with

experienced principals so that the novice principal can meet or exceed the *Standards for Educational Leaders*. Principals that utilize the standards to guide their practice may transform their leadership abilities and skills to match the needs of their schools. Possessing an understanding of transformational leadership theory may guide the novice principal through the process. A review of transformational leadership theory follows.

### *Transformational Leadership Theory*

Transformational leadership theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study. The father of transformational leadership theory, Burns(1978), defines transformational leaders as, “leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations-the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations –of both leaders and followers” (p. 4). The goals of transformational leadership are to enable, empower, and encourage (Chekwa, 2001). Transformational leaders empower others to take more initiative in their work, inspire them to be more committed, and build self-confidence (Covey, 1992). The mentoring component of the LELI Program seeks to provide school leaders with the tools necessary to empower those they lead as well as those that follow.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Daresh (1987) found that first-year principals experienced a lack of support. Tomazin (2008), in a survey of almost 1100 public and private school principals, found that many principals felt overwhelmed by their workload and almost half felt they would not be able to cope with the demands for much longer. Further, Tomazin reported that a third of the principals surveyed indicated that they had a diagnosed medical condition that was caused or exacerbated by their job. Muse, Thomas, and Wasden (1992) suggest that mentoring is key to providing support and preparing new principals for success in their new role. Mentors are potentially

critical to the success of beginning school administrators as noted by Palermo and his colleagues (2004); therefore, it is imperative to pair first-year principals with mentors who provide meaningful mentoring experiences and serve as lifelines of support. The experiences gained by the mentee through the mentoring process benefit both the mentor and mentee (Kram, 1985; Zey, 1988).

Empirical research concerning the mentoring relationship has been widely conducted within the business community (Odell, 1990), but research regarding the mentoring of first-year principals by experienced principals is limited. In an effort to support new administrators, many states have developed their own mentoring programs, and the LELI Program is Louisiana's response to providing such support. Mentoring is an embedded yet crucial component of the LELI Program. The program provides ongoing peer collaboration through face-to-face meetings, online networking, and real time mentoring in lieu of the traditional on-the-job training in sink or swim environments to which past administrators have been accustomed. The LELI Program was developed in order to build leadership capacity in both instructional and administrative areas by mentoring new principals with job-embedded opportunities during their first-year as principals, in an effort to create school-based administrators with effective leadership abilities (LDE, 2006). Presently, critical examination of the LELI Program has been limited to participants' completion of an end of year course survey. Over the years, LELI Program facilitators have used this feedback to improve program requirement. However, the perspectives of first-year principals participating in this state-mandated program have not been formally studied.

Parkay (1992) found that effective mentoring promotes productive work dispositions. Parkay also noted that the lack of mentoring has the potential to produce adverse effects. With the exception of Coker's research (2005) which focused on teacher perspectives of the

effectiveness of the new principals who had completed the LPI Program as identified through NSSE survey results, only five case studies regarding new principal mentoring were located. None of the studies were based on the Louisiana induction program. Four out of the five case studies investigated mentoring in district-level programs, not state-mandated programs. This limited body of research suggests a need for the examination of the mentoring component of LELI.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of second-year principals mentored during participation in the LELI Program. As such, it examined the role mentors play in first-year principals' self reported leadership development and their perspectives on the benefits they gleaned from the mentoring process. Mentoring is a crucial component of the LELI Program. Support is provided through the assignment of a veteran principal to each first year principal. This study sought to uncover the elements novice principals considered crucial within the LELI mentoring to their preparation, support, and leadership.

### **Research Question**

The research question that guided this study was "What are the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and mentoring within the LELI Program?" As outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix A), sub-questions were utilized in order to capture a rich, holistic perception from each respondent on their perceptions of their mentor and the mentoring process within the LELI Program. The three sub-questions to the research question follow.

- a) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial to your preparation as a first year principal?

- b) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial in supporting your success as a first-year school leader?
- c) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial in refining your leadership as a first-year principal?

### **Significance of the Study**

Research focusing on formal mentoring programs for new principals is limited, and to date, no formal study involving the mentoring components of the LELI Program has been conducted. Therefore, the intent of this inquiry was to add to the knowledge base on mentoring for first-year principals through a phenomenological study involving second-year principals who have successfully completed the LELI Program. This study highlighted the perspectives of second-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and mentoring during their first year as a new principal participant within the LELI Program.

### **Scope of the Study**

During a single calendar year, the researcher collected qualitative data from 16 second-year principals who completed the LELI Program in 2007-2008.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms, presented in alphabetical order, occur throughout the dissertation. Definitions identify the meaning of each term in relation to this research study.

- *Accountability*-obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform as expected
- *Blackboard*-electronic means to share information and networking through online forum
- *Disposition*-quality acquired through experience that determines how a person or group meets difficulties or handles situations
- *Effective*-capability to produce a positive effect which is observable



- *First-year principal or mentee-principal* recently appointed as a school administrator and undergoing supervised practical training in the LELI Program.
- *Induction*-program that provides support for new principals by veteran principals during their first year while becoming acclimated to their new roles and responsibilities.
- *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)*-representative body of most of the major stakeholders in educational leadership including national associations, states, colleges and universities.
- *Knowledge*-facts or ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation, or experience
- *Leadership*-encompasses all activities that guide the new administrator toward the application and understanding of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*
- Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)-educational governing body that possesses the constitutional and statutory authority to make policy decisions that govern the public education system of the state. It also exercises budgetary responsibility for all funds appropriated or allocated by the state for schools under its jurisdiction.
- *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*-identified areas of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances essential to an effective principal
- *LDE*-Louisiana Department of Education
- *Louisiana Educational Leadership Induction (LELI) Program*-state-mandated induction program for Louisiana's first-year principals and first-year assistant principals.
- *Louisiana Educational Leaders Network (LELN)*-framework for the recruitment, induction, and ongoing support of educational leaders within Louisiana.
- *LPI*-Louisiana Principal Induction

- *Mentor or veteran principal*-one who develops a unique relationship with his or her protégé and fulfills a need unmet by any other relationship.
- *Mentoring*-the process by which individuals with expert knowledge in a specific domain pass on this knowledge to an individual with less experience.
- *Performances*-execution of an action
- *Preparation*-actions that bring about readiness in the leader
- *Skills*-knowledge effectively and readily executed or performed.
- *Support*-actions and words shared by the mentor to the mentee in order to bring about growth and understanding on the part of the mentee

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), delimitations imply restrictions on the research design that the researcher imposed deliberately. These delimitations usually confine the population to which the results of the study can be generalized. The first delimitation of this study is that only the mentoring component of the LELI Program was examined, narrowing the focus of this study. Although the LELI Program is comprised of nine components, the completion of the program requirements is facilitated through the mentoring process. Therefore, the mentoring component remains at the heart of the successful completion of program requirements. The second delimitation is that the researcher chose second-year principals who successfully completed the LELI Program during their first year as principal in the 2007-2008 academic school year because this population represented the most current set of principals who had successfully satisfied the program requirements. The third delimitation of this study was that the researcher included principals from eight elementary schools, (pk-8 grades) and eight secondary schools (grades 9 – 12). The fourth delimitation of this study is that the researcher

utilized the three pillars established by the LELI Program to organize the data, to report the findings, and to reflect upon the mentoring component within the LELI Program.

Limitations are not imposed by the researcher, but are often inherent to the study due to its design or methodology. Limitations can constrain generalizability and the utility of the findings (Cline, 2009). Because the researcher selected interviews as the data collection method in order to gain the perspectives of first-year principals, only self-reporting results were obtained from the respondents, limiting the study's results to only the viewpoints of the respondents. This limitation assumes that the participants possess a "valid capacity for introspections" (Staudenmayer & Selner, 2009, p.704).

### **Summary**

This chapter has attempted to make the case for the gap that exists in the literature regarding first-year principals and the preparation, support, and leadership they receive during their initial year on the job. This chapter illuminates the need for additional research focused on new administrator mentoring programs. Since there is an obvious gap in the literature regarding the impact of mentors and mentoring processes on first year principals and how both mentors and the mentoring process relate to the success or survival of first-year principals, this study sought to address this chasm.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, literature that reveals perspectives about mentoring and its relationship to transformational leadership are reviewed. This body of literature supports and serves as a foundation for the research and methodology of this study. In as much as a body is comprised of parts that function as one, this body of literature will function to inform the reader of the interconnectedness of the various topics. The phenomenon of mentoring is the overarching concept that will encompass the various topics addressed in this chapter.

Heading this chapter is a discussion of the theoretical framework. This first piece provides the basis around which this study was formed. The theoretical framework explains the logic and meaning around which the mentoring process was developed. To demonstrate the framework in action, a discussion about the results of empirical studies that focused on mentoring new principals and a discussion of new principals' experiences within the mentoring process are included. To ensure understanding about the practical applications of the framework, the examinations of several induction program models detail processes for mentoring new principals. Concluding the body of literature are the effective mentoring elements, including the characteristics, skills, and attributes of the mentor, as well as their roles and responsibilities considered key to mentoring relationships.

#### **Transformational Leadership: A Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of transformational leadership forms the parameters for this research study. Transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation (Burns,

1978). The current research in leadership provides an abundance of literature describing the merits of transformational leadership. Authors such as Tichy (1997), Kotter (1999), Jung (2001), and Einstein and Humpreys (2003), have written articles and books regarding transformational leadership. In 1978, James MacGregor Burns coined the term “transformational leadership” in order to describe the relationship between mentor and mentee. He, along with Bass and Avolio (1994) defined leadership as “leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations-the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations-of both leaders and followers”. According to Burns, Bass, and Avolio, the leader is not merely wielding power, but appealing to the values of the follower. In this context, values are described as, “A principle, standard, or quality regarded as worthwhile or desirable” (Webster’s New Riverside University Dictionary, 2006).

Other current literature alludes to the fact that leaders influence followers by sharing a sense of what is important or worthwhile, and concentrating efforts on the end result. The task itself becomes the focal point, and the mentor and the mentee work together to accomplish the goal with little or no attention being given to who plays the greater role in the undertaking of the task. Burns (1978) suggests that such leadership occurs when both mentor and mentee are engaged in such a way that both raise one another to higher levels of motivation.

Since the process of mentoring includes both the structure of the process and the attributes of both the mentor and mentee, it is important to note the connection between mentoring and the attributes of transformational leadership. Different researchers have commented on the attributes of transformational leadership, as noted in Table 1. With each attribute, a clear connection to the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* has been

constructed. It is important to note that each comment and alignment has a specific bearing on the outcome of effective mentoring, clearly focusing on the leadership ability of the new leader.

Table 1

*Transformational Attributes and Standard Alignment*

COMMENT AND CITATION	STANDARD ALIGNMENT
Leaders have high moral and ethical values (Burns, 1978)	<i>Standard #7 Professional Ethics</i>
Leaders express genuine interest in followers (Einstein & Humphreys, 2003)	<i>Standard #5 Professional Development and Standard #6 School-Community Relations</i>
Leaders have an inspirational vision (Tichy, 1997)	<i>Standard #1 Vision</i>
Genuine trust exists between leaders and those they lead (Einstein & Humphreys, 2003)	<i>Standard #1 Vision, Standard #4 School Improvement, Standard #6 School-Community Relations, and Standard #7 Professional Ethics</i>
Followers share leader's values and vision (Jung, 2001)	<i>Standard #1 Vision, Standard #5 School Improvement, and Standard #7 Professional Ethics</i>
Leaders and followers perform beyond self- interest (Burns, 1978)	<i>Standard #2 Teaching &amp; Learning, Standard #4 School Improvement, Standard #5 Professional Development, and Standard # 6 School-Community Relations</i>

Participatory decision-making is the rule (Kotter, 1999)	<i>Standard #3 School Management, Standard #5 School Improvement, and Standard #6 School-Community Relations</i>
Innovative thinking and action is expected (Tichy, 1997)	<i>Standard #1 Vision, Standard #2 Teaching &amp; Learning, Standard #4 School Improvement, and Standard #5 Professional Development</i>
Motivation is to do the right thing (Einstein & Humphreys, 2003)	<i>Standard #1 Vision and Standard #7 Professional Ethics</i>
Leaders mentor in order to share what they have learned (Burns, 1978)	<i>Standard #1 Vision, Standard #2 Teaching &amp; Learning, Standard #3 School Management, Standard #4 School Improvement, Standard #5 School Management, Standard #6 Professional Development, and Standard #7 Professional Ethics</i>

The transformational leader must develop a vision, create trust, and model the values of integrity to the organization in order to produce followers. Sergiovanni (1989) applied this leadership theory to educational reform efforts when he suggested that transformational leadership's main focus is on arousing human potential, satisfying higher needs, and raising expectations of both leaders and followers to motivate them to higher levels of commitment and performance. Mentoring is a positive way to help develop transformational leaders because

mentoring is a key component of transformational leadership (Grace & Jeffcoat, 2009).

Transformational leadership draws upon learning-centered leadership (Dunoon, 2008) as the individual or collective (team) process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization (Patterson, 1993).

### **Standards of Leadership**

The LELI Program standards are aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) *Standards for School Leaders*. The six *ISLLC Standards* (1996) are explained in the following bulleted items:

- *Standard 1: Visionary Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- *Standard 2: Instructional Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth.
- *Standard 3: Organizational Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- *Standard 4: Collaborative Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, and mobilizing community resources.



- *Standard 5: Ethical Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- *Standard 6: Political Leadership* - A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

The LELI Program aligns current state mandates and initiatives with research leadership, and the *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana*. The *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana* were developed as an expansion of the *Standards for School Principals in Louisiana*, which emerged in 1997 in response to a nationwide movement to identify the areas of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances, essential to an effective principal (LELI, 2008). An abbreviated and corresponding outcome for each standard is listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Abbreviated Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders (LDE, 2007)*

<p><i>Standard 1: Vision</i> -The educational leader engages the district/school community in developing and maintaining a student-centered vision for education which forms the basis for district/school goals and guides the preparation of students as effective, lifelong learners in a pluralistic society.</p>
<p><i>Standard 2: Teaching &amp; Learning</i> -The educational leader uses a knowledge of teaching and learning in working collaboratively with the district/school faculty and staff to implement effective and innovative teaching practices which engage students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences.</p>

<i>Standard 3: School Management</i> - The educational leader promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe and orderly learning environment.
<i>Standard 4: School Improvement</i> - The educational leader works with the district/school community to review data from multiple sources to establish challenging standards, monitor progress, and foster the continuous growth of all students.
<i>Standard 5: Professional Development</i> - The educational leader works collaboratively with the district/school faculty and staff to plan and implement professional development activities that promote both individual and organizational growth and lead to improved teaching and learning.
<i>Standard 6: School-Community Relations</i> - The educational leader uses an understanding of the culture of the community to create and sustain mutually supportive school-community relations.
<i>Standard 7: Professional Ethics</i> - The educational leader demonstrates honesty, integrity, and fairness to guide district/school programs in an ethical manner.

In addition to the standards for educational leaders, Louisiana educational institutions are required to provide a quality education for all students (LDE, 2007), thus factors that impact education need to be identified and evaluated in order to correct or refine educational objectives. To ensure these objectives were met, the LDE in 1997 convened a task force of principals, superintendents, and other educational leaders. Their primary focus was to develop state standards focusing on the role of the principal as an effective leader (LDE, 2007). The state standards emerged as a result of two motivating factors: a recommendation of the Local Personnel Evaluation Committee (April, 1997), and the legislative mandate of the House Bill No. 1379 (Regular Session, 1997). This piece of legislation created the School Leadership Development Fund for the purpose of training and developing existing and prospective school

leaders. In order to meet the requirements of HB 1379, the LDE implemented a comprehensive school leadership development program and the present state standards. The *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana* identified the areas of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances essential to an effective principal (LDE, 2007).

In 2006, the LDE appointed a new task force to research effective leadership practices and attributes that contribute to improving student achievement. The leadership task force revised the *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana*, using research from national organizations such as the Wallace Foundation, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Changes in the standards reflected a dynamic focus on principals only to a focus that encompassed all educational leaders. The initial report was shared with educational leaders, representatives of business and industry, and members of the community in meetings throughout the state to raise awareness of the need for accountability within the leadership ranks.

The abbreviated *Standards for Educational Leaders in Louisiana* defined in Table 1, were developed as an expansion of the *Standards for School Principals in Louisiana* that emerged in response to a nationwide movement to identify the areas of the knowledge and skills, dispositions, and performances essential to an effective principal. Revision of the standards was motivated by three factors: (1) Bulletin 746, *Louisiana Standards for State Certification of School Personnel*; (2) revisions to the Educational Leader Certification; and, (3) the national move to revise the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (LDE, 2007).

## **Role of School Principal**

The role of principals has evolved dramatically within the educational system across the U.S., moving away from an emphasis on school building manager to the more difficult and challenging role of instructional manager. Principals must serve as leaders for student learning. They must also know academic content and pedagogical techniques. In addition, they must work collaboratively with teachers in order to strengthen their skills. They must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence (Usdan & Podmostko, 2000); methods ranging from site-based decision making to academic interventions to parent/community relationships all are dependent on using data to ensure school excellence.

Usdan and Podmostko (2000) outlined three roles that first-year principals must be prepared to embrace, including that of instructional leader, community leader, and visionary leader. Instructional leaders focus on strengthening teaching and learning, providing professional development opportunities for staff, and making data-driven decisions in order to address accountability issues. Community leaders are saturated with a big picture awareness of a school's role within the community. These leaders have a sense of shared leadership among all stakeholders consisting of educators, community members, and partners in education. They build close relationships with all community stakeholders and build advocacy for school as well as tap into all educational resources. Visionary leaders set high expectations for all children and believe that all students can learn. They hold fast to this belief and are able to inspire all others within and outside the school community with this vision (Usdan & Podmostko, 2000). All three types of leadership roles are equally important; however, due to the paradigm shift evident in new accountability legislations such as the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the main focus of today's principal is of that as instructional leader.

Sergiovanni, in 1987, described six major leadership roles that new principals encounter including: including statesperson for the school; instructional leader for teachers within the school; supervisor of all faculty and staff members; organizational leader for school and community; administrator of the school facility; and, team player in the district's overall plan. The statesperson shapes broad policies on behalf of the general welfare of the organization. The instructional leader develops the curriculum program to meet educational standards. The supervisor works collaboratively with teachers and staff members to establish a shared vision for school goals, and may also facilitate and supervise school-based professional development opportunities. The organizational leader ensures that the school's vision, purpose, and objectives are followed to keep the school operating in a safe and orderly fashion within the community. The administrator provides the framework necessary for the school facility to support teaching and student learning. The team player builds a rapport between the school and district personnel to develop a successful and effective school (Sergiovanni, 1987). Although Sergiovanni established specific leadership characters, the LELI (2008) program has focused more on the process by which a new administrator moves toward the roles that Sergiovanni describes. The LELI Program outlines that leadership roles should include: (1) preparation of new principals; (2) support of new principals; and, (3) building leadership capacity, all in an effort to move new principals toward the roles of statesman, instructional leader, supervisor, organizational leader, administrator, and team player described by Sergiovanni.

### **Empirical Works on Mentoring**

Mentoring is a vital tool in the induction of professionals in to any new position. However, there is limited research addressing the mentoring process for new principals and fewer studies are available that identify the number of school districts that have induction or

mentoring programs for new principals. The review of literature focuses on the concept of mentoring as it relates to new principals. The research explains the developmental elements that contribute to good mentoring relationships, the characteristics, skills, and attributes of effective mentors, and the relationship between mentor and mentee.

The LELI Program's perspective regarding the mentoring process is based on best practices incorporating four of the five "*Models of Staff Development*" identified by Dennis Sparks (1989), the Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). LELI's activities, led by the LELI mentor, focus on school improvement processes and school accountability, as mandated by NCLB. The activities are linked to leadership proficiencies and skills to productive schools and enhanced student achievement identified in *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*. The four models utilized in the mentoring component of the LELI Program consist of observation/assessment, involvement in a development/improvement process, training, and inquiry. Each model contains research-based professional development activities designed to improve the job-related knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances of new principals. Based on these five models of staff development, Sparks and Horsley (1989) explain that professional development for new principals is a key aspect in improving student achievement and promoting school improvement. Recognizing the significance of professional development activities to new principals, this study supports the need for a mentoring process that prepares, supports, and builds leadership skills necessary to embrace school improvement and sustain high academic standards.

In the following paragraphs, four research studies will be discussed. The goal of this researcher is to synthesize the information so that the reader can understand what the body of literature suggests. The four researchers to be discussed include West (2002), who suggested

that mentoring is an effective means of transferring knowledge from an experienced principal to a newly appointed one; Doherty (1999) , who identified mentoring as the key contribution in principal longevity; Palermo (2004), who concluded that mentoring is a measure of emotional support and based on effective communication; and, Coker (2005), who shared that principals who participated in a mentoring program were rated higher by their faculty and staff as possessing effective knowledge, skills, and dispositions for their role of principal.

The first research study was conducted by West (2002) and was a case study of 17 first-year principals in one school district in the state of Virginia. The researcher explored the perspectives of these principals regarding their formal mentoring experiences during the first year of their administrations. She reported that new principals characterized their mentoring experiences as providing them with a great deal of guidance, support, assistance, and encouragement. The new principals' perspectives of their mentoring experiences with the formal mentoring process were collected and organized into five domains: (a) organizational support; (b) program clarity; (c) participant involvement; (d) selection and matching procedures; and, (e) regular feedback and monitoring.

West's (2002) participants indicated that their mentoring experiences assisted them in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities they assumed in their new positions. They reported that their mentors assisted them in understanding stakeholder expectations by clarifying several important leadership roles. Two roles that were shared in the interviews were the principal as the instructional leader and the principal as the school visionary. According to West, the principal establishes the importance of the instructional atmosphere and secures the time necessary for ongoing teacher professional development, and school performance scores place an emphasis on principal accountability as the instructional leader. A new principal must also be able to

communicate the school's goals. West found that in order to gain the support and commitment of teachers to the schools goals, new principals need to develop and utilize skills that allow them to work with their teachers in planning for staff development.

West's (2002) major findings addressed the mentoring experiences of new principals and found that role clarification, organizational socialization, and addressing feelings of isolation are critical in the development and success of new principals. Mentors assisted new principals in understanding and becoming acclimated to their new roles and responsibilities. Mentors within West's study also provided new principals specific organizational information to allow for success in adjusting to the school's culture. West concluded that the effectiveness of any mentoring program is enhanced when mentors are selected based on established criteria and paired with mentees based on program objectives. Feelings of isolation can be diminished by pairing the new principal with a mentor, thereby providing new principals with collegial support and establishing a network with other school principals.

The second research study highlighted was conducted by Doherty (1999) and investigated the role that mentors played in the development of school principals. Data were collected by gathering the historical perspectives of 15 retired school principals regarding their informal mentoring experiences. The interviews of these retired principals revealed that mentors contributed to their career development and transitioning from teacher to school administrator and provided encouragement and support. Doherty (1999) reported that the successful administration was connected to a positive mentoring experience. Most of the participants in this study noted that their mentors were people they wanted to emulate. They also advised that new principals who do not participate in formal mentoring programs should seek out mentors to ensure success in their new roles as principals.



According to Palermo's (2004) study, this researcher reviewed, the mentoring relationship was reported as helpful in meeting new assistant principals' needs in acquiring information, knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances to be effective in their new jobs in his study entitled, *Alone in the Hot Seat: Mentoring Novice A/P's*. The perceptions of new assistant principals and their mentors regarding their mentoring experiences were investigated through focus groups, interviews, and observations. Two themes emerged as reported by the new assistant principals: (1) New assistant principals perceive mentoring relationships as a measure of emotional support, and, (2) Mentoring relationships are formed through communication.

Support, encouragement, and words of affirmation were all perceived by new assistant principals as benefits of the mentoring relationship. The targeted new assistant principals stated that the support they felt met their needs and was critical in the mentoring relationship. Another benefit of the mentoring relationship was communication between the mentor and mentee. The quality and formation of the mentoring relationship is vital to its success. Frequent group and individual meetings, email communication, and phone calls were reported as important in the formation of an effective mentoring relationship (Palermo, 2004).

In the last study, focusing on the perspectives of new principals, Coker (2005) found that first-year principals participating in the Louisiana Principal Induction (LPI) program, renamed Louisiana Educational Leadership Induction (LELI) program, did not affect school performance scores significantly. The study utilized surveys and observations of 1,060 teachers and 160 principals from elementary, middle, and high schools and the school's performance scores. The results of the study found that there were no significant differences in school performance schools of principals who participated in LPI and those who did not. However, principals who

participated in LPI were rated higher by teachers on quality surveys, and LPI participants received higher scores from teachers on observation surveys than did non-LPI participants.

Other data collected from surveys administered in Coker's study confirmed findings from those of the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Follow-up Decade Study (2001) indicating that 1) there was a shortage of principals, 2) a significant number of principals had little or no administrative experience, and 3) there were more principals who participated in internships than not. Because the LPI assigns a mentor to first-year principals, Coker (2005) recommends that a qualitative research study be conducted in order to determine what effects mentors have had on the leadership styles of new principals who have completed the LPI program since 2001.

Both West (2002) and Doherty (1999) found encouragement and support were central to the success of the mentoring experience. Doherty (1999) and Palermo (2004) both concurred that the mentoring experiences facilitated the development of new school leaders' knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances in their new career. These four studies focused on the mentoring process and provide sound research supporting the utilization of the mentoring process to ensure the success of first year principals.

### **Benefits of Mentoring**

According to Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (2009), appropriate mentoring can result in better performance and lasting results from a mentee. As a first year principal, the support of a mentor is critical in preparing the first year principal for the job responsibilities that are inherent to the job. As reported by Anderson (1991), support and assistance were crucial to first year principals because he found that problems common to beginning administrators included: feelings of loneliness and frustration, lack of acclimation to

the culture of the school system as well as the lack of input and feedback. However, one cannot assume that all mentoring relationships will address these common problems. Anderson (1991) advised that first-year administrators (mentees) be paired carefully with mentors so that ineffective practices are not repeated by the mentee. Effective mentors were found to be active listeners who help guide new principals to greater understandings of their own circumstances. As referenced in Table 2, good mentors are characterized as supportive, patient, good motivator, and are genuinely concerned with the well-being of their mentee (Young, Sheet, & Knight, 2005).

Mentoring is an integral component of principal induction programs designed to improve school and student performance (LELI, 2008). According to Daresh and Playko (1992) benefits gained by the mentee during the mentoring process include: feelings of professional competence; observing application of theory; improving communication skills; learning the “do’s and don’ts” through the mentoring process; and, acquiring feelings of personal and professional well-being. The benefits gained by the mentee during the mentoring process that Daresh and Playko cite contribute directly to school improvement by building professional competency through improved communication.

The Educational Research Service (2000) reported that past and current principals consistently mentioned that the most important support in their first days as new principals was mentoring by effective and experienced principals. Although Daresh (2001) reports the benefits are reciprocal in nature between the mentor and the mentee, there are three major benefits for those serving as mentors including; (a) improved job satisfaction – mentoring a new principal is a challenging and simulating personal experience; (b) increased peer recognition – praise and accolades are received by mentors for their contributions; and, (c) potential career advancement – serving in the role of mentor is gratifying and sometimes affords an opportunity for career

advancement (Clutterbuck, 1991; Daresh & Playko, 1992). Benefits for mentees include: (a) feeling more confident about their professional competence; (b) observing theory translated into practice; (c) improving their communication skills by networking with colleagues throughout the district fostered through mentoring relationships; (d) learning “tricks of the trade” through the mentoring process; and, (e) gaining of feelings that they belong and that their colleagues genuinely care about their personal and professional well-being.

### **Induction Programs**

In this review of literature on induction programs, descriptions and recommendations for programs are presented, but only two studies addressed the effectiveness of induction programs. The two studies characterized commonalities between three induction programs. Although each of the programs reviewed were structurally different, two shared some common elements. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Model for Leadership Development program studied by Crews and Weakley (1996), and the Administrator Induction Program (AIP) studied by Rogus and Drury (1988) included large group orientation sessions, small group sessions, and one-to-one mentoring. Although the results from the SREB and the AIP programs reviewed three different types of collaboration, most programs studied paired one mentor with one mentee. The Principal’s Inservice Program, studied by Daresh in 1982, grouped 6 to 10 new principals together with only one mentor, and it was not made clear whether the one mentor worked with one mentee at a time, or with all assigned mentees at the same time. Regardless of the number of mentees assigned to a mentor or configuration of the mentoring framework, the overall common thread for the majority of the programs was that some form of assistance, had at their focal point the mentoring process (Weingartner, 2001).

It is generally agreed that mentoring programs are designed to provide assistance and support for interns, not to evaluate them (Palermo, 2004). Internship programs can help, but a mentoring program for a new administrator on the job can provide feedback and support when a complex, new experience demands new skills. Assistance is based on the trusting relationship fostered between mentor and mentee with the understanding that a mentee would not seek assistance from the mentor if evaluation were part of the package according to Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall's study (1998).

Limited research on the effectiveness of mentoring in educational administration exists; however, numerous models of induction programs have been studied (APEC, 2008). Additionally, there is a wealth of literature in educational journals and books on the topic of mentoring teachers, but little concerning the mentoring of new principals. According to Daresh (1995), there have been relatively few published descriptions of research related to the structure, implementation, evaluation, or outcomes of mentoring programs designed to enhance the professional development of educational leaders. It is evident that, if mentorships for principals are to achieve their full potential, school districts must be fully committed to the mentoring process.

Two studies were conducted on induction programs for new principals and assistant principals. In the first study by Barnett and Mueller (1987), entitled *The Long Effects of Inservice Training for Principals*, sixty-two principals and assistant principals participated in the Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) Program in California, Utah, and Arizona. A questionnaire was administered to these principals to gain their perspective regarding their participation in the PAL program. The findings suggested that the influence of the peer-assisted training was most strongly felt by those who continued to work with their mentors. The implications of this study

were that group support, trust, and close relationships were responsible for fostering support. The outcome of the study also implied that on-going supportive peer-assistance supports professional growth. The second study of induction programs was named “Coming on Board: Characteristics of the Beginning Principal” conducted by Daresh (2004). Twelve first and second-year principals and assistant principals from the U.S. Midwest participated in this study. Interviews were conducted with the new administrators in order to identify common problems and issues. The study identified role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulties with socialization as common problems. The recommendations called for improved practicum experiences, specialized inservices, collegial support, and assigned mentors. The common theme found in the findings of these two studies supports that there is a need for mentoring. New principals have problems related to roles and responsibilities of their new job and a support system can assist in meeting those needs.

Successful induction programs according to Hopkins-Thompson (2000) include: careful screening, selection and pairing, training, and preparation of mentors and mentees. New assistant principals need support and encouragement in a non-threatening, non-evaluative environment. Administrative induction programs, according to Daresh (2001), have two primary purposes: career advancement and/or psychological development. Of course, the logical path for career advancement for the assistant principal is to the principalship. Equally important, Daresh notes that the life of the school leader is lonely, frustrating, and full of interpersonal conflict. The image of the school leader is associated with expectations articulated in the following quote: “You’re the boss. Fix your own problems, and don’t ask for help from anyone. If you can’t do the job on your own, you’re a failure (p. 2).” This image is indicative of what causes stress in the lives of the new principal.

Due to the lack of support experienced by new administrators during their first year, Daresh (2001) proposes that school districts plan, implement, and evaluate formal induction programs that will enable school administrators to succeed. Although most research on induction conducted over the last 10 to 15 years has focused on teachers, Daresh (2001) makes the distinction that principals are different from teachers in significant ways, and deserve their own program of professional development due to the following reasons:

- The research base on administration is not clear enough to guide induction programs;
- Administrators do their jobs in isolation from their peers;
- New administrators are not new to schools;
- Administrators are bosses; and,
- Administrative peers are usually not true equals to the beginner.

Treating new administrators like beginning teachers does not take into account the possibility that the two administrators are at different places in their careers (Daresh & Playko, 1990).

An induction program that takes into account principal differences in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions will meet the new principal where he is and guide him in the direction where he wants and needs to travel.

### **Mentoring: The Elements Within**

There are many definitions for the word mentor that are provided through available literature. In the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2006), mentor is defined as “a trusted counselor or teacher, especially in occupational settings that provides ongoing support.” A mentor is also defined as someone who offers support to another person (Wong, 2008). According to Murray and Owen (1991) a mentor is one who develops the skills and leadership abilities of less experienced organizational members. Zey (2001) defined a mentor as one who oversees the

career development of another through teaching, counseling, support, and protection, if warranted. For the purpose of this study, Zey's more comprehensive definition will be used.

The success of the mentoring process is directly related to the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (Daresh & Playko, 1991). In the first section below, literature relevant to the characteristics, skills, and attributes of effective mentors is examined. In the second section, key factors in the mentoring process is explored through an explication of pertinent literature. The final section details an investigation of the relationship between mentor and mentee as established in the literature.

### *Mentor Characteristics*

Successful mentors share some common characteristics. According to the Louisiana Mentoring Module (2006), a successful mentor is characterized as supportive, patient, respected, motivating, effective, secure in the position of administrator, an achiever, and accepting of others. A mentor is one who supports the needs and aspirations of the mentee (Young, Sheet, & Knight, 2005). The success of the mentee's development is critical and accomplished through the supportive attitude of the mentor. A mentor encourages the mentee to accept challenges and overcome difficulties. According to Crosby (2003), author of *Mentoring: Matching the Mentor and Mentee*, special consideration must be taken when matching up mentees with their mentors. If this is not done, then the level of support is highly compromised and will remain at a minimum level.

A mentor is patient and willing to spend time performing mentoring responsibilities (Young, et al., 2005). A mentor allows adequate time to interact with the mentee. The time requirements are defined and agreed upon by both the mentor and the mentee. Lovejoy



ISD (2006) and the Pueblo Community College Mentor Program (2008) are two of the numerous mentor program developers that emphasize the importance of time management. It should be noted that both of these programs set up specific guidelines and expectations regarding the amount of time that is to be devoted to the mentor/mentee relationship.

A mentor is one who is genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others (Young, et al., 2005). A successful mentor is one who has “good people skills,” who knows how to effectively communicate and actively listen. A mentor also resolves conflict and gives appropriate feedback. Across a range of mentoring programs, from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (2005) to the National Institutes of Health (NIH, 2004), all successful mentor programs look for mentors who are people orientated.

A mentor is someone who inspires a mentee to do better (Young, et al., 2005). A mentor needs to be able to motivate a mentee through encouraging feedback and challenging work assignments. Lovejoy ISD (2006) contends that as a motivator, a mentor may at times need to generate motivation with the mentee. Motivation is an inner drive that compels a person to succeed. It is not often that mentees are not motivated. In general, mentees are enthusiastic about their job. After all as stated in Lovejoy ISD, mentees tend to be characterized as highly-motivated individuals with a thirst for success. Mentors usually perform the role of motivator only when there is a need to motivate a mentee to complete a difficult assignment, or to pursue an ambitious goal. Through encouragement, support, and incentives, mentors can motivate mentees to succeed. Therefore, a mentor is confident in the mentee's career so that pride for the mentee's accomplishments can be genuinely expressed. A mentor should appreciate a mentee's strengths and abilities, without viewing these accomplishments as a threat. A secure mentor delights in a mentee's discoveries and welcomes a mentee's achievements. A mentor enjoys

being a part of the mentee's growth and expansion. A mentor attempts to inspire a mentee with this same drive for achievement. This "attempt at achievement" is the flint that sparks a mentee's desire for career success. In this way, a mentor helps a mentee to set, evaluate, and reach career goals.

A mentor should thoroughly understand the skills required of the mentee's position or desired position and be able to effectively teach these skills to the mentee (Young, et al, 2005). A mentor not only teaches the skills of the trade, but also manages the learning of the mentee. This means the mentee must actively try to recognize and use teaching opportunities. According to Lovejoy ISD (2006), as a teacher, a mentor needs to teach the mentee the skills and knowledge required to perform administrative responsibilities successfully. This role requires the mentor to outline the responsibilities of the position and to share experiences as a seasoned professional. It is important that the mentor also share the wisdom of past mistakes. A mentee cannot only learn from past errors, but must also realize that no one is perfect.

A mentor is usually a professional achiever, one who sets lofty career goals, continually evaluates these goals, and strives to reach them (Young, et al., 2005). A successful mentor is usually one who takes on more responsibilities than is required, volunteers for more activities, and tends to climb the proverbial career ladder at a quick pace. Mentees often find it helpful if the mentor will discuss how they balance work with personal life demands (Pueblo Community College, 2008).

Mentors have a long and prominent history. In ancient Greek mythology, Mentor, was the friend of Odysseus and tutor to his son. Mentor's name is well-known as a faithful and wise adviser (Reh, 2008). Today, a mentor is a person characterized as supportive, patient, respected, accepting of others, people-oriented, an achiever, good motivator, and effective teacher. The

characteristics a mentor utilizes depends on the needs of the mentee. On any given day, the mentor may perform any one of the roles or characteristics. Over time, and with experience, mentors can learn to assume different roles more easily (Super Self, 2009).

### *Mentor Skills*

Mentors who facilitate effective learning relationships are comfortable using an assortment of related process skills (Zachary, 2000). The process tool kit for mentors consists of twelve skills, as outlined by Zachary, a specialist in adult development and learning, and director of Leadership Development Services, LLC, a consulting firm that offers leadership education and training for corporate and nonprofit organizations in the United States, provide a framework for successful mentoring experiences. The framework includes: (1) Brokering relationships; (2) Building and maintaining relationships; (3) Coaching; (4) Communicating; (5) Encouraging; Facilitating; (7) Goal setting; (8) Guiding; (9) Managing conflict; (10) Problem solving; (11) Providing and receiving feedback; and, (12) Reflecting.

### *Mentor Attributes*

The effectiveness of the mentor is key to the success of the mentoring experience in educational administration (Sweeny, 2003). Daresh and Playko (1991) found that there are several important qualities that a mentor must possess to be effective. Effective mentors: a) have experience as practicing school administrators; b) demonstrate generally accepted positive leadership qualities, such as intelligence, good oral and written communication skills, and well-developed interpersonal skills and sensitivities; c) ask the right questions of beginning principals; d) model principles of continuous learning and reflection; and, e) exhibit an awareness of the political and social realities of life in at least one school system. Effective mentors also possess qualities that enable them to be caring individuals committed to the personal and professional

growth of others (Rowley, 1999). Effective mentors are often recognized as being experienced and accomplished individuals within their districts, possessing good leadership skills, having an understanding of human dynamics, district policies and procedures. These key attributes are found in Table 3. The table identifies the characteristics, performances, and dispositions of effective mentors as stated in the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006) within the section named “Qualities of Effective Mentoring” (p.15). The content outlined in Table 3 reflects what Sweeny, (2003), Daresh and Playko (1991), and Rowley, (1999) noted as effective key attributes of mentors.

Table 3

*Characteristics, Performances, and Dispositions of Effective Mentors*

CHARACTERISTICS	PERFORMANCES	DISPOSITIONS
Supportive	Understand balance and mutual interests	Open and honest
Patient	Respect needs of interns	Respectful
Respected	Communicate clearly the expectations	Generous with time
People-oriented	Accept differences with interns	Trustworthy
Secure in position	Focus on objectives and outcomes	Compassionate
Accepting of others	Maintain confidences	Passionate for principalship
Good motivator	Provide straightforward feedback	Motivated
Effective teacher	Listen without judging	Courageous, bold
Achiever	Encourage risk taking	Ambitious
	Love to learn	Positive

*Relationships Between Mentor and Mentee*

Creating a supportive learning climate ultimately rests on building and maintaining relationships. Without building and maintaining a learning relationship, effective mentoring is impossible. Building and sustaining a mentoring relationship involves respect, trust, and

effective communication (Zachary, 2000). Effective mentoring includes encouragement, facilitation and guidance of learning, goal setting, managing conflict, problem solving, providing and receiving feedback, and opportunities for reflection (Palermo, 2004).

Recognizing that effective mentoring is built upon effective relationships between the mentor and mentee, school boards and school officials understand that formal preparation for the principalship must include a practical component to impart necessary real-life skills (Educational Research Service, 2000). Mentoring programs are outlining specific roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentee so that the relationship is positive for both parties. Five essential mentor roles were outlined by Anderson and Shannon (1988). The five mentor roles served as the basis of the conceptual foundation for effective mentoring programs. The roles were identified as: teaching, sponsoring, counseling, encouraging, and befriending. The mentor's role as the teacher is to serve as a model, to inform, confirm and affirm, prescribe and use questioning to reflect on current practices. As a sponsor, the mentor is to provide protection, support, and at times promote or sponsor. The role of the mentor as a counselor is to listen, probe, clarify, and serve as an advisor. As the encourager, the mentor is to affirm, inspire, and challenge the mentee. The mentor, as a friend, is to accept and build a relationship of trust. The five mentor roles outlined by Anderson and Shannon (1988) are reflected in the characteristics, performances and dispositions of effective mentors identified in the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006c). Although Anderson and Shannon only speak to five of the ten roles of a mentor in the above paragraph, they are identified as key components of the mentoring process. The perspectives shared by Anderson and Shannon and the LELI Program denote the key components necessary in building a mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Teaching, sponsoring, counseling, encouraging, and befriending are the roles that Anderson and Shannon identified as

key components of the mentoring process. Their perspective is shared by the LELI Program by identifying these same mentor attributes within the characteristics, performances and dispositions of effective mentors.

The success of the mentoring relationship between the mentor and mentee as noted by Anderson, is the willingness on behalf of the mentor to take on the additional responsibilities of nurturing, supporting, and providing feedback to the mentees. In addition to the five roles identified by Anderson and Shannon (1988) a mentor can also assume other roles. Which role a mentor assumes depends on the needs of the mentee. On any given day, the mentor may perform one of the roles or all of the roles. Over time, and with experience, mentors can learn to assume different roles more easily. As described in the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006b), the ten roles of a mentor include: teacher, guide, counselor, motivator, sponsor, coach, advisor, role model, referral agent, and door opener.

According to the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006b) as a teacher, a mentor needs to teach the mentee the skills and knowledge required to perform the responsibilities of the administrator successfully. The role requires the mentor to outline the responsibilities of the position and to share experiences as a seasoned professional. It is important that the mentor also share the wisdom of past mistakes. A mentee cannot only learn from past errors, but also realize that no one is perfect.

The *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006b) refers to a mentor as a guide, helping the mentee navigate the inner workings of the organization and decipher the unwritten office rules. This information is usually attained by the mentee over a period of time. The dynamics of the organization or office politics are not always apparent but are crucial to know. The unwritten rules can include the special procedures an office follows, the guidelines that are not always

documented, and policies under consideration. It is important for the mentor to discuss personnel responsibilities and the office personalities involved.

In the LDE's *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006c), the role of counselor requires the mentor to establish a lasting and open relationship. In order to create a trusting relationship, the mentor needs to stress confidentiality and show respect for the mentee. A mentor can promote confidentiality by not disclosing personal information that the mentee shares. The mentor should always show respect by listening carefully and attentively to the mentee and by not interrupting the mentee while the mentee speaks. The counselor role also encourages the mentee to develop problem-solving skills. The mentee should be able to think through problems rather than always depending on the mentor to provide the solution. The mentor can develop the problem-solving skills of the mentee by advising the mentee to first attempt to solve the problem before seeking assistance.

According to the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006c) as a motivator, a mentor may at times need to generate motivation within the mentee. Motivation is an inner drive that compels a person to succeed. It is not often that mentees are not motivated. In general, mentees are enthusiastic about their job. After all, mentees tend to be characterized as highly-motivated individuals with a thirst for success. Mentors usually perform the role of motivator only when there is a need to motivate the mentee to complete a difficult assignment, or to pursue an ambitious goal. Through encouragement, support, and incentives, mentors can motivate mentees to succeed.

As stated in *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006a) the sponsor creates opportunities for the mentee – opportunities that may not otherwise be made available to the mentee. These opportunities can relate directly to the job or indirectly to the mentee's overall professional

development. The goal of the mentor is to provide as much exposure for the mentee as possible with minimal risk. Opportunities should challenge and instruct without damaging the mentee's self-esteem. A mentee should not be set up for failure. New opportunities can increase the visibility of the mentee, but mentors must be careful in selecting these opportunities.

The *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006b) notes one of the most effective ways to coach a mentee is through providing frequent, positive feedback during assigned tasks or while the mentee strives toward goal attainment. Positive feedback is a great morale booster, removing doubt and building self-esteem, resulting in a sense of accomplishment. A mentor needs to give different kinds of feedback as the situation demands: positive feedback to reinforce behavior and constructive feedback to change behavior. Both types of feedback are critical to the professional growth of the mentee. Feedback should be frequent, specific, and based on direct observation of the mentee, not secondhand information. When giving constructive feedback, the mentor should be descriptive about the behavior and not use labels, such as "immature" or "unprofessional." The mentor should neither exaggerate, nor be judgmental, and should phrase an issue as a statement, not a question.

In the LDE's *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006c), the advisor's role requires the mentor to help the mentee develop professional interests and set realistic career goals. The mentor needs to think about where the mentee wants to go professionally and help set career goals. Career goals should be specific, time-framed, results-oriented, relevant, reachable, and flexible to accommodate for the changing dynamics of the organization.

The *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006c) states that as a role model, the mentor is a living example of the values, ethics, and professional practices of the agency. Most mentees, in time, imitate their mentors. Teaching by example may be a mentor's most effective



developmental tool. The mentee will learn as the mentee observes how the mentor handles situations or interacts with others. The mentor needs to be careful how they appear to the mentee. The mentor needs to strive for high standards of professionalism, solid work ethics, and positive attitude.

In the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (LDE, 2006c), the mentor, as the referral agent, works with the mentee to develop an action plan that outlines what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to reach career goals. Once the action plan is in place, the mentor can then use the action plan to move the mentee toward career goals.

According to the LDE's *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006c), the role of the door opener is to open up doors of opportunity. This role primarily involves helping the mentee establish a network of contacts within the agency, as well as outside the agency. The mentee needs a chance to meet other people to spur professional development. As a door opener, the mentor can introduce the mentee to the mentor's contacts to help build the mentee's network structure. As the door opener, the mentor also opens doors of information to the mentee by directing the mentee to resources that may be helpful.

There are many roles that a mentor plays in the mentoring relationship. According to Anderson and Shannon (1988) mentors serve as a teacher, sponsor, counselor, encourager and friend. These attributes are also identified as effective key factors in the mentoring relationships formed within the LELI Program, in addition to the roles outlined in the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006a). The roles mentors play in the process can and do determine the success of the mentee in their new roles, whether the mentor is mentoring a new teacher or a new administrative leader.

## Summary

Recognizing the changing role of the school principal, the Louisiana Department of Education has consciously grounded the Louisiana Educational Leadership Induction (LELI) program in research-based best practices utilizing four of the *Five Models of Staff Development* (1989) by the NSDC as its model. It is imperative for new administrators to receive adequate support and training in their new role in order to meet the mandates of NCLB in addressing school accountability and student achievement. Mentoring, through an induction program, by experienced and successful administrators, is one way to assist new administrators. The mentoring process involves the mentee becoming acclimated to their new roles and responsibilities, and their mentor providing them with the tools necessary to become successful. The roles played by mentors in the professional lives of their mentees are numerous, but necessary to the growth of the newly appointed administrator.

The process of mentoring, which includes the three pillars of the mentoring component within the LELI Program, including preparation, support, and leadership, were examined through the lens of transformational leadership in this phenomenological study. The phenomenon of mentoring as it pertains to accountability and school improvement issues was explored.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to conduct this phenomenological study. The phenomenon of mentoring investigated in this research study is directly related to the shift in the role of today's administrators perpetuated by *No Child Left Behind* accountability mandates. This chapter includes sections that present the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research design, the role of the researcher, description of sample, data collection procedures, analysis of data, and procedures utilized to ensure trustworthiness of this study's findings.

This study's purpose was to investigate the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and mentoring. A sample of second-year principals who completed the LELI Program in the 2007-2008 academic year as first-year principals served as the participants for this research study and represented each educational region of Louisiana.

#### **Research Question**

After an extensive review of the literature pertinent to mentoring experiences of first year principals, the following research question was proposed: "What are the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and the mentoring process within the LELI Program?" The specific focus of this study examined the relationships between mentors and mentees and how the mentoring component within the LELI Program has affected the first-year principals' assimilation into the profession. The three pillars (preparation, support, leadership) of the mentoring component within the LELI Program determined the focal point of this study, uncovering the elements most crucial to new administrators. The first sub-question

focused specifically on the elements most crucial to the preparation of a first-year principal as a result of the participants' experiences with mentors and mentoring within the LELI Program. A second sub-question focused on support elements most crucial to the success of a first-year school leader. The third sub-question focused on elements most crucial in refining the leadership of a first-year principal with mentors and mentoring within the LELI Program. The three sub-questions to the research question follow.

- a) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial to your preparation as a first year principal?
- b) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial in supporting your success as a first-year school leader?
- c) What elements within the mentoring process were most crucial in refining your leadership as a first-year principal?

### **Statement of the Problem**

New administrators report feelings of frustration due to the demands of their new job (Anderson, 1991; Daresh, 2001). A NAESP study (2003) reported over half of new administrators experienced a lack of support in meeting the challenges of their new roles and responsibilities. Preparation, support and building leadership capacity, the foundation of the mentoring component within the LELI Program (LELI, 2008), speak to the needs articulated by new administrators in current literature. Since the LELI Program's inception in 1994, however, no research has been conducted to examine the perspectives of first-year principals on their mentoring experiences.

There is a growing body of literature that suggests that the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is critical to the success of the mentee's first year in his or her new role (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Daresh, 2001; Monsour, 1998). Since participation in the LELI

Program is state-mandated for new principals, it is imperative to investigate whether the mentoring component prepares, supports, and builds leadership capacity in first-year principals. It is important to know whether the LELI Program assists new principals in meeting the challenges of their new job. It is also important to understand what elements were viewed as most crucial to new principals in the mentoring process that directly assisted in their preparation, support, and development of leadership skills. Ginty (1995) defined effective mentoring as veteran principals sharing their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performance experiences with novice principals. By pairing an experienced administrator with a first-year principal, the LELI Program addresses the new principals' first year of building personal leadership capacity by utilizing the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* as the evaluation instrument for determining the acquisition of leadership skills.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of second-year principals regarding their mentors and the mentoring process utilized by the LELI Program and the elements most crucial to the preparation, support, and leadership skills acquired in meeting the challenges of their new role. In 1994, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) developed a professional development platform for first-year principals designed to maximize their leadership and management potential through the LELI Program (LELI, 2008). One of the components of this state mandated program is the mentoring component. Mentoring is the act of passing on knowledge from an individual with expert knowledge in a specific domain to an individual with less experience (Daresh, 2001).

## **Qualitative Research Design**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), one of the focal points of utilizing qualitative data is that it features naturally occurring, ordinary events from which the researcher can ascertain the concepts of real-life moments. Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1998) note that a qualitative approach is best used when the methods are aligned with the views and experiences of the researcher. The qualitative design of this study permitted the researcher to investigate the fundamental nature of the mentoring phenomenon within the LELI Program by gathering perspectives of first-year principals through one-to-one interviews. Personal interviews are the most appropriate data collection method for such an investigation because they allow one “to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Since phenomenology is defined as a school of thought that focuses on the experiences and interpretations of the research participants (Trochim, 2006), mentoring experiences and interpretations can be considered a phenomenon in their entirety. Mentoring comprises many facets of reflection, and this research study focused on the three pillars that form the foundation of the mentoring component within the LELI Program, including preparation, support, and leadership.

### *Rationale for Using a Qualitative Approach*

Rudestam and Newton (2001) defined phenomenology, a qualitative research design, as inquiry that seeks to explain the meaning of a particular human experience through the personal articulation of each research participant. Since this research focused on the phenomenon of mentoring of novice principals in an age of increased educational ability, this method of collecting data was most appropriate for this study. The lack of literature directly related to the experiences of mentoring first-year principals in Louisiana, a state often the target of criticism

because of low educational performance, reflected a need for a phenomenological examination of LELI. The use of qualitative research will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding mentoring, describing mentoring that is both authentic and relevant to educators. To date, there has been no specific research addressing first-year principals' perspectives regarding mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. Due to limited available literature about principal mentoring, a qualitative design was adopted to understand the depth and breadth of each new principal's mentoring experiences.

### *Phenomenology*

Van Manen (1990) describes phenomenology as understanding the very nature of a phenomenon. Phenomenology focuses solely on the reflections of the research participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Glesne (1999) notes that when the researcher's goal is to gain an understanding of the participants' life experiences and derive meaning from those experiences, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis is the best method to use. Since this research study investigated the perspectives of first-year principals in the LELI Program, it was imperative to gain those perspectives through a phenomenological research approach, ensuring that the participants' experiences, beliefs, and actions revealed the broad aspects of mentoring.

As established earlier in this document, mentoring is the targeted phenomenon in this research study. It is necessary to utilize phenomenological research methods to investigate the scope of this phenomenon. According to Frey and his colleagues (1991), phenomenologists conduct research under naturalistic conditions, collecting meaningful qualitative data, and then analyzing that data to determine main concepts or themes that arise from the data. Using this definition as the springboard for investigation, phenomenological methodology ensures the careful description of the LELI participants' experiences that leads to their special qualities or

abilities. Van Manen (1990) suggests that the description of the phenomenological experience of mentoring can show us the experience in a fuller and deeper manner. A phenomenological application to this study allows for a fuller and deeper understanding of the participants' mentoring experiences within the LELI Program.

This phenomenological study sought to investigate the perspectives of first-year principals on mentors and their mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. Since first-year principal perspectives served as the vehicle for this research investigation, qualitative research methods were utilized. Patton (2002) reported that the use of qualitative methods permits inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance such as the mentoring experiences of first-year principals. This phenomenological approach affords the researcher the opportunity to study unique differences and similarities within this qualitative study as suggested by Patton (2002), thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the perceptions of first-year principals regarding their mentoring experiences.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Creswell (2005) recognizes and denotes that the qualitative researcher takes an active role in the research study. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to certain skills that a researcher must possess in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data in a qualitative study. These skills include: knowledge with the phenomenon and setting being studied, a genuine interest in the topic, a multidisciplinary approach to the study, and excellent investigatory skills.

The skills highlighted by Miles and Huberman (1994) were reviewed by the researcher prior to the onset of this study. It was determined that the researcher possessed knowledge of the phenomenon, had a genuine interest in mentoring, would utilize a multidisciplinary research approach, and had utilized investigative skills in her daily job responsibilities as a school



administrator. In addition to these skills, the researcher's participation in the LELI Program both as a first-year principal and as mentor provided a foundation of experience with the LELI Program. Mentoring in the LELI Program influenced the researcher professionally through first-hand experiences as a participant and as a mentor.

The researchers initial mentoring experiences in the LELI program occurred several years ago when she was a new assistant principal. For the past eight years, the researcher has served as a LELI mentor for new assistant principals in Region 5. While serving as an assistant principal of an elementary school for five years, the researcher mentored new assistant principals. For the past three years the researcher, while serving as the principal of an elementary school, was contracted to mentor new assistant principals. The researcher's interaction with new assistant principals over the past eight years piqued a desire to investigate this phenomenon. Limited research data regarding the mentoring component of the LELI Program had been collected. The researcher felt it would be beneficial for educational leaders to understand the perspectives of first-year principals regarding the mentoring component within the LELI Program, particularly with regard to the elements thought by the mentees to be beneficial in preparing, supporting, and building leadership capacity. Since a leadership cadre is only as successful as the weakest member, understanding the mentoring process is critical to building administrative leadership capacity in every school and district nationwide.

This researcher's involvement in LELI added complexity to the role and responsibilities inherent in this research project. Although the interview data are presented in their original form, one might wonder if prior involvement with the LELI Program colored the understanding of the data. Due to this researcher's personal mentoring experiences with the LELI Program, she was careful to report all data collected, regardless of whether it aligned with the researcher's beliefs.

To guard against bias, the mentors and mentees in this research study were investigated according to the pillar of the mentoring component. Capturing respondents' perspective authentically was always a consideration when asking an interview question or when documenting the respondents' answers. To ensure that the data were accurately reported, all interviews were taped, and then transcribed twice – once by the researcher and once by a doctoral colleague. This additional safeguard protected the intent and content of the respondents' answers to the interview questions.

In a qualitative study, the role of a researcher involves interpreting the experiences as reflected by the participants (Creswell, 2005). House (1990) suggests three basic principles as general guidelines when dealing ethically within the relationship between researcher and participant: mutual respect, no coercion, and support for democratic values and institutions. The researcher guarded against the manipulation of data by audio taping all interviews. To ensure that all participants were afforded the same opportunity to answer questions, the interview protocol (see Appendix A) was followed in the same manner with each participant without variation.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Participants were second-year, Louisiana principals who successfully completed the LELI Program in the 2007-2008 academic year as first-year principals. All participants were grouped according to the eight educational regions in Louisiana as illustrated in Figure 2. Each educational region of the state is identified in Figure 2. Using stratified random sampling, 16 second-year principals from the eight regions of Louisiana were selected. The eight regions served as individual strata. One elementary principal and one secondary principal were randomly selected from each region. This ensured that each region was presented at both the elementary

and secondary level. For the purpose of this study, elementary principals included grades prekindergarten- 8, and secondary principals included grades 9-12. As part of the sampling plan, if a new principal declined to participate, another principal within that stratum was selected. Although this provision was anticipated, there was no need to put this into effect. In the first round, all principals solicited agreed to participate in this study.

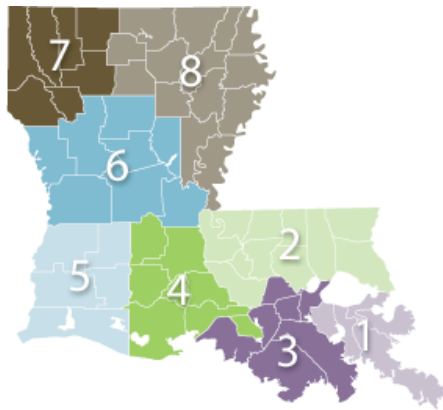


Figure 2 *Louisiana Educational Regions* (<http://www.lapositivebehavior.com>)

Permission to contact the second-year principals was obtained from the LELI Program facilitator (see Appendix B). Once granted, participants were contacted via e-mail to solicit their willingness to participate in this study (see Appendix C). Written consent was obtained prior to conducting the initial interviews. The consent form explained the steps taken to assure confidentiality of each participant (see Appendix D).

### **Description of Respondents**

The research respondents were divided into two divisions – elementary participants were new principals in pk-8 schools, while secondary participants were new principals in schools with grades 9-12. In Tables 4 and 5, each research respondent, the region in which he or she served as principal, and the demographic data of the school in which the principal served are outlined.

Table 4

*Demographic Information for Elementary Respondents*

PSEUDONYM	REGION	DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION
Principal Anderson	Region 1	Administrator of an elementary school with more than 500 students and 50 staff members
Principal Covington	Region 2	Administrator of an elementary school with less than 500 students and 36 staff members
Principal Elliott	Region 3	Administrator of an elementary school with less than 500 students and 32 staff members
Principal Henderson	Region 4	Administrator of an elementary school with more than 500 students and 45 staff members
Principal Istre	Region 5	Administrator of an elementary school with more than 500 students and 48 staff members
Principal King	Region 6	Administrator of an elementary school with more than 500 students and 50 staff members
Principal Nixon	Region 7	Administrator of an elementary school with more than 500 students and 40 staff members
Principal Oliver	Region 8	Administrator of an elementary school with less than 500 students and 33 staff members

Table 5

*Demographic Information for Secondary Respondents*

PSEUDONYM	REGION	DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION
Principal Broussard	Region 1	Administrator of a secondary school with more than 500 students and 70 staff members
Principal Denton	Region 2	Administrator of a secondary school with more than 500 students and 52 staff members
Principal Franklin	Region 3	Administrator of a secondary school with less than 500 students and 15 staff members
Principal Grant	Region 4	Administrator of a secondary school with less than 500 students and 31 staff members
Principal Jackson	Region 5	Administrator of a secondary school with less than 500 students and 34 staff members
Principal Landry	Region 6	Administrator of a secondary school with less than 500 students and 26 staff members
Principal Miller	Region 7	Administrator of a secondary school with more than 500 students and 44 staff members
Principal Pierce	Region 8	Administrator of a secondary school with more than 500 students and 38 staff members

### **Interview Protocol Testing**

The interview protocol for this study was field tested to evaluate the clarity of the interview questions presented. The field testing included five first-year principals in Region V who participated in the LELI Program. Participants were interviewed individually during a 45- to 60- minute session at their home-based school. All questions in the interview protocol were asked, and each participant was questioned about the clarity and ambiguity of each question. Throughout the interview process, the protocol remained true in its original format without adjustments or additions. Interviews were recorded for transcription purposes, and each interview was transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed to denote themes or patterns. Participants were provided with copies of the transcription and asked to correct or clarify any part of the transcripts that did not accurately reflect their experiences. Analyzing the data from each participant allowed the researcher the opportunity to sort the data obtained, develop interpretations, and reach conclusions. As a result of the field test study, the interview protocol was modified to gain a fuller, deeper understanding of the mentoring experiences of these research participants.

### **Data Collection**

According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research usually relies on three data collection strategies: interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents. In-depth interviews were selected to allow the researcher to understand the perspectives of each participant (Seidman, 1998). Interviews are interactive and promote an environment that is conducive to sharing of perspectives between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviewing was selected as the main method of collecting data from the second-year principals because the activity allowed the researcher to understand the mentoring process from each participant's individual perspective

(Seidman, 1998). Interview guide techniques proposed by Patton (2002) are appropriate for the data collection in this study and were used accordingly. Interviews were scheduled at a place and time that was convenient for each of the 16 participants. Questions used in the interviews were open-ended (see Appendix A).

Permission was obtained from the LELI Program facilitator (Appendix B) to acquire access to the first-year principals who had successfully completed the LELI Program in the 2007-2008 year. From the list provided by the LELI Program facilitator, two first-year principals were contacted from each of the eight educational regions. An email to solicit research participants from each educational region was sent out upon obtaining permission from the program facilitator.

A second email was sent out a week after the initial email. At this point, I received an overwhelming response with more than 50 participants for this study. Each principal was sent initial information containing the IRB approval (Appendix E), a letter of introduction (Appendix C), and the consent form (Appendix D). Prior to the telephone interview, but no more than 24 hours before the actual interview, signed consent forms were secured from each principal wherein they were provided a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix A).

The timeline for data collection was from mid-March, 2009 to the end of May, 2009. Each principal was contacted via phone after initial contact was made via email. Interviews were scheduled according to the participants' personal schedules. As the interviews progressed, I was excited by the principals' willingness to share their reflections on their mentoring experiences and about their LELI Program mentor. Interviews were conducted at times that were convenient for each of the participants. An established interview protocol was utilized during the interview, and participants were given the opportunity to preview the protocol prior to the interview. The

duration of each of the 16 interviews was between 45 to 60 minutes. All respondents were gracious in offering a follow-up interview for any additional information needed for this study. None were needed.

To begin the research process, the researcher scheduled telephone interviews with each second-year principal via phone or email correspondence. Email correspondence and interviews began in late March 2009 and were complete by mid May 2009.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2005) qualitative researchers typically engage in analyzing the data in their study in the following order: preparing and organizing the data for analysis, exploring the data, describing and developing themes from the data, representing and reporting the findings, interpreting the findings, and validating the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) reported that qualitative data analysis is a continuous and iterative process. Their findings informed the data analysis process for this research study, indicating the need for ongoing reflection and evidence gathering to support the study's results.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to secure confidentiality. Pseudonyms were randomly selected from Bell South's 2008-2009 telephone book and assigned to each participant. To protect the research participants, only partial information regarding the schools' demographics was reported in the results. Relevant demographic data about principals had the potential to identify them to the reader; therefore, information that could potentially link a principal to a specific school was not included. To further safeguard confidentiality, the researcher did not link any of the content provided by the research participant to a specific mentor or school district. Data regarding urban, suburban, and rural status were not included because it would also identify a participant to a particular regional setting.



Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Sixteen participants were provided copies of the interview transcripts so that they might clarify parts of the transcript that they found to be inaccurate through member checking. This process made the reporting of conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations more efficient (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interviews were transcribed so that the data could be analyzed and categorized. The researcher transcribed, coded, and analyzed data within each grade-level division, with notations regarding recurring patterns or emerging themes, and compiled them in the form of a matrix. The researcher followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion that qualitative researchers use display matrices for the management and analysis of data. The matrix data were analyzed to identify themes that emerged from participants' comments, regarding the three pillars of preparation, support, and leadership that comprise the foundation of the mentoring component within the LELI Program.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness provides credibility, reliability, and transferability to qualitative research methods. In order to address the threat of researcher bias and interpretation inaccuracy, efforts to ensure trustworthiness were implemented. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness as a substitute in qualitative studies for many of the quantitative validity issues. The same two researchers illustrated the meaning and importance of trustworthiness by asking the question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to" (p. 290)? Lincoln and Guba suggested techniques for ensuring trustworthiness, including the determination of (1) credibility – defined as the richness of the information gathered; (2) transferability – defined as the application of the information to a new

situation; (3) dependability – defined as the consistency of both the product and the processes; and (4) confirmability – defined as the neutrality of the information gathered.

Although Lincoln and Guba's definition of trustworthiness was used, a number of techniques suggested by Patton (2002), Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), and Creswell and Miller (2000) were employed to ensure trustworthiness of the data results. The three methods that were employed in this qualitative study include reporting a thick description from the respondents' viewpoints, member checking of the transcribed notes, and peer debriefing when reporting the results.

Thick, rich description lays the foundation for the setting being described by the participant and is the under girding for qualitative analysis and reporting (Patton, 2002). Participants in the research study are rich with information, more so than the researcher. It is the primary responsibility of the researcher to grasp the perspectives and experiences of the participants in order to present detail, context, and emotion so that the researcher can establish the significance of the experience (Denzin, 1989).

The information and results provided in this study were checked by the participants or members in this study. Member checking is a process wherein participants review the data collected and findings reported in order to examine the accuracy of the researcher's work. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) attest that the participant's role in member checking is invaluable in proving the validity, accuracy, and credibility of the data collected and the analysis that follows.

Member checking was utilized by this researcher after the taped interviews were transcribed by both the researcher and her doctoral colleague. The transcribed notes were sent via email to the respondents and a request for the respondents to examine their responses for

accuracy was made. All respondents replied via email, and no corrections were required of the researcher.

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that qualitative researchers should enlist the assistance of a peer reviewer with no connection to the qualitative study to examine the findings, interpretations, and conclusions and ensure that they are supported by the data. Serving as a doctoral colleague, a local college professor with experience in qualitative research methods and analysis served as a peer debriefer to provide an external check of transcripts, the research process, and the interpretive conclusions of the researcher. This doctoral colleague acted as a neutral sounding board and visual inspector of the data and the interpretation of the data. Researcher bias and inaccuracies were guarded against by employing peer debriefing as a data validation method.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented an outline of a qualitative study designed to explore the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and mentoring within the LELI Program. The selected methodology, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis were relevant to investigating the research question and adding to the body of knowledge by collecting the perspectives of first-year principals regarding mentoring and their mentoring experiences within the LELI Program.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings

#### **Introduction**

This qualitative inquiry explored and disclosed the perspectives of principals who were mentored through the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program. The perspectives of the principals regarding the benefits, limitations, and challenges of the mentoring process within the LELI Program formed the foundation of the study. The inquiry centered on the central research question, “What are the perspectives of principals regarding their experiences with mentors and the mentoring process within the LELI Program?” The researcher conducted 16 one-to-one interviews via telephone with principals who successfully completed the LELI Program during the 2007-2008 school year from each of Louisiana’s eight educational regions.

To assist the reader in grasping the depth of information obtained from the participants, the chapter is divided into seven sections, beginning with an overview of the eight educational regions within the state of Louisiana and ending with a summary of the findings. Included within the chapter are a synopsis of the mentoring component of the LELI Program, the researcher’s perspectives regarding the interviews conducted, results from the elementary school level research participants, results from the secondary school level participants, and lastly, the findings that arose from the data collected.

The participants were two second-year principals who successfully completed the LELI Program from each of the eight educational regions within Louisiana. From the list of LELI graduates in each region, one elementary and one secondary principal were selected for interview utilizing stratified random sampling. All research participants successfully completed the LELI

Program during their first year as school principal and were interviewed one-to-one via telephone conversation. To ensure the confidentiality of each participant, pseudonyms were assigned to each principal in each of the educational regions.

### **Louisiana Educational Regions**

The state of Louisiana is divided into eight educational regions. Each region consists of several parishes, and within the parishes, several schools ranging from elementary to secondary are included. Table 6 which illustrates the parishes included in each of the eight educational regions was developed in alignment with the Louisiana School Directory as reported on the Louisiana Department of Education's website (<http://www.doe.state.la.us>). Schools that consist of grades pk-8 are reported as elementary schools, and grades 9-12 are reported as secondary schools. Prekindergarten-12 schools are reported as secondary schools as well. Table 6 highlights that information.

Table 6

#### *Louisiana Educational Regional Demographics*

REGION	PARISHES INCLUDED	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
1	Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, Recovery School District, St. Bernard, St. Charles	PK-12 schools = 16 PK-8 schools = 98 9-12 schools = 16	>500 students = 41 elementary and 19 secondary schools  <500 students = 57 elementary and 13 secondary schools
2	East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana, City of Baker, City of Bogalusa, Zachary Community, Central Community	PK-12 schools = 24 PK-8 schools = 216 9-12 schools = 50	>500 students = 105 elementary and 41 secondary schools  <500 students = 111 elementary and 33 secondary schools

REGION	PARISHES INCLUDED	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
3	Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, Terrebonne	PK-12 schools = 13 PK-8 schools = 119 9-12 schools = 17	>500 students = 41 elementary and 18 secondary schools  <500 students = 78 elementary and 12 secondary schools
4	Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, Vermilion	PK-12 schools = 22 PK-8 schools = 139 9-12 schools = 21	>500 students = 63 elementary and 27 secondary schools  <500 students = 76 elementary and 16 secondary schools
5	Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis	PK-12 schools = 23 PK-8 schools = 63 9-12 schools = 13	>500 students = 28 elementary and 13 secondary schools  <500 students = 36 elementary and 22 secondary schools
6	Avoyelles, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Sabine, Vernon, Winn	PK-12 schools = 35 PK-8 schools = 85 9-12 schools = 18	>500 students = 31 elementary and 13 secondary schools  <500 students = 54 elementary and 40 secondary schools
7	Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Red River, Webster	PK-12 schools = 14 PK-8 schools = 106 9-12 schools = 24	>500 students = 42 elementary and 16 secondary schools  <500 students = 64 elementary and 22 secondary schools
8	Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll, City of Monroe	PK-12 schools = 28 PK-8 schools = 104 9-12 schools = 23	>500 students = 28 elementary and 13 secondary schools  <500 students = 76 elementary and 38 secondary schools

The information presented in Table 6 is significant to the findings of this research study because it assists the reader to understand how the data were collected and from whom the data were obtained. Although some regions include large numbers of parishes and have large school enrollments, equal representation from each region was obtained by interviewing two novice principals from each region. The information in this table is also important in that it demonstrates the composition of each region as described by the state.

The division of schools is identified in Table 6, but the specific enrollment of each school is not listed to ensure the confidentiality of participants. To assist the reader in understanding the scope of job responsibilities of each research participant, an arbitrary numerical qualifier of more than or fewer than 500 students was utilized. According to the Louisiana Schools Directory (2008), schools with more than 500 students on the average are assigned an assistant principal. However, job responsibilities of principals with fewer than 500 students are generally the sole responsibility of that school leader. The extent of a principal's job responsibilities may impact the experiences of both the mentor and the mentee, ultimately impacting both the mentor and mentees engagement and attitude toward the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

### **Mentoring: A Key Component of LELI**

The mentoring process is a key component of the LELI Program. The findings at the end of this chapter will reflect the benefits, limitations, and challenges inherent in the mentoring component of LELI. To first understand how the LELI program defines the roles and responsibilities of its mentors, the following excerpt from the program's handbook is presented:

Mentoring is an integral component of the program. The team mentor serves as an advisor, teacher, role model, advocate, and friend. By utilizing currently practicing principals and assistant principals as mentors, a network is developed that provides the inductees with an ongoing system of support and guidance. (*LELI Mentor HB*, 2007, p. 15)

Research literature has provided insight regarding the mentoring process utilized by principal mentoring programs. A principal mentoring program, called The Administrative Mentorship (AM) program, established by Broward County Public Schools, was developed to train and support first-year principals and provides insights into the mentoring process. According to the Broward County School Board's web-based report, "Programs that mentor novice principals are an improvement over the abrupt and unaided entrance into academic administration that has typified the experiences of many beginning principals" (Blasik, 2005, p.1). The importance of administrators taking on the additional task of advocating for the principalship by encouraging and supporting educators is vital to the survival of the profession (Weingartner, 2009).

As established in the *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators, Bulletin 741* ([www.louisianaschoolsnet/1de/bese/1041.html](http://www.louisianaschoolsnet/1de/bese/1041.html)), the development and implementation of the LELI Program is intended to support the newly appointed principal in a full-time, full-year administrative position. Permanent principal endorsement of new principals is contingent upon successful completion of the LELI Program. New principals must demonstrate proficiency in the areas of administration, instruction and professional knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances. To prepare new principals, mentors participate in a yearly regional meeting, organize required observation opportunities, and establish a calendar for program completion. Additionally, face-to-face networking opportunities are engineered by experienced principals, who serve as team mentors, in order to provide a continuous support system for new principals. "Mentoring supplies the necessary support as effective job-embedded professional development" (NAESP, 2008, p.49).



The professional development opportunities for leadership within the LELI Program are directly aligned with the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* and reflect research-based best practices (LELI, 2008). One best practice within the LELI Program is that the mentor plays a major role in assisting new principals with the development of leadership skills. As the tenets of instructional leadership demonstrate, building leadership skills is the catalyst for developing effective schools. With the demands of NCLB, principals are expected to provide instructional leadership to their schools and faculty members. Mentors serve as a “sounding board” when addressing challenging issues such as school improvement, academic excellence, and increasing federal and state mandates encountered by the mentees.

According to Weingartner (2009), mentors share the responsibility of developing the new mentee’s journey by providing support, advice, and vision. Leithwood and his colleagues (2007) explained the importance of building leadership by stating, “...leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. That is why it is so important to support newcomers to the field” (p. 36). In the era of standards-based education and high-stakes accountability, the job of principal has never been more complex or more critical (NAESP, 2003). Throughout the LELI Program, activities are designed to address the Standards for Educational Leaders and to respond to accountability issues. Additionally, state and federal regulations and policies are integrated into program activities. The activities are tailored to the specified needs of new principals and provide them with appropriate and effective learning opportunities to lead their schools in improving student achievement. Working with a mentor, support and leadership examples are provided so that the mentee can build his/her repertoire of leadership skills.

### **Researcher's Perspectives Regarding Interviews**

At the start of the data collection process, I became increasingly anxious when only four principals responded to my initial request for information. Because statewide testing was underway, I believed that a possible lack of interest existed about my research study. Those feelings were compounded by the knowledge that only a limited number of participants could be contacted. I felt that if principals chose not to participate at this time, the study might not meet with completion.

Two weeks after the initial request for participation, I received 50 emails from principals around the state, volunteering to participate in this research study. My excitement continued to climb when I realized that I did have enough volunteers from each educational region, and that those volunteers represented both divisions of schools in each region.

When I began calling the targeted respondents, I was pleasantly surprised at their willingness to engage in conversations about their experiences during the first year as a principal participant in the LELI program. Even those participants who spoke of the limitations and challenges of the program were forthcoming with information that added to the depth and wealth of the reported results. Although some participants chose to speak at length about the different components of the LELI Program, others chose to answer succinctly.

Since the interview protocols required the second-year principals to reflect on their own journey through the mentoring component of the LELI Program, I wondered whether the respondents would hesitate to answer questions about the framework, timeline, or activities within the program, especially if the respondent had difficulty in completing any of the requirements. I also questioned whether a respondent would be reluctant to speak of his mentor in anything but a positive light.

Throughout the interviews I was pleasantly surprised at the willingness of the respondents to answer all questions. I was inspired by the commitment of the respondents to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. In the remaining paragraphs within this chapter, a general portrait of each respondent will be provided to the reader, utilizing quoted data from the second-year principal to highlight the principal's beliefs about his or her mentor and the mentoring process within the LELI Program.

### **Elementary Participants**

Sixteen interviews were conducted in this study. The perspectives of eight first-year elementary principals are reported in this section followed by the perspectives of eight first-year secondary principals. The principal interviews began a week after state-wide testing in March and continued through the last week in May, 2009. Each principal was first contacted by phone, and then by email. The email contained a summary of the researcher's project, the principal interview protocol (Appendix A), participant request letter (Appendix C), and participant consent form (Appendix D) as email attachments. The phone interviews with the principal respondents were scheduled for 45 minutes to one hour. Each interview was audio taped. The researcher transcribed the tapings. The transcriptions were then printed and emailed to each principal for accuracy before data analysis. The unique demographics of the interviewed principals' schools are reported in Table 4 & 5.

#### *Principal Anderson*

I began this telephone interview by introducing myself, and then explaining the purpose of the interview. I reviewed the consent form before proceeding with the actual interview. I reiterated that our conversation would be tape recorded before asking the first interview question. I followed the Interview Protocol (Appendix A), gathered demographic information about

Principal Anderson before moving on to the interview questions in order to gather her perspectives for this research study.

This principal is the administrator of an elementary (pk-8) school with more than 500 students and 50 staff members within Region 1. She shared that she had not participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal and attributed the overwhelming feelings experienced in her new role to that reality. She described her first year as a “whirlwind” experience in which she was trying to just “get through all the program requirements” instead of having time to focus on how the program would impact her in becoming an effective principal.

Principal Anderson proceeded to share that she and her mentor corresponded through email and Blackboard a majority of the time. She explained, “Any time I had a question, she responded very quickly and provided really good insights.” She described her mentor as a very encouraging person, saying, “She always made me feel like I could do it, even though I was a first year principal, that it was not something that I could not handle.” She commented that if her mentor did not know the answer to her question, the mentor would research the answer and respond to her within a day.

Principal Anderson stated that there were 12 first-year mentees assigned to her mentor. She commented that the number of interns was too many, in her opinion, for one person to handle. Although her mentor was always available, this principal also shared that in her opinion, the number of mentees made it difficult to share experiences during their team meetings due to time constraints. The mentor, according to this principal, wanted each meeting to be a “sharing and support session.” According to this principal, the format for these team meetings consisted of the mentor providing an opportunity for each mentee to share a school-based situation with the group. The other mentees would then provide supportive comments or suggestions as to how

they would have handled that particular situation. She shared that the team meetings facilitated a lot of good professional discussions, so that “we weren’t just learning from our mentor but we were learning from each other in the class as well.” “This really strengthened the relationship between the mentees in our cohort.” During the interview, Principal Anderson commented that the sharing of their experiences was the most beneficial to her as a first year principal.

In retrospect, it was stated by Principal Anderson that the LELI Program had merit as evidenced in the sharing of experiences by the mentor to the mentees. This principal noted that the mentor to mentee ratio needed to be reduced, and that participating as an assistant principal prior to the principal experience would have been beneficial. In summary, it was made evident by Principal Anderson that both pros and cons exist with the LELI Program.

#### *Principal Covington*

Principal Covington serves alongside 36 staff members in educating fewer than 500 students at her elementary (pk-8) school in Region 2. She willingly shared her insights with me in regard to her mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. She was very complimentary when referring to her mentor and used words such as “supportive,” “encouraging,” and “positive.” She described her mentor as “always available” to her and; therefore, able to provide her with a support system that was greatly needed during Principal Covington’s first year principalship. The principal went on to share that her mentor provided continuous feedback to her during the first year as a new principal within the LELI Program. She communicated that her mentor made time to answer her questions regarding how to conduct informal observations and provide recommendations to new teachers in regard to the observations.

Principal Covington explained that the informal observation process utilized within her school district was vague, and she wanted to be both fair and equitable to her staff members. Her

mentor provided her with information that allowed her to comprehend the observation process, so that allowed her to be viewed by her teachers as the “instructional leader” her first year as a new principal. This principal noted that her mentor created a culture for sharing among and between all mentees within their cohort. Her mentor developed a network of sharing by utilizing the Blackboard to post any issues or concerns experienced by the mentees. The issues or concerns were addressed weekly by the mentor through emails to all of the mentees.

Principal Covington viewed her mentor as a very “supportive person” who was able to “pass on her experiences to someone like me who had no idea what I was doing during my first year as a new principal.” Principal Covington commented that even though she had participated in several professional development trainings and served in leadership roles before, first year principals, in her opinion, “still need guidance from their mentors.” She noted that due to federal, state, and local mandates it is difficult to decipher how to prioritize the implementation of these initiatives and successfully connect them to increasing the academic achievement of her students. “Having someone who is a veteran in the educational field to rely on in complying with these laws was a comfort to me.”

Principal Covington stated that because she did not participate in the LELI Program as an assistant principal, she felt that she would have benefited from the program more if it had occurred during her second year as principal. She articulated her feelings in this way, “I believe I would have had more time to focus on the assignments and appreciate the experience more.” Covington’s mentor shared the importance of being “visible and focusing on what was going on in the classrooms” with the mentees, but Covington identified “time” as the limiting factor that impacted this mentor’s interaction. Covington also shared that her mentor assisted her in

connecting what she did on a daily basis to the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* by posting the connections through reflection practices.

In conclusion, Principal Covington remarked that the LELI Program provided a strong support system to her during her first year as a new administrator. This principal shared that the mentor provided continuous feedback to her that strengthened her ability to serve as the instructional leader of her school. Although she did not participate as an assistant principal prior to the principal experience, this principal felt that she would have benefited from the program more as a second year principal. Principal Covington noted that the greatest benefit of participating in the LELI Program was connecting the principal standards to her daily roles and responsibilities through daily reflective practices.

#### *Principal Elliott*

Principal Elliott is the administrator of an elementary (pk-8) school in Region 3 that has an enrollment of fewer than 500 students and a staff of 32. This principal communicated that her mentor was always “available” to her. She specified, “If I had any questions or concerns regarding school-related issues, I knew I could call him and he would return my call within hours with suggestions and recommendations.” She mentioned that her mentor was a practicing principal so she felt that his suggestions and recommendations were credible. Principal Elliott stated that her mentor provided her with resources such as copies of articles, books, and web-based links to complete online assignments required by the LELI Program. She said her mentor was encouraging and provided feedback to questions that she had as a new administrator regarding current special education laws. She went on to add that a mentor is “someone who guides a person along when they feel like their hands are tied, and they are not sure of which route to take next.”

When asked specifically about the mentoring process within the LELI Program, Principal Elliott commented that “more time could have been put into actually sitting down and discussing things” rather than spending time “going through the LELI binder to make sure all program assignments were completed.” She suggested that more time be allocated to meet as a team and discuss standards-based application opportunities within the program instead of focusing on meeting program requirements. She stated that there were some miscommunications in information provided to the mentor through the state department in regard to due dates for assignments. The miscommunication caused frustration and anxiety within the cohort. Principal Elliott remarked that her mentor worked hard to defuse those feelings by communicating with the LELI Program’s facilitator to ensure extensions of program assignments.

Principal Elliott mentioned that in her opinion, the benefit of mentoring through the LELI Program was just “having someone there that I could talk to when I needed assistance or guidance.” This principal claimed that her mentor encouraged her to become better organized by keeping a daily checklist of items that needed to be addressed, both as the manager and instructional leader of the school. This activity assisted this principal in becoming focused and organized each day. She stated that this helped her take “one day at a time.”

Principal Elliott listed good rapport with faculty, students, and parents and organizational skills as leadership qualities that she felt that new principals should possess. She surmised that she attained these two leadership skills due to her mentoring experiences through the LELI Program because her mentor stressed the importance of building school culture during your first year. This principal explained that the first year should be spent “building relationships.” Then everything else will fall into place.



Upon reflection, Principal Elliott surmised that the overall experience of the LELI Program was beneficial due to the recommendations provided by her mentor. This principal noted that her LELI mentor was a practicing administrator therefore the suggestions and recommendations rendered were credible. Principal Elliott commented that program requirements were time consuming and team meetings would be more beneficial discussing standards-based application. In closing, this principal clearly stated that the LELI Program would be best completed during her second year as a new administrator.

#### *Principal Henderson*

This interview was probably the shortest in length of all of the interviews conducted within this study. Mr. Henderson is the principal of an elementary (pk-8) school in Region 4 with an enrollment of more than 500 students and 45 staff members. Principal Henderson participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal and stated that “nothing can prepare you for your first year as a new principal.”

This principal was very direct in his answers and repeatedly made the same points in regard to the lack of preparation for his new role as a school administrator by his mentor. He offered some very strong opinions about his expectations of his mentor and the mentoring process within the LELI Program, which ranged from availability to ensuring that he completed all of the LELI Program requirements. He said, “My mentor helped me with meeting the requirements of the LELI Program but not with preparing me for my job and the roles or responsibilities.” This principal had over 20 years as an educator and communicated that participation in the LELI Program should not include people with as much leadership experience and he had “under his belt.” Principal Henderson also noted that his mentor did not have as many years in “the system” as he did; therefore, he questioned, “How did she know as much as me?”

He did indicate, however, that reviewing the standards for principals with his mentor was “good preparation for me in connecting them to my day to day duties.”

Principal Henderson indicated during this interview that he would have liked more face-to-face meetings between mentor and mentee in order to answer questions regarding program assignments. “We never discussed problems that we may be faced with as an administrator. I would have liked to see us come together more as a class and walk through some scenarios that we have experienced and how our mentor suggests working through these job-related issues.” He continued by suggesting that he would have benefited from some onsite visitations from his mentor to “observe me on the job and provide feedback as to what I was doing well and what I could do better.”

In retrospect, Principal Henderson remarked that the LELI Program did not prepare him for his role as responsibilities as a new administrator although this principal participated in the program as an assistant principal. This principal stated that the assistance provided by his mentor was not beneficial. The researcher gleaned from this interview with Principal Henderson that the relationship between this principal and mentor was not conducive to the desired outcomes of the LELI Program. In summary, it was made evident by Principal Henderson that he desired more opportunities for on-site visitations within the LELI Program.

#### *Principal Istre*

Principal Istre is a Region 5 elementary (pk-8) principal of a school with an enrollment of over 500 students and 48 staff members. His interview was conducted on a weekend and lasted the full 60 minutes. Mr. Istre articulated detailed accounts of his mentoring experiences with his LELI mentor that included his mentor assisting him in completing an application for a local award. This principal also communicated that his mentor assisted him in aligning the principal

standards to the components set forth by this grant. He referenced the one-to-one assistance provided by his mentor in applying for the grant as one of the major reasons that his school was awarded the grant. He remarked that the school that he served his first year had never received a grant prior to his appointment. This principal noted that he was viewed as a visionary leader by his staff because of the commitment of his mentor to share her professional expertise in grant writing.

According to this principal, he had a good rapport with his mentor. The mentor-mentee relationship was established by weekly phone calls and visits as needed. Discussions not only about program requirements but about general knowledge and skills in regard to educational standards and the application of those standards to day-to-day decisions, helped this mentee “become as successful as I am today.” Principal Istre shared that his mentor communicated to him the importance of measuring stakeholder satisfaction by administering perception surveys. He mentioned that this was feedback from all of people for whom he was accountable. He utilized the perception surveys his first year to gauge his progress in meeting the needs of each of the stakeholder groups. He claimed that this is the measurement tool that he used to assess his success as a first-year principal.

Although he did not participate in the LELI Program as an assistant principal, Principal Istre remarked that he was not at a disadvantage because his mentor “provided ongoing, constant communication about specific responsibilities and roles that an administrator should know.” He added, “She went through my job description with me, step-by-step, to ensure that I understood what was expected of me during my first-year based on performance indicators.”

Principal Istre stated, “I feel that every principal should have a strong working knowledge of the curriculum, the needs of the school, the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and

the teachers.” He explained that he had conversations with his mentor on how to align each standard in running his school on a day-to-day basis. These conversations consisted of preparing curriculum-related professional development opportunities, operating the physical plant, addressing stakeholder satisfaction, disciplining students, and aligning those processes to the standards to ensure effectiveness as a new administrator. Of his mentor, Principal Istre claimed “she assisted with curriculum issues, provided articles, assisted with grant writing, resolving campus situations, and offered suggestions with our school improvement plan.”

According to Principal Istre, his mentor was very positive and provided support and assistance when needed through words of encouragement or “just being a sounding board.” “Knowing that there was someone that I could call if I had a question about anything curriculum related, discipline related, or issues relating to stakeholders was comforting.” When asked specifically about his mentor, he shared, “My mentor was there for me whether it was email, Blackboard, telephone, or face-to-face.” “The biggest help was the constant communication.” In regard to improving his mentoring experience, he offered that more face-to-face meetings with other principals would be great as well as additional training with the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*.

Principal Istre stated that the mentoring provided by the LELI Program was positive and provided ongoing support needed his first year as a new administrator. This principal noted that participating in this program as an assistant principal would have been beneficial, and that more face-to-face meetings needed to be increased. In summary, it was made clear by Principal Istre that the expectations outlined in the LELI Program were easily obtained with the assistance of his mentor.

### *Principal King*

Principal King is an elementary (pk-8) principal in Region 6 with more than 500 students and 50 staff members. She reflected on her mentoring experience by describing her mentor as supportive and available. According to Principal King, her mentor provided support by corresponding with her on a regular basis through emails and Blackboard. Her mentor also answered her questions in a timely manner. Feedback in regard to school-based issues and concerns was solicited from her mentor. This principal claimed her mentor included suggestions and recommendations based on his professional experiences as a school principal. She felt confident in utilizing his suggestions and recommendations because as she shared, “the proof was in the pudding.” Principal King remarked that his years of experience as a principal strengthened her opinion of his recommendations as a veteran in the field of administration, and her relationship with her mentor was cemented by her ability to “pick his brain” on any school-related issue.

Elementary Principal King noted that her mentor prepared the mentees assigned to him by aligning the principal standards to the day-to-day school operations. During team meetings, her mentor would take each standard and facilitate discussions among the mentees to list school situations that aligned with each standard. Each mentee had to post a situation or scenario under each standard. The mentees would then discuss how each situation aligned with that particular standard and justify posting it under that standard. Her mentor would also have the mentees reflect on situations that occurred at their individual schools. The mentees would brainstorm possible solutions to the issues presented by each participant. This networking opportunity provided a wealth of information for Principal King by drawing on each new principal’s perspective and school-based experiences. The mentor also provided contact information for

district-wide resources when addressing school-related issues that mandate enlisting the assistance of district-level personnel.

Principal King remarked that being the instructional leader in an elementary school was vital to her survival her first year. The walk-around assignments within the LELI Program were insightful to this principal in that her mentor focused on how to transfer the observations to professional development for teachers based on the teachers' skill levels. Principal King explained that she learned valuable information regarding the use of data to meet the individual needs of her teachers. This information was credited with developing the principal's instructional leadership skills.

Because Principal King did not participate in the LELI Program as an assistant principal, she commented that she would have preferred to participate in the LELI Program during her second year as a principal. She stated, "I would be a more effective leader if my time were focused on getting to know the faculty, staff, students, and the parents during the first year of principalship, rather than completing LELI Program requirements. I would have appreciated the LELI experience more as a second year principal." Apparently Principal King would have preferred the availability of his mentor to the cumbersome nature of the program requirements.

This principal summarized her mentoring experience within the LELI Program was beneficial as evidenced by her account of her mentor. Principal King stated that program requirements were time consuming, and that she would have preferred completing the LELI Program during her second year as principal. In retrospect, this principal identified networking opportunities with other first-year principals and mentor feedback as the greatest pros of her participation in this program.

### *Principal Nixon*

This principal oversees a staff of 40 teachers and had an enrollment of over 500 elementary (pk-8) students in Region 7. Principal Nixon began the interview by stating,

I realized that the whole job is about the people and building relationships with them. Communication is one of the most important leadership qualities. You can't lead people unless you can work with them. Communication is vital.

This principal continued by sharing that her mentor also shared her belief in the importance of communication because she was available and communicated regularly, which in turn made her feel supported.

According to Principal Nixon, it helped her to know that her mentor had already “walked in my shoes.” Her mentor provided her with real tips that she wouldn't have thought of on her own due to her lack of administrative experience. Most of these “tricks of the trade” were shared during face-to-face meetings and pertained to organizational skills, stating, “Instructional leader in the morning and desk jockey in the afternoon.” This principal explained that her mentor was employed within the same school system as a school administrator too. She articulated that, “He really understood where I was because he had been there too.” This fact validated the mentors' roles because “they know how to make the day-to-day operations of the school an important learning experience for you as a new principal.” This principal added that her mentor requested that the mentees keep a daily reflection journal to chronicle their day-to-day experiences as new principals.

Principal Nixon remarked that her mentor provided support by answering questions pertinent to her new role as principal by sharing, “If he didn't know the answer, he would provide me with resources such as articles, internet links, and books necessary to find out the answers to my questions.” Her mentor made her feel like the questions that she asked or what she

had to say was important. He provided her with honest tips on how to get things done easily and effectively.

This elementary principal participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal.

However, she remarked,

I can't think of anything that could have happened that would have helped me to be better prepared because schools are different. You have to have your own experience. You think you'll be prepared because you've done the assistant principal's job, but being the principal is a whole different ballgame, and I was not expecting it.

She explained that she found the regular face-to-face meetings were beneficial because they provided a platform from which to talk about school-related issues with other administrators such as disciplinary issues dealing with special education students, preventing student tardiness, scheduling to provide for team meetings during the school day, and staffing with non-qualified teachers. According to Principal Nixon, different perspectives were gained from her peers that benefited her as a new principal in assisting her to see the "big picture" during their face-to-face team meetings. She indicated that the issues experienced at her school were not an isolated case but were also experienced within the LELI cohort; therefore, exchanging ideas for addressing the aforementioned issues provided her with "creative" solutions to her own site-based issues.

Principal Nixon also indicated that she found the sharing time during team meetings very beneficial to her as a new principal. She communicated that she would like to see an increase in the number of school visitations so that she could have the opportunity to observe more on-the-job applications more specifically, "Instead of talking about it, you get to see how it is in action." Principal Nixon also recommended that the Blackboard assignments be shortened due to time spent on the portfolio. This principal mentioned that because the portfolio was aligned with the *Standards for Educational Leaders*, her mentor aligned the online questions within the



discussion board with each of the standards. She felt that this was another example of her mentor recognizing the need to minimize the amount of paperwork and focus more on aligning the standards to daily operations of the school.

In summary, it was stated by Principal Nixon that the LELI Program's mentor provided an open line of communication which made her feel supported. This principal noted that team meetings needed to be increased, and that LELI assignments needed to be reduced. Principal Nixon made it clear at the end of the interview that aligning the principal standards to daily operations of the school was the greatest benefit of the LELI Program.

#### *Principal Oliver*

Principal Oliver is an elementary (pk-8) principal in Region 8 that oversees a staff of 33 teachers with an enrollment of fewer than 500 students. When asked about her mentor and mentoring experiences within the LELI Program, this principal shared that her mentor was available and open to her inquiries at any given time. He provided feedback to her specific questions regarding elementary curriculum by tying them to the standards. Her mentor provided a contact name and number of a principal with a school with similar demographics to this principal's school. This principal indicated that this one act by her mentor provided her with valuable "insights" regarding her new partnered school.

Principal Oliver remarked that she did not understand the relevance of the standards until she participated in the LELI Program. Her mentor assisted her in making the standards relevant to her and her job performance. This principal indicated that during team meetings, her mentor would address each standard and have prescribed exercises that entailed in-depth discussions. She explained, "Each activity we were assigned helped to bring out the meaning of the standards for me."

Principal Oliver's mentor made her feel comfortable by welcoming her questions. He provided sound advice and encouraged this principal to network with other principals in order to provide input for solutions to problems encountered at her school. She shared, "Many times I felt like I wasn't meant for this job, that I couldn't do this job, and he would encourage me by telling me over and over that I was doing a good job." She also stated that her mentor provided support by assisting her with resolving specific school issues such as parental participation in afterschool functions. Since her mentor was a former principal, Principal Oliver remarked that she was confident in the resolutions he recommended because he had experience with a high percentage of parental participation at his school in afterschool academic activities. She also mentioned that in her opinion, one very important benefit of her mentoring experience was the open lines of communication that her mentor provided to her.

Face-to-face team meetings were beneficial to this principal; however, she indicated the need for more face-to-face meetings with her mentor in order to assist her in the roles and responsibilities of her new position. She shared that "the meetings were significant because they discussed real school situations as a team and how to resolve them by sharing different strategies." Principal Oliver remarked that a leadership quality that was developed through her mentoring experiences was the ability to network with other professionals in order to share successes and find solutions to similar problems within their schools. Her mentor connected this principal with human resources within her district and outside her school system as well. She continued, "He would find the resources available to help me seek possible solutions to my problems." She specified, "He taught us to network within our own peer group in order to build our knowledge base as new principals." She attributed the development of this new skill of networking to her "effective" mentor.

This principal concluded her interview by sighting face-to-face meetings as beneficial during her participation in the LELI Program. Principal Oliver indicated a need for more team meetings, and networking opportunities made available through her mentor as very beneficial. Although this principal cited both pros and cons within the LELI Program, Principal Oliver attributed her survival during her first year as a new administrator to her mentor.

### **Secondary Participants**

#### *Principal Broussard*

Principal Broussard is a secondary (9-12) principal with 70 staff members and more than 500 students in Region 1. At the beginning of the interview, this principal remarked that she did not realize the importance of a mentor until she participated in the LELI Program. Principal Broussard described her mentor as available through weekly telephone conversations and bi-weekly email correspondence. Her mentor provided her with resources such as articles and books that, according to this principal, were “my life-line.” This principal stated that upon reflection, the most beneficial activity was that of developing her portfolio. One of the requirements set forth by the LELI Program is the development of an electronic portfolio that addresses the *Standards for Educational Leaders* using the online and school-based activities. Principal Broussard shared that she could see the relevance of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* in her job. The examples provided by her mentor in addressing each of the standards assisted her in focusing on the “right expectations.” She continued by remarking that she experienced “overwhelming feelings her first year and that the support that she received from her mentor was monumental.”

According to this principal, no matter how much education or professional experience, nothing can prepare you for your first year as the “boss. She explained, “You feel as though you

are an island because everyone expects you to know what to do and have all the answers. I didn't have all the answers.” This principal articulated that she realized that she didn't know all the answers, but she recognized that she had been given a resource person who did through past experiences. In this principal's opinion, this resource person was a huge “gift” from the State Department.

There were several disruptions during the course of the telephone interview with Principal Broussard. The interruptions were caused by her faculty members. This principal stated that she maintains an open door policy, and she wished to be viewed as approachable by her staff members. I suggested continuing the interview at another time that would be more convenient for her since the flow of our conversation had been interrupted three times, but she insisted that we continue with the interview. She was able to multi-task between the interview questions and the questions randomly posed by staff members at different points throughout the interview.

Principal Broussard shared that her district did not provide any organized professional development for new principals due to budgetary and time constraints. Therefore, the LELI face-to-face meetings were informative and essential to building her knowledge-base in administration. She shared that LELI team meetings should have been scheduled monthly instead of every three months for new principals with no prior administrative experience. The meetings, according to this principal, were “meaningful and insightful” because they were directly related to aligning the school's day-to-day operations to the principal standards. Principal Broussard remarked that because she was so inundated with the day-to-day operations of her school, she did not have time to contact any of her colleagues outside of LELI face-to-face meetings. The team

meetings created a culture for “sharing and learning” about teaching strategies, personnel issues, parental concerns, comparing test scores, utilizing data, and implementing school improvement plans.

Principal Broussard also suggested that the LELI mentor should be assigned to the mentee for at least three consecutive years similar to mentors being assigned to new teachers through the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LATAAP). She articulated, “This would support the new principal during the first three years in their new role and provide constant input and feedback by an experienced principal to help refine the leadership skills of the new principal.”

Principal Broussard summarized her mentoring experiences were vital in completing the LELI Program requirements. This principal noted a need for more team meetings, and that the resources provided by her mentor were beneficial. Principal Broussard made it evident that the program pros far outweighed the cons.

#### *Principal Denton*

This secondary principal is an administrator in a Region 2 school, serving more than 500 students in grades 9-12 and a staff totaling 52. Her recollection of her mentor was that she assisted in building this principal’s knowledge base by sharing her own practical experiences and situations as an administrator. Her mentor covered district-wide policies and procedures but explained that there was the “spirit of the law and the letter of the law” when applying these policies and procedures. Principal Denton felt that this skill is developed through years of experience and with discernment. She shared that she felt her mentor had the ability to make rational decisions based on her years of experience coupled with discernment.

Principal Denton also stated that she held her mentor in high regard. She described her mentor as a principal in a very high-risk school with diverse problems. According to Principal Denton, her mentor had a wealth of knowledge and experience which added credence to her answers to the challenges she faced at her own school.

She shared a lot of practical experience and situations that she has been through as a principal. There is policy of what you should do, but there is also the practical way of how you deal with people. When we met with her it was very helpful for us to hear the problems encountered and how she handled them.

She added that this mentor was well-respected in their district because she conducted herself in a professional manner at all times. This principal aspired to emulate the professional mannerisms portrayed by her mentor.

According to Principal Denton, the Blackboard assignments were redundant and time-consuming, but the LELI team meetings were most beneficial. She explained, “Our mentor capitalized on our time together by making certain that we completed our LELI Program requirements and reserved time for sharing.” Her mentor allowed team members to talk about their school situations and share their concerns in an effort to allow for networking, all of which this principal found to be quite helpful. This principal shared that through group discussions feelings of isolation were diminished due to all the mentees experiencing some, if not all of the same challenges.

Upon further reflection, Principal Denton stated that “nothing could prepare me better than just doing my job and figuring it out.” She added that “having a mentor that made herself available to me was the most beneficial element of the mentoring experience.” Her mentor’s ability to share resources helped to support this principal in her daily experiences.

This principal outlined the leadership qualities that her mentor possessed as “good work ethics, openness to learning, and self reflection.” Principal Denton communicated that the

coping skills that her mentor possessed were directly related to her positive attitude. She noted, “Developing coping skills like my mentor is a professional goal for me.” She remarked that she aspired to become a strong, well-respected administrator within their district, mirroring the reputation of her mentor. She explained that since she did not participate in the LELI Program as an assistant principal, she felt very fortunate to have someone else’s experiences from which to draw upon when coping with her own school’s challenges of with meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

This principal concluded that the LELI Program was beneficial due to the positive mentoring experiences provided by her mentor. Principal Denton stated that the program requirements were time consuming, and that participating in the program before becoming a new principal would have been beneficial. Upon reflection, this principal commented that the most beneficial element of the LELI Program was her mentoring experience.

#### *Principal Franklin*

Ms. Franklin is a secondary (pk-12) principal with a staff of 15 and an enrollment of fewer than 500 students in Region 3. She was very abrupt and direct in her answers during this interview. When asked about her mentor and the mentoring experiences during her participation in the LELI Program, she noted that she participated in this program as an assistant principal. She felt that she had an advantage that her colleagues did not have. She shared that her mentor provided guidance by giving answers to questions in layman’s terms. Her mentor would go through the principal standards and explain what to do or how to handle situations such as the steps in developing the school’s mission statement by connecting them back to the standards.

According to this principal, this mentor also assisted by demonstrating how to find answers to problems in *Bulletin 741*. She also mentioned that her mentor assisted with program

requirements in ensuring that we completed the assignments in the binder. “This mentor “helped us cut through the red tape.” She remarked that he “simplified our assignments by redirecting our attention to the task at hand... he kept us focused.” Principal Franklin shared that each LELI team meeting had an agenda and was followed accordingly. She specified, “This kept us focused and to the point.” “It is easy to get side-tracked when everyone begins sharing their school challenges.” She remarked that the mentor ensured the integrity and relevance of the team meetings by adhering to the agenda and conducted within the specified time frame.

Principal Franklin noted that she felt there were too many interns in her group from differing school levels. The time spent during team meetings listening to concerns and issues that were not relevant to her needs was viewed as “wasted time.” She suggested that team meetings be focused on the needs of each principal, and that participants should be grouped according to division levels (elementary, middle, high school). She indicated that she felt that her mentor was available through phone calls and/or emails and that if she needed his assistance regarding technical issues with the LELI Blackboard site, she knew she could call on him.

In closing, I asked this principal specifically about what leadership qualities, if any, she felt she had developed through her mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. She stated that the leadership quality she acquired through this mentoring process was that of collaboration with her staff, modeled by her mentor. She explained that “as a leader, I guide my staff in the direction we need to go. I am a motivator, navigator and facilitator.” She attributed this skill to her mentor who kept her focused in order to “stay the course.”

In summary, Principal Franklin shared that she was successful during her first-year as a new principal because of her mentoring experiences. This principal noted that the mentor to mentee ratio needed to be reduced, and that participating as an assistant principal prior to the



principal experience was beneficial. Principal Franklin stated that her mentoring experiences within the LELI Program better prepared her for her new role as a school administrator.

#### *Principal Grant*

Principal Grant is a secondary (9-12) principal in Region 4 with fewer than 500 students and 31 staff members. She stated that she did not receive a lot of feedback from her mentor in regard to developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions of her current position. She indicated that her mentor's role was more of a facilitator of the program requirements. She added that although he did not address specific tasks within her job, he did provide her with assistance to navigate the program. She continued our interview by offering that she had participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal and although the program offered good information, she felt the two programs were repetitive in content and requirements. She referenced specifically the Blackboard online assignments as being redundant and time-consuming.

This secondary principal suggested that the mentoring process could be improved by adding more face-to-face meetings between the mentor and mentee. The team meetings were helpful but Principal Grant would have liked to receive an agenda for the meeting prior to the meeting date to better prepare for the meeting. She also suggested that future meetings should provide more professional development on walk-arounds, rather than focusing on finishing program assignments. She communicated that she would have benefited from discussing school-based case scenarios with other administrators during team meetings.

Principal Grant expressed a desire for a one-to-one relationship with her mentor that included opportunities for the mentor to visit the mentee's school. She shared, "I enjoyed the school visits that I made and would like to conduct more school visits with schools that were similar to my school's demographics in order to share similarities and differences within these

schools.” The insights shared between these schools would provide a beneficial network in regard to planning, implementing, and assessing strategies for school improvement.

This principal noted how her mentor answered her specific questions and provided her with examples of what to do through emails or telephone conversations. She remarked that “he prepared me well by discussing, reviewing, and aligning the standards to my role as an administrator.” She stated that the book, *Survival Skills for the Principalship* (Blaydes, 2007), was the best thing that she got out of the whole program because she used this book as her “Bible” for daily reference. Principal Grant explained that the aforementioned book sits on the right hand of her desk, and she refers to it daily.

Upon reflection of her mentoring experiences, Principal Grant noted more cons than pros of the LELI Program. This principal shared her desire for more team meetings and a reduction in program assignments. Principal Grant noted that the program requirements were repetitive because she participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal. Overall, this principal described her mentor as a program facilitator of the LELI Program’s requirements and her mentoring experiences as redundant from her experiences as an assistant principal.

#### *Principal Jackson*

This secondary principal is an administrator in a Region 5 school, grades 9-12, with fewer than 500 students and a staff totaling 34. Principal Jackson began the interview communicating the academic challenges that she faced during her first year as a new principal. She did participate in the LELI Program as an assistant principal and noted that she was better-prepared for the challenges of principalship due to that participation. This principal had a better understanding of the school improvement process that was addressed in the standards for principals. She remarked that through the exercises as an assistant principal in the LELI

Program, she was able to disaggregate data, identify teaching strategies, write a plan of action, and develop monitoring techniques to assess student progress. She stated, “The buck stops with you and as the leader of the school, you have to be ready to make tough decisions that make a positive impact on your school.” She remarked, “In a school like mine, the impact had to be instructional.”

Principal Jackson shared that her mentor was “outstanding.” Her mentor provided rich feedback regarding creating a positive school climate. Her mentor assisted her in making decisions that affected her school, students, staff, and community. She noted that “making the right decision is not always easy because you have to look at the big picture, and as the administrator, you have to keep focused on that picture.” This principal mentioned that her mentor was just a phone call away. She attributed her survival during her initial year as principal to the support given under the auspices of the LELI Program. She also remarked that her mentor provided her with human resources skills such as networking with appropriate personnel that could assist her at the district and state levels. The mentoring experience as described by Principal Jackson was “meaningful in preparing me for understanding my role as both the instructional leader and manager of the school.” She referenced that during face-to-face meetings, the mentees networked in order to share strategies to address their school improvement plan. She remarked, “This activity taught me how to make all the pieces fit together.” She indicated that making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) the first year as a new principal was a “stressful challenge.” She stated that her mentor prepared and supported her throughout her first year in becoming an effective leader in understanding and meeting AYP by providing weekly, continuous communication the first year.

The interview concluded by Principal Jackson stating that although the support and networking provided by her mentor were beneficial to her as a new administrator, the online assignments were repetitive and viewed as “busy work.” She suggested reducing the online assignments and increasing the face-to-face meetings to address real school scenarios.

#### *Principal Landry*

Principal Landry is a secondary (pk-12) principal with a staff of 26 and an enrollment of fewer than 500 students in Region 6. Principal Landry remarked in the beginning of the interview that he had been in the school system for a long time. Although he did not participate in the assistant principal program within LELI, he explained that due to his professional connections with district-level personnel and other school colleagues that he had a working knowledge of the principalship. He indicated that his LELI mentor did not have as many years experience as he did, and he shared that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” He explained that his mentor exhibited a “great deal of energy and enthusiasm,” but continued by noting that the program was a “waste of my time.”

Principal Landry shared that the team meetings were very well-organized. Agendas were issued electronically prior to the meetings, informing him of the purpose of each meeting. He noted that he enjoyed “visiting” with his colleagues during the team meetings. This principal indicated that he did not complete all of the assignments because he did not have time for “busy work.” He also communicated that he experienced difficulty with the Blackboard forum. Therefore, he was frustrated with the writing assignments. He concluded the interview by stating that if principals had more than 20 years as an educator in their district, they should not be required to participate in the LELI Program.

In retrospect, it was stated by Principal Landry that the LELI Program had no merit as evidenced in his documented sharing of experiences in the program. This principal noted that the program was not beneficial to him as a new principal. In summary, it was made evident by Principal Landry that the LELI Program should exclude first-year principals who have several years of educational experience.

*Principal Miller*

Principal Miller is a secondary (9-12) principal with more than 500 students and 44 staff members in his Region 7 school. Principal Miller interjected early on that the major benefit of his participation in the LELI Program was the networking facilitated by his mentor. He claimed “a lot of networking was generated through emails and telephone among his team.” This principal noted that the anecdotes shared during team meetings led to rich discussions. In those discussions, he added, there was a culture of sharing that the mentor created in order for us to self-reflect on what was done and what we could have done differently. He communicated that through the mentor’s feedback and input, “I had a better understanding of the responsibilities of an administrator.” His mentor also shared his own experiences, and Principal Miller commented that he was able to learn vicariously through his mentor’s experiences.

Principal Miller referenced specific tasks that he found challenging as a new administrator and provided examples of how his mentor assisted him. His mentor discussed how to set up professional learning communities, how to structure job-embedded professional development opportunities that were aligned to his school improvement plan. He stated that “those things have really been an asset to me as a new principal because my staff members view me as the instructional leader.”

This principal participated in LELI Program as assistant principal, so his portfolio was partially developed. He noted that he modified the portfolio to his new position. His mentor assisted him during team meetings in understanding, outlining, and aligning each standard to the roles and responsibilities of his new position. According to Principal Miller, “This gave me a clear vision of what meeting the standards really meant.” By examining each of the standards in-depth, Principal Miller indicated that it assisted him in developing his own leadership skills. He noted, “I am a good communicator and a better listener because I understand the importance of my role as the school leader as based on the standards of vision and collaboration.”

In closing, Principal Miller suggested that he would have liked his mentor to visit him on his campus to “shadow me a little, and let me know if I was doing well.” He indicated that this one-to-one time with his mentor would have helped him with providing feedback to his teachers, opportunities for providing affirmation, and more “me” time. This secondary principal also stated that he would have liked the opportunity to visit his mentor on the mentor’s campus to observe how the mentor handled situations.

#### *Principal Pearce*

Principal Pearce is a secondary (9-12) principal in Region 8 with over 500 students and 38 staff members. Mr. Pearce was the last interview that I conducted for this research study. He was very eager to share his mentoring experiences within the LELI Program because he recalled the introductory comment made by his team mentor, “You will survive your first year, let me provide you with some direction”. According to Principal Pearce, his mentor was very encouraging, open, available, professional, and helpful. He recalled that his mentor came well-prepared for team meetings by providing agendas that were well-organized with no wasted time. His mentor included case scenarios of his own experiences which were insightful and provided

examples of how to address issues at the secondary level. The mentor also provided opportunities for networking with other new principals. This time was viewed as valuable by Principal Pearce because it afforded the opportunity for the team to discuss challenges at the high school level such as the implementation of high school redesign. His mentor also provided them with resources, online sites, journals, articles, and human resources that addressed this particular school issue. He described his mentor as “a living example” because his mentor was a principal facing these same challenges at his own school. Principal Pearce communicated that his mentor laid the foundation for him to implement strategies to address high redesign within his secondary school which in his opinion, “saved me a lot of time and energy.”

When asked specifically about leadership qualities that Principal Pearce felt he possessed as a result of his participation in the LELI Program, he listed obtaining patience, understanding of stakeholders, being a mediator, and managing time. He went on to share that “educational knowledge, organizational skills, effective time management, and the desire to do an excellent job are all very important qualities that a new administrator should possess.”

Principal Pearce commented that because of the support provided by his mentor, Principal Pearce would welcome the opportunity to serve as a mentor to new principals within the LELI Program; he communicated that he benefited from his participation in the program, however, he would suggest more site visits, reduction of online assignments, shadowing of an experienced, effective mentor, and more collaboration between different schools and different regions.

### **Emerging Themes**

This research study utilized the three pre-existing pillars of the mentoring component within the LELI Program, including preparation, support, and leadership. The themes that

emerged from the responses of the participants directly relate to those three pillars, bearing qualitative evidence to the mentoring process within the LELI Program. The themes were systematically grouped according to similarities that emerged from the responses of the research participants. A list of themes was developed, codes were assigned to themes, and themes were placed into table format for easy readability. The three pillars that serve as the foundation of the mentoring component within the LELI Program are presented in Table 7. The corresponding themes identified by the data for the first pillar entitled, Preparation, were a) assistant principal participation in the LELI Program, b) excessive time requirement, and c) need for more on-site visitations. The themes identified by the data for the second pillar entitled, Support, were a) benefits of networking sessions and b) interpersonal attributes of the mentor. And finally, the themes that directly correlate with the third pillar entitled, Leadership, were a) practical application of the *LA Standards for Educational Leaders*, b) using mentor feedback, and c) using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making.

Table 7

*Pillars and Themes*

PILLARS	THEMES
Preparation	1A. Assistant principal participation in the LELI Program 1B. Excessive time requirement 1C. Need for more on-site visitations
Support	2A. Benefits of networking sessions 2B. Interpersonal attributes of the mentor
Leadership	3A. Practical application of the <i>Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders</i> 3B. Using mentor feedback 3C. Using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making



To clarify the relationship among the three pillars and the eight themes, a revised conceptual diagram is illustrated in Figure 3. Although the original conceptual framework (Figure 1) identified the LELI Program and the mentoring component within the program, the elements within the mentoring component were not identified. The original diagram contained the dichotomous avenues upon completion of the program, leading to either effective or ineffective leadership on the part of the participant. The revised conceptual diagram visually represents the components of the mentoring processes within the LELI Program, as well as the relationship between the three pillars established by the program itself and the themes that emerged from the respondents' replies to the interview protocol.

Much like the dichotomy in the original conceptual framework, the revised conceptual map features the dichotomy within the mentoring component of the LELI Program, namely individual accountability and team accountability. Since the team accountability or mentor – mentee accountability is at the heart of this research study, the themes, as suggested by the respondents, are located under the team accountability section of the conceptual diagram. The successful or unsuccessful completion of all program requirements is contingent upon many factors such as the mentor-mentee relationship.

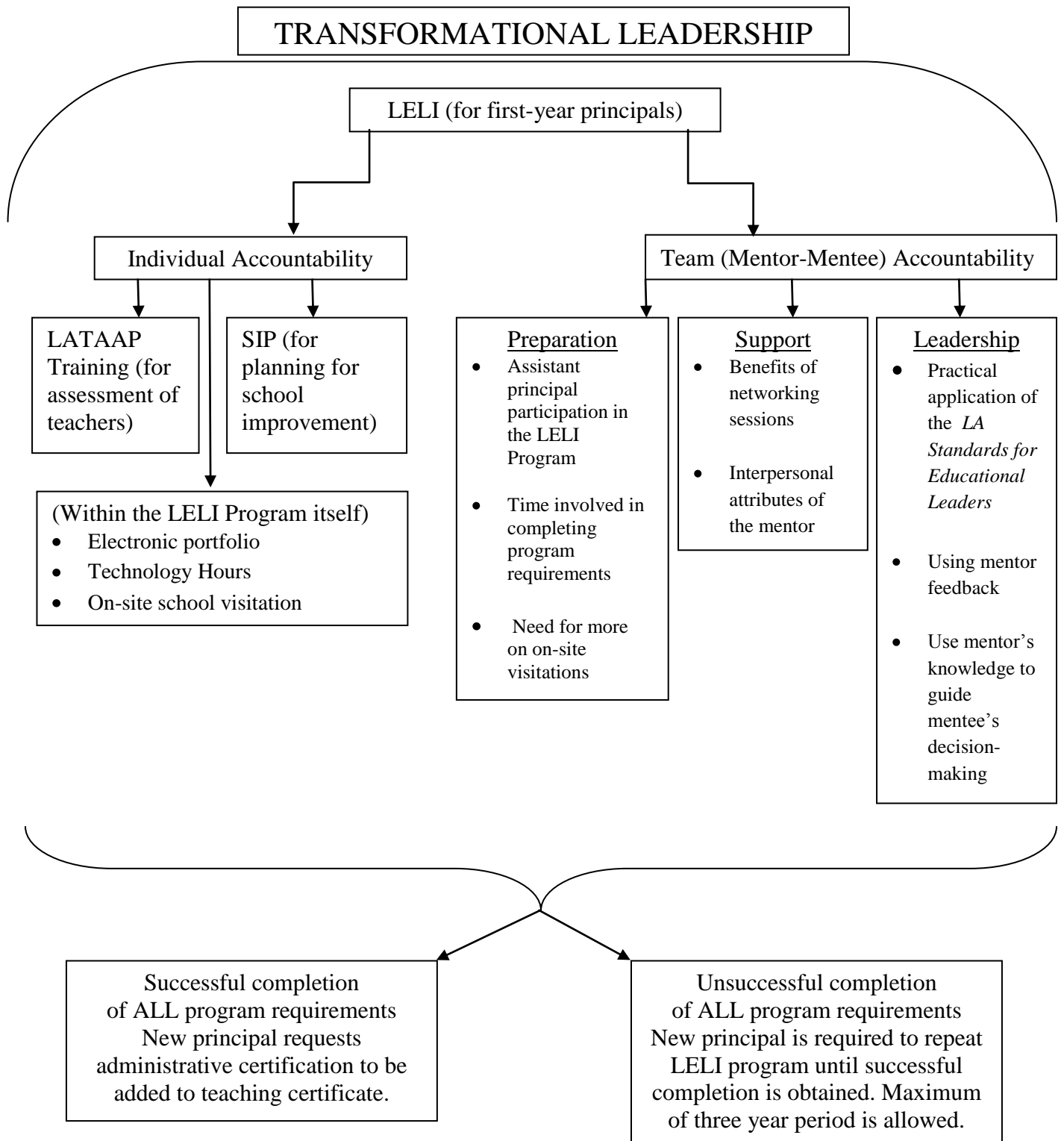


Figure 3 *Revised Mentoring Conceptual Diagram*

## **Pillar 1: Preparation**

One of the foundational pillars within the mentoring component of the LELI Program is that of preparing new principals for the roles and responsibilities of a school administrator (*LELI HB*, p. 5). The LELI Program attempts to prepare participants in their new roles and responsibilities by speaking directly about the *LA Standards for Educational Leaders*, engaging new principals in discussions regarding difficulties and obstacles faced on their campus, and affording on-site visitations by experienced principals with live feedback. According to a NAESP report (2008), preparing principals in their new role as instructional leaders is becoming an increasing challenge. Black and English (1986) noted that the primary purpose of administrative preparation programs should be given to obtaining knowledge and skills that prepare new principals in addressing situations during their first year.

For years, corporations have used on-the-job mentoring to offer developmental assistance to less-experienced workers by more-experienced workers. In an ERS study (2000), when asked about the strengths and weaknesses of their own preparation for the principalship, respondents identified “good on-the-job training under a fine mentoring principal” as a “strong plus.” This confirmation of the literature suggests that mentoring is a vital element for better preparing new principals.

The following paragraphs will demonstrate the connection between the pillar of preparation and the three themes including (1) participation as an assistant principal in the LELI Program, (2) excessive time requirement, and (3) the need for more on-site visitations. Findings for each theme will also be revealed in the discussion.

*Theme 1A: Assistant principal participation in the LELI Program*

In this research study, eight of the 16 principals, three elementary and five secondary principals, reported that they participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal. This was not known to the researcher at the time of sample selection. These eight principals expressed that they possessed a deeper understanding of the program requirements, better connections with the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, and the extended development of an electronic portfolio as a result of their earlier participation as assistant principals. The three elementary principals noted a clearer understanding of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* and the ease of application of these standards to day-to-day operations. The five secondary principals communicated a major advantage was the assistance with program requirements and understanding policies and procedures.

Principals Franklin and Nixon indicated that due to their participation in the LELI Program as assistant principals they were better prepared for the “lead role.” Principal Franklin shared that she had an advantage that her colleagues did not have as newcomers to the principalship due to the fact that she was prepared by her experiences in LELI as an assistant principal and her colleagues had not shared those same experiences. Principal Jackson stated, “The buck stops with you and as the leader of the school, you have to be ready to make tough decisions that make a positive impact on your school.” She also remarked that she was better prepared for the challenges of principalship due her participation in the program as an assistant principal. This principal indicated a direct positive relationship between participating as an assistant principal and preparation of a new administrator within the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

Even though he participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal, one principal did not feel participation as an assistant principal in the LELI Program sufficiently prepared him for his new role as a school principal. Principal Henderson stated that “nothing can prepare you for your first year as a new principal.” Although this principal had 20 years of experience as an educator, he communicated that the mentoring component of the LELI Program did not benefit him during his first two years as principal of the school.

This theme indicates that second-year principals who participated as an assistant principal, minus one respondent, believed the program was beneficial to them during their first year as principal. Those eight respondents who did not participate as assistant principals articulated that it would have been beneficial if they had participated in the mentoring portion of the LELI Program prior to their first year as principal. Since 15 of 16 second-year principals indicated that time spent in the program should extend for a period of no less than two years, the participation in the mentoring component of the LELI Program as an assistant principal serves as an important finding.

#### *Theme 1B: Excessive time requirement*

Three principals indicated that the time needed to satisfy program requirements was excessive. Because of the time-intensity of the assignments, three principals communicated that they would have preferred completing the program during their second year on the job. According to Principal Anderson, too much time was spent on completing program requirements instead of having time to focus on how the program would impact her in becoming an effective principal. Principal King remarked, “I would be a more effective leader if my time were focused on getting to know my faculty, staff, students, and parents instead of completing program requirements. I would have appreciated the [LELI] experience more.” Principal

Jackson mentioned that program requirements were difficult due to a year of survival in her new position. The program requirements that were mandated by the LELI Program did not alleviate the stress of her new position in addressing the challenges and issues of her school. This principal, along with the two others who mentioned the time factor required to complete program requirements indicated that the online discussion, completing the electronic portfolio, and the time spent posting reflections on the Blackboard site interfered with their the time necessary for their new job and job-related responsibilities.

Although only three principals identified the excessive time it took to complete program requirements, the findings for this theme indicate that the management of authentic work as a first-year principal and managing the requirements of an induction program to be of significant value to the reader or future program developers.

#### *Theme 1C: Need for more on-site visitations*

The purpose of the full-day school visitations is to prepare new administrators for real-time situations and to gain information that will assist new principals in providing leadership to their schools. School visits focus on the school improvement process, leadership development, and networking – all areas that prepare the school principals for their school-based roles and responsibilities. On-site visitations are referenced by five of 16 principals as preparing them in their new role. Ten of the 16 principals alluded to the need for more than one school visitation. Because on-site visitations were the topic of discussion during face-to-face meetings, on-line Blackboard forums, and in email discussions between the mentee and the mentor, principals indicated that the visitations prepared them for their new roles and responsibilities by providing models of action and decision-making.

Principal Grant expressed a need for more school visits in order to “visualize schools in action that are similar to my own school. This way I can see what works and transfer this into possible school improvement strategies for my own school.” Principal Nixon explained that on-site visitations were an opportunity to observe more on-the-job applications. “Instead of talking about it, you get to see how it is in action.” Both Principals Grant and Miller indicated that school visitations were vital in addressing school improvement issues. However, both shared the wish to have their mentors visit the mentees at the mentees’ home schools. Principal Grant noted that onsite visitations from her mentor to “observe me on the job and provide instantaneous feedback as to what I was doing well and what I could do better” would be beneficial to her as a new principal. Principal Miller also stated that he would like the opportunity to visit his mentor on the mentor’s campus in order to “observe how an experienced principal handles situations and get a feel for the culture established by his mentor.” Each principal who mentioned this theme in their response clearly articulated how they viewed on-site visitations as beneficial in the preparation process within the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

The findings identified within this theme suggest that both the mentor and mentee would like additional opportunities to visit each other’s schools, gaining insight about the school culture, school programs, and school management. Since reciprocal visits were identified as possible providers of increased understanding and application of skills, these findings substantiate its impact on preparing new principals for their roles and responsibilities in their home schools. As reported by Ellen Delisio (2007), educational researcher and reporter for *Education World Online*, on-site visitations between principals allowed time between

professionals to “discuss all aspects of the principalship, including personnel issues, internal and external communities, staffing needs, budgetary problems, teacher/staff evaluations, time constraints.”

## **Pillar 2: Support**

The second pillar within the LELI Program is providing ongoing support and guidance to new principals by the team mentor (*LELI HB*, p.5). Mentors are available for discussion to the mentee regarding day-to-day challenges; provide research based practices for implementation, and network with resources and contacts for mentees to utilize in order to handle future obstacles. Mentors also assist and support first-year principals in completing LELI Program requirements designed to assist new principals in becoming instructional leaders. Ferrandino and Fafard (2008) remarked that mentoring programs connect principals with people who can help them test ideas, reflect on their own practices, model effective practices, navigate tough situations, and affirm their approaches. Weingartner (2009) denoted that networking is the key to this process.

Networking within the LELI Program includes online professional development learning opportunities, utilizing Blackboard as a medium for communication. Face-to-face team meetings are also a platform to discuss day-to-day issues and expand on specific topics of interest. Mentors share their experiences related to current practices in schools in order to build capacity and provide leadership. With the sharing of best practices by the mentors and mentees, a network is developed that provides an ongoing support system between mentor and mentee.

Lipton and Wellman (2001) noted that the mentoring process equips the mentee with problem solving and decision making skills, provides both support and challenge, and facilitates a professional vision. But in the early days of principalship, a new administrator needs a network



that will provide support. According to Weingartner (2009), supporting new leaders during their transitional period with extemporaneous support can promote growth beyond the first year.

From the data, two themes emerged, including (1) benefits of networking sessions and (2) interpersonal attributes of the mentor. Each of the themes was defined by quotes and paraphrased material from the research participants. The following paragraphs will demonstrate the connection between the major theme of support and its two themes. Additional findings will also be reported.

#### *Theme 2A: Benefits of networking sessions*

Networking is the sharing and exchange of ideas, information, and best practices between the mentor and the mentee. In most networking situations, the numbers of mentors and mentees allow for multiple exchanges of information and resources. In this research study, all but one of the principals reported that the networking that occurred during team meetings was beneficial in helping him or her gain information and resources to become an effective leader. Principals Denton and King both noted that their mentors created networking opportunities that provided “a wealth of information.” Principal Nixon commented that “a lot of networking was generated through emails and telephone conversations among my team members.” Opportunities for sharing school issues and solutions to challenges faced by first-year principals were allowed by Principal Denton’s mentor. Principal Covington indicated that her mentor helped to develop a network group among their cohort members that extended past the team meetings into online discussions. Each respondent who identified the benefits of the networking sessions within the mentoring component of the LELI Program, indicated that the open communication and sharing with their mentor proved helpful and supportive.

According to a 2008 NAESP report, “Principals have greater need for group-process training than in traditional programs.” Daresh (2001) indicated that mentees gain professional self-confidence by witnessing “theory into practice” and sharing experiences through networking opportunities. Principal Nixon explained that her mentor provided her with real tips or “tricks of the trade” during face-to-face meetings. She went on to add that the different perspectives gained during the team meetings were beneficial. Ten of the 16 principals listed the topics discussed at team meetings essential to building their “knowledge base” as administrators. Principal Anderson stated that the team meetings created a “culture for sharing and learning.” Three of the ten principals who alluded to the benefits of team meetings remarked that the team meetings should be prescriptive to the needs of the new principals, that is, they should be organized according to the needs of principals in elementary, secondary, and specialty schools. Principal Franklin communicated that team meetings must be established based on the needs of each principal, grouping them within appropriate school level groups. Six principals indicated the need for additional team meetings other than those scheduled by the LELI Program. Three of the six principals, Elliott, Henderson, and Istre, all offered that the additional face-to-face meetings should have more emphasis placed on one-to-one meetings between mentor and mentee, providing the necessary support of each individual principal.

Networking provides an emotional support system to the new principal as the job roles and responsibilities unfold. Principal Broussard remarked that she experienced “overwhelming feelings” her first year. She indicated that the support she received from her mentor during face-to-face meetings was “monumental and meaningful.” Principal Jackson described her mentoring experiences as “meaningful in preparing me for understanding my role as both the instructional leader and manager of the school.” She referenced that during face-to-face meetings, the mentees

networked to share strategies to address their school improvement plan. According to this principal, "...this activity taught me how to make all the pieces fit together." Principal Nixon also indicated that she found team meetings very beneficial, providing the necessary support that this principal required.

The findings for this theme indicate the benefits of networking include the face-to-face interactions between the mentor and mentee, the human resources available through shared experiences, and the professional development that undergirds the LELI Program. These three aspects of networking that were specifically addressed by the respondents in relationship to the support activities within the mentoring component of the LELI Program prove to impact the new leader in his or her new role as principal.

*Theme 2B: Interpersonal attributes of the mentor*

Attributes are often called intelligences, and as educational expert Howard Gardner explained, "An intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (1983/2003, p. x). Since the mentoring process is built around the concept of communication and collaboration between two professional individuals, Gardner's interpersonal intelligence is the most frequently used attribute during the mentoring process. It is the belief of this researcher that the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is contingent upon the pairing of the two, based on the interpersonal attributes of both the mentor and the mentee. The Qualities of Effective Mentoring, contained in the *Louisiana Mentoring Module* (2006), outline several of the same attributes identified by the research respondents. Mentors are the key element within the mentoring component of the LELI Program. Twelve of

16 principals referenced their mentor in a positive manner. Descriptive words, such as “supportive,” “encouraging,” and “available,” were noted by the first-year principals who participated in this research study.

Principals Covington, Nixon, Oliver, Henderson, and Pearce all indicated that their mentors provided support and assistance during their first year of administration. According to Principal Pearce, his mentor was “...encouraging, open, available, professional, and helpful.” He added that due to the support from his mentor, Principal Pearce aspires to become a mentor within the LELI Program.

Principals Denton, Broussard and Elliott all referenced their mentors as “available.” Principal Denton remarked that her mentor possessed “good work ethics.” This principal communicated, “I aspire to become a strong, well-respected administrator within my district, mirroring the reputation of my mentor.” Principal Broussard regarded her mentor as her “life-line.”

Principals Anderson and Elliott described their mentors as very encouraging. According to Principal Anderson, her mentor “always made me feel like I could do anything.....I could handle any situation.” Principal Elliott shared that her mentor was encouraging by providing feedback to specific questions that she had as a new principal. She stated that her mentor was “someone who guided me along when I felt like my hands were tied and not sure what direction to go.”

Principals Miller, Oliver, and Istre articulated that their mentors made them feel supported through regular communication. Principal Oliver explained, “Many times I felt like I wasn’t meant for this job, that I couldn’t do this job, and my mentor would encourage me by telling me over and over, that I was doing a good job.” Principal Istre communicated that his

mentor was there for him whether it was via email, Blackboard, telephone, or during face-to-face meetings.

Three principals referred to their desire to emulate the professional mannerisms of their mentor. Principal Denton referenced her mentor's "wealth of knowledge and experiences" as adding credence to her advice. Principal Jackson shared that her mentor was an "outstanding" professional in her field. Principal Pearce referred to his mentor as "...professional and helpful."

Principal Landry communicated that his mentor did not have as many years experience as he did and stated, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." He continued that his mentor exhibited a "great deal of energy and enthusiasm." This principal was the only one interviewed who did not indicate a beneficial relationship with his mentor. He stated that "the program was a waste of time."

The findings identified within this theme suggest that both the mentor and mentee must actively pursue a two-way trust, take risks, share real concerns, and follow the recommendations of the mentor when the mentee is out of his or her own comfort zone. These data affirm the necessity of the investment in positive mentor-mentee pairings within the LELI Program. It is these findings that indicate a true support system is necessary for the mentee to approach his or her job responsibilities with confidence.

### **Pillar 3: Leadership**

The third pillar within the LELI Program is building leadership capacity in new principals through the mentoring process (*LELI HB*, p.5). The LELI Program builds leadership capacity through activities that provide opportunities for meaningful interaction between mentor and mentee. Professional development opportunities require mentees to reference and apply the principal standards to day-to-day operations. The mentor assists the mentee in building effective

leadership skills through the application of principal standards while immersed in the LELI Program's activities. All activities within the mentoring portion of the LELI Program are based on the *Five Models of Professional Development* identified by NSDC (Sparks et. al, 1989). The *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* are the basis for the professional development opportunities used for building leadership skills of new principals. Real-life applications of the principal standards by new principals are noted by Lindley (2009) as the transferring of theory into practice. He commented,

The goal is to help the mentee recognize the connection between the real and the conceptual. In this way, the mentee understands that the standards provide a realistic framework for conceptualizing the role of the principal, thereby broadening the mentee's perception of the principal's role (p. 147).

According to the 2008 NAESP report, mentors play a vital role in assisting the mentee in developing leadership skills. First-year principals need the assistance of mentors to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to adequately fulfill their new role (Leithwood, et al., 1992). Zachary (2000) noted that the focus of mentoring is moving away from a product orientation to a process-oriented model. The mentees' application of leadership skills in day-to-day operations enables them to transform their schools into a place where teachers and students "do better" (Kiper, 2007). The literature suggests that mentors play a crucial role in building the leadership capacity of new principals.

In the following paragraphs the concept of building leadership is discussed. Included are quotes and paraphrased material from the respondents regarding the three emerging themes. The themes are (1) practical application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, (2) Using mentor feedback, and (3) using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making.

### *Theme 3A: Practical application of the Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*

Daresh (2004) asserted that mentoring programs should assist new administrators in applying theory into practice. Connecting the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* to the day-to-day operations of new principals is one of the ways mentors noted in this study provide mentees with support. Nine of 16 principals commented that their mentors assisted them in connecting daily school operations to the standards for principals. Principal Oliver remarked that she did not understand the relevance of the standards until she participated in the LELI Program. Her mentor assisted her in making the standards relevant to her daily job performance. Principal Anderson shared that she could “see the relevance of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* in her job.” The examples provided by this principal’s mentor in addressing each of the standards assisted her in focusing on the “right expectations.” Principal Franklin remarked that her mentor would outline the standards and link practical school situations to each standard, helping her to identify her leadership strengths and areas of improvement. Principal Henderson commented that his mentor “prepared me well in discussing, reviewing, and aligning the standards to my role as an administrator.” Principal Miller also noted that his mentor assisted him in understanding, outlining, and aligning standards to the roles and responsibilities of his position. According to this principal, “This gave me a clear vision of what meeting the standards really meant.” Principal Miller also added that the leadership activities assisted him in developing his leadership skills, identifying both his strengths and areas for improvement. It is this connection to the leadership pillar that is clearly identified by the respondents.

The findings for this theme indicated the application of principal standards to day-to-day activities is beneficial to the new principal in building his or her leadership repertoire. The respondents in this research study cited the discussion, reviewing of key concepts and standards,

and application of the principal standards as elements of the mentoring portion of this program that assisted them in building leadership capacity.

*Theme 3B: Using mentor feedback*

In an organizational context, feedback is the information sent to an individual or group about its prior behavior so that the individual or group may adjust its current and future behaviors to achieve the desired results. The application of feedback in education, and more specifically to the system of mentoring has a singular intent - "continuous improvement." Communication that focuses on continuous school improvement must be effective and constant. Nine of the 16 principals interviewed mentioned "ongoing communication" with their mentor. Principal Anderson stated that "any time I had questions; my mentor responded quickly and provided me with good insights." Principal King remarked that feedback from her mentor included suggestions and recommendations based on the mentor's professional experiences, ultimately guiding the mentee's own leadership journey. According to Wilmore and Bratlien (2005), mentees gain hands-on experiences and feedback from their mentors. The experience of their mentors allows mentees the acquisition of the knowledge and skills (Shank, 2005).

Three of the nine principals communicated that their mentors provided them with resources necessary to find out the answer to their questions. Principal Pearce mentioned that his mentor provided him with resources, online sites, journals, articles, and other information that addressed school issues. This principal described his mentor as a "living example" for him to emulate. He indicated that he had actually patterned his own leadership actions after his positive role model.

Four principals shared that the discussions led by their mentors provided guidance in their decision-making processes. Principal Miller claimed that his mentor discussed the



importance of professional learning communities and assisted this principal in structuring job-embedded professional development opportunities aligned with his school improvement plan. Principal Franklin indicated that her mentor was just “a phone call away.” Her mentor could be contacted via email, telephone, or in person for discussions relating to school issues, assisting Principal Franklin in strengthening her leadership collection. Principal Nixon explained that through discussions with her mentor, a culture of sharing was developed where the ultimate challenges of leadership in action were discussed. This new principal shared that through mentor feedback and input, “I had a better understanding of the responsibilities of an administrator. My mentor shared his own professional experiences, therefore, I felt as though I was able to learn vicariously through my mentor’s experiences.” Principal Nixon clearly connects this theme that focuses on receiving feedback from the mentor to the Leadership pillar within the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

Principal Jackson recognized that her mentor provided her with rich feedback that assisted her in making decisions that affected her school. She noted that “making the right decision is difficult at times and having a sounding board is beneficial.” The availability of her mentor was instrumental in what she implied as “survival” during her initial year as a new principal. Using feedback from her mentor clearly assisted Principal Jackson in defining her leadership skills during her initial year as a school administrator, supporting the necessity of feedback within the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

Principal Grant was the only principal interviewed that indicated that she did not receive adequate feedback from her mentor in regards to developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of an administrator. When probed for more information, Principal Grant replied, “I would prefer not discussing this any further. My mentor works at the central office, and I am not

comfortable speaking about her.” Although the researcher reiterated that all responses would be confidential, this principal preferred to refrain from commenting. It was evident that the lack of feedback from her mentor proved not worthy of discussion for this principal, ultimately leading the researcher, and possibly the reader, to wonder whether this lack of communication had a negative effect on the respondent.

The findings for this theme indicated the mentoring component within the LELI Program used mentor feedback to guide mentee progress throughout the program, as well as mentor feedback to improve the activities and engagement of the program participants. Respondents in this research study cited the necessity of ongoing communications, the need for a mentor sounding board, and the need for a mentor who had walked the same path as that of his mentee. These were identified as elements of the LELI program that assisted the mentees in building their own leadership capacity.

### *Theme 3C: Using mentor’s knowledge to guide mentee decision-making*

Decision-making is the key to transformation. It is one of the key character traits distinguishing effective school leaders from school managers. Decision-making is defined as leaders attempting to transform their environments...in hopes of achieving the goal of higher levels of student success (Kiper, 2007). Interactions based on decision-making are fundamental to the mentor-mentee relationship within the mentoring component of the LELI Program. Seven of the 16 principals interviewed credited their success with decision-making, an integral element of leadership, during their first-year as principal to their mentors’ sharing of their own professional experiences.

Principal Denton recalled that her mentor assisted her in building her administrative knowledge base by sharing her own practical experiences and situations as an administrator.

Principal Elliott also recognized the value of drawing upon the experiences of her mentor and applying them to her own school's challenges. Principal Pearce stated that his mentor included case scenarios and his mentor's experiences were insightful and practical when dealing with school issues. Principals Denton, Elliott, and Pierce made a direct connection between the necessity of their mentor's experiences in assisting with the mentee's decision-making and practical application of the mentee's leadership skills, solidifying continued mentoring for increasing leadership capacity for new administrators. Discussions of both successful and not so successful decisions by the mentee allowed the mentor to help guide the mentee toward a better solution. During school visits, the mentees could observe their mentor in real-time decision-making, and watch the immediate response of students and teachers.

The findings for this theme indicated that decision-making was a key element in the overall leadership ability of the mentee. Through case scenarios that helped to develop a pool of possible solutions to resolve problems and through working with authentic scenarios from the mentee's campus, the mentors and mentees identified resources for funding, research-based strategies, school improvement planning, and related school processes. It is these findings that solidify the need for decision-making opportunities within the mentoring component of the LELI Program, all in an effort to build leadership capacity.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The findings that emerged from the data articulated the need for a strong mentoring component within an administrative induction program. Although mentoring relationships were initiated during the mentee's first year as principal, many of the respondents indicated that the mentoring relationship should begin when the new principal served as an assistant principal. The actual mentoring time between the mentor and the mentee was highlighted as the most needed by

the majority of the respondents, demonstrating that face-to-face communication and problem solving were beneficial to the respondents. Further findings within the study focused on preparation, support, and leadership capacity building. These findings indicated that onsite visitations, networking, and establishing a relationship with the mentor were key elements in whether the mentoring process assisted in the development of a better-informed, more-confident administrator who felt competent in handling the day-to-day operations within the school. From school improvement efforts to identifying resources to making curriculum decisions that would benefit student achievement, it was determined that the mentor helped the mentee to “walk the talk, and walk the most productive path.”

From these findings, the reader can infer that a mentor must assist the mentee in building his or her leadership capacity likewise, one might infer that utilizing high visibility techniques, opting for only professional ethical decisions, and planning for academic success may prove crucial to the mentoring process, as well as to any induction program that targets new administrators.

The final chapter of this dissertation is a discussion of the findings and their implications on the mentoring component of the LELI Program. Special attention will be given to the role of the mentors and the mentoring experiences provided within the program.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### **Introduction**

This qualitative study investigated the perspectives of second-year principals regarding mentors and their mentoring experiences in the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program during their first year as an administrator. This chapter contains an overview of the research study, the discussion of the findings, and the relationship of the findings to the three foundational pillars of the mentoring component within the LELI Program. The pillars explored include preparation, support, and leadership. Limitations, study implications, recommendations for future research, and concluding thoughts are also included in this chapter.

#### **Overview of the Study**

This study examined year-one experiences and perspectives of second-year principals regarding the extent to which their mentoring experiences in the LELI Program prepared them for their new role as a school administrator. This research study investigated the perspectives of elementary and secondary principals who successfully completed the LELI Program in the 2007-2008 academic year. Two principals representing each of the eight educational regions within Louisiana were interviewed via telephone. Similarities and differences between the mentoring experiences of the principals were explored. Reported data were categorized according to their educational division – either elementary or secondary. Information indicating whether the principal participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal prior to the principalship was also disclosed.

Historically, studies of mentoring have focused on mentoring in business and in teacher preparation programs. There are limited empirical studies addressing the mentoring of first-year

principals. Therefore, it was important that this phenomenological study collected insights from those principals who participated in the LELI Program as first-year principals.

The specific focus of this study was to examine the question: What were the perspectives of first-year principals regarding their experiences with mentors and mentoring within the LELI Program? Three sub-questions were also used to further investigate the perspectives of the principals. Sub-question 1 focused on the elements within the mentor's experiences that were most crucial in the preparation of the first-year principal. Preparation, as defined by the LELI Program (*LELI HB*, 2007), are actions that bring about readiness in the leader, such as online discussions regarding leadership skills, face-to-face meetings with other mentors and mentees, and creating a personal portfolio demonstrating leadership understanding and practice. Preparation activities included within the mentoring process were investigated so that perspectives of the respondents regarding these activities could add to the phenomenological content of this study. Sub-question 2 focused on support elements demonstrated by the mentor that were most crucial to the success of a first-year principal. Support, as defined by the LELI Program (*LELI HB*, 2007), are the actions and words shared by the mentor to the mentee in order to bring about growth and understanding on the part of the mentee. Respondents' perspectives regarding their interactions and conversations with their mentors added to the phenomenological content of this study, underscoring the importance of the mentoring relationship within this induction program. Sub-question 3 focused on the elements, presented by the mentor, that were most crucial in refining the leadership practices of first-year principals. Leadership, as defined by the LELI Program (*LELI HB*, 2007), encompasses all activities that guide the new administrator toward the application and understanding of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*. Data collected from the respondents regarding the mentors' assistance with the application of the

standards to real-time situations added to the phenomenological expanse of this study. Again, since mentoring as a phenomenon can only be investigated through the insights of the participants in a mentoring relationship, this study captured the perspectives of the mentee, or the new administrator.

The data from each first-year principal were collected through telephone interviews, after an initial contact via email. All of the research participants elected to be interviewed via telephone rather than face-to-face. The principals willingly shared their perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. Their responses regarding mentoring experiences provided the researcher with information and insight about the mentoring component of the LELI Program.

### **Discussion of Findings**

There are three pillars around which the results of this study were recorded. They serve as the foundation of the mentoring component of the LELI Program: (1) preparation, (2) support, and (3) leadership. These three pillars are pre-operative divisions established by the program, and served as the three divisions around which the interview protocol was established. After rigorous analysis of the data, eight themes emerged from the data and were categorized by the researcher according to their relationship to each of the three pillars. Both the pillars and themes will be examined within this chapter. Themes are important to the reader because they clarify the anomalies and give parameters to each pillar. The findings that correspond to each pillar and theme will also be discussed in the following sections.

#### *Pillar 1: Preparation*

Actions that bring about readiness in the leader are at the core of the definition of Preparation, as identified within the LELI Program (*LELI HB*, 2007). These actions include

online discussions regarding leadership skills, face-to-face meetings with other mentors and mentees, and creating a personal portfolio demonstrating leadership understanding and practice. Although these aspects of Preparation were identified in the handbook, there are three findings that are supported by the data from this research study, including participation as an assistant principal, excessive time requirements, and the need for more on-site visitations. Each of the findings will be discussed in subsequent sections.

*Theme 1A: Assistant principal participation in the LELI Program*

Although eight of 16 research participants spoke about participating first as assistant principals, the remaining eight principals did not participate in the LELI Program as assistant principals. This difference was mentioned by the remaining eight principals as detrimental to the survival of their first year as new principals. This finding causes one to reflect upon the need for a two-year versus a one-year program, as well as the possible need for a more developed alignment between year one and year two participation in the LELI Program. It is evident that regardless of participation in LELI as an assistant principal or as a principal, mentoring is a necessary component of an induction program that should span over the course of two school years and serve as a key force in the preparation of the new administrator.

Eight of the respondents completed a year of requirements in the LELI Program as an assistant principal. Participating in the LELI Program as an assistant principal allowed the assistant principal the opportunity to investigate his/her own leadership skills and abilities prior to becoming the administrator of a school. In Harris' (1998) dissertation, he indicated that mentoring aided assistant principals in learning their jobs and preparing for future jobs. Likewise, participation in the LELI Program as an assistant principal was identified from the data as a key element in preparing first-year principals in their new role. Since eight of the 16



new principals participated in the LELI Program while serving as an assistant principal, this particular finding was brought to the forefront. These new principals reported that their experiences in the LELI Program as an assistant principal better prepared them for their roles and responsibilities as a new principal. Principal Franklin, for example, attributed her ability to “stay the course” and take the “lead role” during her first year as a new principal to the fact that she participated in the LELI Program as an assistant principal. Although mentoring relationships were initiated during the mentee’s first year as principal, many of the respondents indicated that the mentoring relationship should begin when the new principal served as an assistant principal.

To understand the process by which new principals are prepared for their future principalship, Mac Corkle (2004) suggested that studies must explore the reasons that influence assistant principals to move into the position of school principal. This study by Mac Corkle reported that the mentoring experiences provided through induction programs greatly influence assistant principals in preparing them to become principals. Such results indicate that specific mentoring opportunities, such as the face-to-face meetings, Blackboard discussions, and onsite visitations, are beneficial for new assistant principals in preparing them for their new role. In the present study, the actual mentoring time between the mentor and the mentee was highlighted as the most needed by the majority of the respondents, demonstrating that face-to-face communication and problem solving were beneficial to the respondents. Hence, the findings that emerged from the respondents’ perspectives articulated the need for a strong mentoring component within an administrative induction program.

As identified by the state of Indiana, and as recognized by other states in the nation, estimates claim that as many as half of the current administrators will reach retirement age within the next five years (NAESP, 2008). With this alarming statistic, the urgency of filling

vacant administrative positions has reached critical mass (NAESP, 2003). To ensure that future administrators possess the depth of knowledge and expertise needed to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as school administrators, the process of mentoring may be crucial. According to a SREB 2007 report, the public has the right to require quality leadership from an administrator the first day on the job. Consequently, mentoring provided by an established induction program has the possibility for ensuring quality leadership to meet demands of both assistant principals and principals. The knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances experienced through the LELI Program by assistant principals are noted as beneficial to a smooth transition from the role of assistant principal to principal, demonstrating that this finding is critical to the LELI pillar entitled Preparation.

*Theme 1B: Excessive time requirements*

Seven of 16 study participants referenced the excessive time involved in completing LELI Program requirements. Nine principals made reference to the benefits of the program requirements. Seven principals noted that by completing the program requirements as assistant principals, they had an advantage that the other nine principals did not possess – additional time to spend on their job responsibilities. The knowledge of the LELI Program requirements was understood by new principals who had completed the program as an assistant principal, but these same requirements were new and required more time for new principals that had not completed the program as an assistant principal. Balancing the program requirements with their authentic workload was difficult for those principals who had not participated in LELI as an assistant principal. Since excessive time requirements were mentioned repetitively throughout the interviews, this finding is worthy of discussion.

Many educators report that participation in a mentoring program is vital to the success of first-year principals (Daresh & Playko, 1992). According to a SREB report (2007), the mentoring experiences facilitate the application of principal standards to the day-to-day operations. In order to meet induction program requirements, new principals experience the roles and responsibilities of their mentor school principal. Seven out of the 16 new principals referred to this particular theme as vital to preparing them for their first year as a new principal.

Although several research respondents referenced the LELI Program requirements as interfering with their day-to-day job responsibilities, several national mentoring programs were also found to contain similar induction program requirements. Within the LELI Program, mentors are required to: 1) assist new principals in adjusting to their new role; 2) provide support which includes feedback on management and instruction; 3) identify solutions to school improvement issues; and, 4) provide structured opportunities for reflection regarding educational practices. Mentees in the LELI Program are required to: 1) reflect on new roles and responsibilities by applying principal standards to day-to-day school operations through reflections which include off campus school visitations; 2) respond to assignment readings and case scenarios via Blackboard postings; 3) network with team mentees and mentor on development, implementation, and monitoring of school improvement plan; and, 4) develop electronic portfolio documenting application of *LA Standards for Educational Leaders*.

The Virginia Department of Education (2000) mentoring program aligns with the LELI Program in that they both incorporate opportunities for communication and feedback between the mentor and mentee; enlist professional development activities that incorporate technology usage; share school improvement plans and teacher observations; and align with state standards. The National Association of State Boards of Education (2008) reported that in the state of

Illinois each new principal will complete a state-mandated mentoring program during the first year of service. As outlined by the New York State Education Department, new principals are also held accountable for successful completion of program requirements in their state's mentoring program. Both New York and Louisiana mandate that first year principals successfully complete induction program requirements within similar time constraints in order to become certified in administration.

Participation as a principal in the LELI Program provided opportunities to network with other mentors and mentees, identify school improvement solutions, gain support and guidance from a mentor, and apply principal standards to day-to-day operations. These elements are directly contained within the mentoring component of the LELI Program, and were viewed by the participants as necessary and meaningful. However, program requirements such as online discussions and the completion of the personal portfolio were deemed as too lengthy in scope and as providing additional tension to the new administrator in his or her professional setting. Although all program requirements are intended to prepare a principal for his or her responsibilities on the school campus, it was evident that certain program requirements did not hold the significance intended for the research respondents, and quite frankly, might have had an adverse effect on the preparation of the new principal for his duties.

#### *Theme 1C: Need for more on-site visitations*

Fifteen of 16 principals interviewed stated that the mentoring component of the LELI Program should include more on-site visitations. In addition to this finding, nine of sixteen participants identified onsite visitations as contributing to their beliefs about effective leadership. The on-site visits addressed concerns such as school improvement and managerial processes. According to Principal Istre, on-site visitations provided an understanding of the balanced

approach principals must play as instructional leader and managerial leader. Principal King linked school-based observations to professional development opportunities for her staff as a result of her school visitation. Principal Grant obtained a better picture of her high school schedule that integrated math interventions aligned with school improvement strategies. On-site visitations caused Principal Miller to revisit his vision statement in order to support the school improvement plan and lead his staff to student success. The primary purpose of visitations is to allow novice principals to observe experienced school leaders in their school environments, while the novice principal focuses on acquiring new knowledge, skills, and dispositions (LELI, 2008). School visitations involve principals who have achieved success as instructional leaders and who have moved their schools to higher levels of performance by aligning standards and high expectations to teaching and learning practices (RIDE, 2009).

As part of school improvement efforts, school visitations are often required of new principals. In a study conducted by Fink and Resnick (2001), they reported that through a series of school visitations in District Two of New York City, leadership practices did improve. District Two was transformed by high academic expectations by requiring new principals to integrate school visitations into their school improvement plans. Principals observed, discussed, and analyzed specialized practices and implementation methods. Visitation opportunities were identified as a major turning point in raising student achievement for District Two school district.

Nine of 16 principals in this research study attributed the development of their school improvement plans to on-site visitations. The remaining seven principals viewed on-site visitations as an opportunity to observe a veteran principal in action. Principals Henderson, Nixon, and Denton all commented on the benefits of networking with other professionals. They

indicated that the networking sessions were learning opportunities that allowed both the mentor and mentee to share ideas and strategies in the pursuit of a common goal-academic excellence.

School visitations provide the opportunity for new principals to network with veteran principals. Not surprisingly, the Western Oregon University report (2009), that listed school visitations under the Components of a Comprehensive Induction System, supports those visitations as being a vital component in mentoring programs (Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Humphrey, Wechsler & Bosetti, 2007). Darling-Hammond (2007) also noted that principals responding to a national survey listed peer school visitations as beneficial during their first year as a new principal in gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to address school improvement thereby raising student achievement. Both the Western Oregon University report and the Darling-Hammond research support the need for on-site visitations within an induction program, primarily for the venue of mentor-to-mentee sharing of best practices.

Although school visitations might appear insignificant to the outsider, the depth and complexity of interpersonal interactions could be explored during on-site visitations, allowing novice principals to engage in discussion regarding best practices and quality processes. From school improvement efforts to identifying resources to making curriculum decisions that would benefit student achievement, it was determined that the mentor prepared the mentee to “walk the talk, and walk the most productive path” during onsite visitations at the mentor’s school. This finding was significant in its scope, since visits to other sites often remove the principal from his or her own home school. This removal from the home-base campus might be the primary reason why more site visits are not initiated by LELI Program developers. Although online discussions were included in the program requirements, the data indicate that the online discussions could be replaced by more on-site visitations, allowing the continued face-to-face interactions between the

mentor and the mentee. Additional on-site visits might also contribute to the practical application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* in the mentee's school, providing causative impact to the preparation of the new principal for his or her leadership obstacles.

### *Pillar 2: Support*

The LELI Program (*LELI HB*, p. 5), defined the pillar of Support as the actions and words shared by the mentor to the mentee in order to bring about growth and understanding on the part of the mentee. In this study the data produced two findings – the first finding focused on the benefits of the networking sessions and the second finding focused on the attributes of the mentor. Subsequent sections are devoted to these two findings.

### *Theme 2A: Benefits of networking sessions*

In the case of the LELI Program, 13 of the 16 principals noted networking sessions as the most vital part of the mentoring program due to the support it provided through the sharing of experiences, regardless of whether they followed a face-to-face or online format. The three remaining principals did not reference networking as playing a vital role during their participation in the LELI Program; rather, they referred to it as just another meeting to attend that required time away from their school. It should be noted that one of the three principals who did not cite networking as beneficial did not find any components of the program beneficial. This finding underscores the need for networking opportunities that are based solidly on a positive mentor-mentee relationship, and more importantly, on a professional relationship that has the potential to extend long after completion of the program and support both administrators in their day-to-day operations.

In *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* online (2009), the definition of *networking* is listed as “the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions

specifically to cultivate productive relationships for employment or business.” Meeting for the sake of meeting is not what Newby (2004) suggested when she articulated the goal of networking. Networking, as noted by Newby, the Associate Executive Director, of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, was to support principals in refining their role as instructional leaders through meetings and conversations with other principals. The goal of the meetings, therefore, was to assist principals in transforming their schools by minimizing ineffective practices. A NAESP report (2004) argued that in order for networking to be effective, principals must identify and implement proven effective best practices that can be applied to their schools.

Building on the concept of networking, the Principal’s Leadership Network (PLN), a regional program of The Education Alliance at Brown University and in partnership with NAESP, was organized in 2000 to allow k-12 principals to investigate solutions to leadership challenges through site visits and conversations. Participating principals shared instructional principles, values, and tools proven to improve student achievement. Networking provided informational, insightful, problem-solving and career-enhancing contacts.

Since networking supports the transfer of information and because principals play a vital role in the education of our nation, the Academy of Principals (2009) has developed an online forum for educators to engage in professional discussions in order to share best practices. They believe that professional excellence can be achieved through direct, shared knowledge and leadership experience from effective educators. When exploring this online forum, principals who participate can converse on topics ranging from management to instructional and assessment tools, thereby giving them opportunities to transform their leadership skills through networking practices.



Although networking provides opportunities for principals to work on their leadership skills, Glasman (1995) noted that new principals spend a majority of their time on problem solving. As such, case scenarios offer an effective means of gathering best practices in order to gain insight and apply solutions to school-based challenges. Case scenarios also promote assessment before decision-making, expanding the awareness of school-based issues and responsible actions to address those issues. The LELI Program contains face-to-face meetings as well as an online discussion forum, and both are integral parts of the networking process, helping principals to form solid judgments and a repertoire of best practices. Although the respondents indicated a preference for face-to-face meetings with their mentors and other mentor-mentee groups, networking opportunities were identified as a necessary component within the mentoring processes of the LELI Program, establishing the support system necessary for growth in new administrators, validating the second pillar of the LELI Program entitled Support.

*Theme 2B: Interpersonal attributes of the mentor*

The act of mentoring is not a new concept. In fact, the word “mentor” was found in Homer’s *Odyssey* (Fagles, 1996). The Greek king and warrior, Ulysses, entrusted his son to Mentor, a friend, to educate and guide his son in his 20-year absence. Today, mentoring has been applied to both corporate and educational settings. Thirty-two states currently have enacted laws and policies related to mentoring programs for new principals. The effectiveness of these programs relies heavily on the mentors. Berk and his colleagues (2005) defined effective mentors as being committed to the mentoring process, providing resources, offering professional guidance and direction, encouraging open communication, providing feedback and input, creating professional learning opportunities, and sharing personal experiences.

Although these responsibilities are not attributes as such, the list does provide insight as to the wide range of responsibilities required of the mentor. In the present study, the mentor's attributes (see Table 3) were identified by 11 of the 16 principals as contributing to the effectiveness of the relationship between the mentor and mentee, demonstrating that the attributes of a mentor are directly correlated to the roles and responsibilities of the mentee. These new principals reported that their LELI mentors provided ongoing support and guidance during the program's activities. The five remaining new principals did not mention their mentor's attributes as contributing to their interpersonal relationship.

Interactions between mentor and mentee come with great responsibility on the part of the mentor. Mentoring is the act of passing information and skills to another person (Clutterbuck, 1999). As stated in BENZHI (2008), one of the world's fastest growing networking communities for teaching and administration positions in China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, "If done correctly, mentoring can make the transition from academic theory to practical application seamless" (p.1). This networking community utilizes guidelines similar to those in the LELI Program in securing mentors for both teachers and administrators. Since mentors guide the mentoring process, their attributes are critical to the success of the mentor-mentee relationship and its long-term impact on the mentee.

In a 2007 study conducted by The Center for Coaching & Mentoring, it was noted that mentors were judged by their behavior during interactions with their mentees. Several attributes of good mentors were identified in this study. These findings included that the principal mentors listened, were always available, provided feedback, cared, encouraged, supported, communicated, and shared with their mentee. Similarly, these attributes were among those listed by the 11 of 16 new principals in regard to their LELI mentors. The interpersonal attributes for

mentors assist new principals in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, to lead their schools (*Louisiana Mentoring Module, 2006c*), ultimately providing support for the new administrator through effective communication and effort on the part of the mentor.

### *Pillar 3: Leadership*

Activities that guide the new administrator toward the application and understanding of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* were identified as the defining aspects of Leadership within the LELI Program (*LELI HB*, p. 5). Data collected from the respondents articulated three findings for this pillar, including practical application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, using mentor feedback, and using mentor's experiences to guide mentee's decision-making. In the following sections, each of the findings will be discussed.

#### *Theme 3A: Practical application of the Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*

This theme had the largest number of responses, with all 16 respondents declaring that the practical application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* proved instrumental in building their own leadership capacity. As such, this finding was established as the most prominent of all findings discovered. Consistent with NCLB's emphasis on school accountability, each new principal highlighted the principal's primary function of instructional leader as being critical to his or her success, as opposed to the principal's traditional role as manager. Responding to the need for the new principal to understand and utilize state accountability standards to guide his leadership practice, LELI mentoring, which focused on the practical application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, was shown to be a critical component within the LELI Program. Principal Covington said that the mentoring process helped her apply the principal standards to her daily job activities. Principal Istre cited

that with the assistance of his mentor he was able to align the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* to his daily administrative duties. The alignment of the principal standards to daily school operations by the LELI mentor was also mentioned by Principal Nixon as beneficial. Principal Broussard remarked that her understanding of the relevance of the principal standards in her job was due to her mentor, and that the understanding helped her in her application of leadership practices.

Since the enactment of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* in 1997, research by Marzano (2005) and his colleagues identified effective leadership skills, practices, and school operations in direct relationship to increased student achievement, again supporting leadership practices that can transform the school into a high achieving institution. Marzano's work speaks directly to the application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, declaring that the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances that are required of new principals are critical to academic achievement.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) published a report differentiating the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) from individual state standards. The six *ISLLC standards* served as a national model for state leadership standards, guiding and aligning key state leadership policies that included recruitment, preparation, licensure, and continuous professional development. The *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders* mirror the *ISLLC standards* in content and number, with Louisiana's list having an additional standard aimed at professional development. In a brief issued by the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices (2003), it was noted that other states, including Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, and Ohio, required candidates in their induction programs to develop a portfolio that demonstrated their efforts to meet the state's standards for school principals. Louisiana also

shares the portfolio requirement in its own principal induction program, ensuring that the program participants demonstrate a working knowledge of leadership standards and provide evidence of the practical application of those standards.

Connecting state standards to principal performance was addressed by Hallinger and Heck (2000), who stated that school principals “exercise a measurable, though indirect, effect on school effectiveness and student achievement.” Leadership impacts the quality of teaching in schools, and that leadership is outlined by the principal standards of vision, teaching and learning, school management, school improvement, professional development, school-community relations and professional ethics (Coker, 2005). School leaders must provide focus and direction for curriculum and teaching, while managing the organization efficiently to support student and adult learning. Principal Jackson articulated this contention when she said her mentor assisted her in recognizing her role as the school’s instructional leader and manager through the development of the school improvement plan. Principal Pearce noted that his mentor modeled *Standard Two-Teaching and Learning* by developing and implementing strategies to address high school redesign. Principal Miller stated that his mentor modeled Standard One by communicating his vision to all stakeholders through various means of communication. Principal Franklin commented that her mentor modeled professional ethics necessary for speaking with stakeholders in order to encourage school-community relations. The principals in this research study stated the relevance of applying the principal standards to school improvement issues while addressing academic excellence.

More than 40 states have since adopted the ISLLC standards or used them as the basis for their own standards. In many of those states, the standards continue to play an important role in informing key policies affecting the training, licensing, induction, professional development

and evaluation of school leaders. Although the lasting effects of the LELI Program have not been studied, the findings in this section speak directly to the need for real life applications of the standards to real time, school-based situations. Such applications are likely to be helpful to the new principals in their leadership journey, supporting LELI's pillar 3 entitled Leadership.

*Theme 3B: Using mentor feedback*

Skills vital to the relationship with their mentors were identified by 11 of the 16 principals and included learning from the mentor's expertise, receiving feedback openly, obtaining knowledge and skills necessary to become a successful leader in the school organization, developing a broader networking base, and using the mentor as a sounding board. These findings are directly related to building leadership capacity through role modeling and honest conversations about real-life solutions to real-time situations.

Feedback is information received from others defining perceptions of observations, actions, or comments that have been said. According to CiteMan Network Management Realty (2008), feedback is received daily from different sources. Feedback empowers more open communication and improves performance. Feedback is specific, goal-oriented, and directed toward future improvement. When the principal encounters difficulties and needs consultation on how to handle various challenges, feedback from the mentor helps him test ideas, reflect on his own practices, model effective practices, navigate tough situations, and affirm his approaches (NAESP, 2003).

Eleven of 16 new principals in this study remarked that the challenges of leadership they encountered in their daily decision-making often required the assistance of their mentor. The mentor assisted the mentee in handling daily challenges by sharing possible strategies and techniques to address the issues at hand. This finding was echoed throughout the responses,

indicating that feedback was a necessary element of the mentoring process. Principal Covington noted that the feedback obtained from her mentor regarding staff observations was instrumental in how she conducted informal observations and when she provided meaningful recommendations to her staff. Principal King stated that her mentor provided beneficial suggestions and recommendations based on this principal's school-based issues and concerns as they developed. Principal Oliver said that her mentor provided feedback specific to elementary curriculum issues in addressing after-school tutoring activities. Principal Grant remarked that her mentor's feedback was beneficial in addressing the planning, implementation, and assessment of school improvement strategies at her school. Consistent with a majority of respondents feedback is recognized as crucial to refining the skills necessary to survive in any new position wherein positives are affirmed and negatives redirected (Zachary, 2000).

During face-to-face meetings, online discussions, emails, and telephone conversations, the intent of feedback offered by the LELI mentors is to provide insights to new principals, guiding their leadership practices. Continuous and direct feedback from the mentor assists in preparing the new principal as an effective school leader. The constructive feedback provided by the mentor should be based on information identifying the issue and brainstorming solutions that are applicable to the situation at hand (NAESP, 2003). By using the prescriptive feedback of experienced mentors, new principals are provided with proven and effective practices that can be applied in their schools. This finding, articulating the connection between beliefs and practice under Pillar 3 entitled Leadership, solidifies the need for feedback to inform the leadership beliefs and practices of aspiring administrators at all academic levels.

### *Theme 3C: Using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making*

Half of the 16 respondents indicated that their mentor's knowledge and decision-making skills proved beneficial to building their own repertoire of understanding and decision-making, assisting the respondents in making better informed decisions. This finding specifically addressed the knowledge and decision-making skills of the mentor. Mentors are selected because of their experiences and decision-making successes, so consequently, the mentees have much to learn from their assigned mentor. Mentoring, as noted by NAESP (2003), partners new principals with mentors who can assist them in a variety of ways. The mentor's role is to guide and develop effective leadership skills by modeling the self-reflection of effective practices, testing and assessing the implementation of new ideas, researching solutions to challenging situations, and affirming and reinforcing the mentee's approach to day-to-day practices.

According to Daresh (2001), new principals learn more from their mentors regarding their profession and gain more insight into their own needs, visions, and values than from any other learning experience. Fink (2003) supported Daresh's (2001) premise stating, "...there is nothing better when training new principals than the guidance of the mentor" (p. 34). Eight of the 16 principals in this research study agreed with Daresh in this premise regarding the importance of mentor experiences. These eight respondents noted that utilizing the leadership skills and experiences of their mentors was beneficial to them when they had to make a tough decision. Principal Broussard stated that capitalizing on the past administrative experiences of her mentor was beneficial when developing her school improvement plan. Principal Denton shared that she learned from her mentor's experiences. This principal noted that her mentor was the principal of a school that shared the same demographics as Principal Denton which added credence to the LELI mentor's experiences with high-risk students. Principal Pearce commented that the case



scenarios based on his mentor's administrative experiences were instrumental in forming the decisions at his school because they were "proven to work". Mentees in this research study gained insight and knowledge due to the interactions that focused on the experiences of their mentors.

The benefits of mentoring depend on successful sharing from the veteran mentor to the novice mentee, focusing on experiences and solutions in the mentor's history. Bloom and Warren (2003) indicated that due to the mentoring experiences provided to new principals, the novice administrators are better prepared as instructional leaders. Bloom specifically stated, "You don't learn how to be a principal in graduate courses, you learn it on the job" (p. 25). The mentors' role in sharing their experiences in the LELI Program is to expedite the learning curve for new principals, guiding their leadership beliefs and practices in order to assist with the challenges faced during their first year in their administrative role as the instructional leader (LELI, 2008).

### **Summary**

This research study investigated the perspectives of first-year principals who were mentored through the LELI Program. Their perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences and the role their mentors played in their leadership development were collected, rigorously analyzed, and reported. Using the three pre-existing pillars of the mentoring component of the LELI Program, including preparation, support, and leadership, as the parameters for data reporting, the responses from the research participants were divided into eight themes that correlated to each of the three pillars, including, (1) assistant principal participation in the LELI Program, (2) excessive time requirement, (3) need for more on-site visitations, (4) benefits of networking sessions, (5) interpersonal attributes of the mentor, (6) practical application of the

*Louisiana Standards of Educational Leaders*, (7) using mentor feedback, and (8) using mentor's knowledge to guide mentee decision-making.

The respondents were grouped according to their school divisions, either elementary or secondary principals, so that reporting of the data was consistent among like participants. As a group, the elementary principals felt that the mentoring process was nurturing; they reported that their mentor experiences successfully enhanced their growth during their first year as a new principal. Their responses indicated that the mentoring component of the LELI Program proved beneficial to their survival as a first year principal. Secondary principals commented on their mentoring experiences as beneficial, but reported the LELI Program requirements, such as participating in online discussions and completing their portfolio, were somewhat time-consuming, and often infringed upon the principals' day-to-day responsibilities. As a whole, the respondents in this research study agreed that the mentoring component of the LELI Program should be extended from one year to two years. Only face-to-face mentoring should occur in the first year of participation, allowing mentees to establish the basis for a strong mentoring relationship first, and to complete program requirements second.

### **Limitations**

A number of limitations in this research project emerged as the project progressed, impacting the scope and data collection process. Since interviews for this study were aimed solely at new principals, a self-reflective picture of each principal's leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions was obtained. Although the likelihood for outliers in data is expected in a research study, no outliers were noted. The data collected from the respondents in the present study directly referred to the three pillars of the LELI Program, including preparation, support, and leadership. The data did not diverge from the pillars because the interview protocol

questions were directly aligned with the three pillars. Since the researcher relied strictly on the data collected from audio telephone interviews, there existed an additional limitation that excluded face-to-face interviews and survey administrations. Although limitations in this study have been identified, it is important to note that the strength and utility of this study are relevant to not only to induction program executives, but to the mentoring process within the LELI Program. Since the LELI Program continues today, it is imperative that the data from this study inform future operations and long-term goals, ensuring that the mentoring process is beneficial to all participants.

### **Study Implications**

Mentoring is critical. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee determines the success of the mentee as the school leader. The respondents in this study specifically referenced more time with their mentor for individualized face-to-face discussions, as well as a desire for more on-site school visitations. Program developers and facilitators should also note that the respondents communicated the need for a mentor during their first year as a principal, and delaying their completion of the LELI Program requirements until the second year as a school administrator. As evidenced by the study's findings, there is a strong connection between the principal standards and the practices of the mentee as the instructional leader of the school. There must be a clear understanding of these standards before they can be applied to the day-to-day operations of the school by the first year principal, so induction program developers and facilitators should allow opportunities for deep understanding of the standards and connected practice through practical applications. Although standards for educational leaders outline criteria for effective practice, standards are not the only means for assuring connected practice, hence the need for effective mentoring.

Mentoring experiences between the mentee and the mentor assist in the development of the instructional leader skills of first year principals. In order to develop instructional leadership, it is important to include opportunities for mentoring sessions so that mentees acquire first-hand knowledge and experiences from their mentors. Therefore, the mentoring experiences provided by the LELI Program to first-year principals were imperative to their growth, as evidenced by their comments regarding the preparation, support, and leadership opportunities within the LELI Program. The implications from the results of this study indicate the need for a mentoring component within induction programs in order to build leadership capacity in the new principal.

The results of this study may inform other states in their efforts to implement preparation, mentoring, or induction programs for first-year principals. The importance of the results from this research study could impact the mentoring practices within this program to allow more individualized time with the LELI mentor. The results of this study may inform the current LELI Program facilitators in enhancing the existing program.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Further research studies focusing on the development of leadership skills through mentoring programs and its relationship to state standards could be conducted. The educational significance of this study could impact further studies within the LELI Program, comparing the findings of other state programs that enlisted the support of mentors. Additional studies could be conducted to extend this research in order to obtain information from both the mentee and their mentor regarding the mentoring relationship established within the LELI Program.

This study indicated the need to investigate the perspectives of first year principals in regard to their mentoring experiences within the LELI Program. The perspectives from the elementary and secondary principals addressed the gap in the literature regarding mentoring of

first year principals. Mentoring is identified as a vital element for preparing and supporting new principals (ERS Study, 2000). The findings from this research may enlighten other states contemplating the creation of a mentoring program for first year principals and inform the foundation and parameters for a new mentoring program. More specific suggestions for future research are offered below.

Research targeting responses of teachers, parents, and students may be used to corroborate principals' self-perceptions regarding his or her own leadership. Corroboration from teachers, parents, and students, affirming or refuting the perspectives of the first-year principal, would assist program developers and state boards of education members in funding and supporting new principals' growth and retention through mentoring programs.

Corroboration from mentors regarding the mentees' perspectives of the LELI Program could also be targeted. An extended study could be implemented to fully understand the impact that mentors have on the preparation, support, and leadership for principals during a period of three years—from the initiation into LELI and for two years following completion of the program requirements. According to Orr (2006), it takes principals three years to make school improvement progress in their school. The study could focus on how the mentoring experiences through the LELI Program informed their decision making and whether their decisions have been based on the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*.

And lastly, a study utilizing an electronic survey administered to first-year principals who have completed the LELI Program in future years would gather additional information to extend the results of this study, informing LELI Program facilitators so that the program could continue

to improve. A database of longitudinal information would support and provide insight into LELI's program implementation and impact on leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions of first-year principals.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study supported the importance of the mentoring process within the LELI Program to first year principals. The respondents openly spoke about their experiences that prepared, supported, and built leadership capacity. It is the belief of this researcher that the relationship between the mentor and mentee determines the level of achievement that the mentee believes he has attained. The foundation of the relationship is based upon the "perfect fit" between the mentor and the mentee, as established through program activities and matching mentor attributes to mentee needs, helping to build confidence and a broader experience base in the mentee.

Principal Denton shared that the mentoring process was beneficial because her mentor was a practicing principal of a school with similar demographics. Principal Istre noted that his mentor was also an elementary principal that had acquired a local award that he desired for his own school. This principal stated that this shared vision with his mentor motivated him to succeed at accomplishing this professional goal. Principal Nixon said that due to the fact that her mentor was a successful elementary principal within her school district, she felt that she had an advantage to becoming an effective school leader. Principal Broussard remarked that she was not confident of her abilities during her first year as a new principal. Because her mentor was encouraging and nurturing, this principal noted that she succeeded and survived her first year. Principal Jackson commented that her mentor she was paired with was "outstanding" because

she applied the principal standards to the day-to-day operations of her school. The preparation that the mentor provides to the mentee is only as strong as the relationship between them.

The LELI Program specifically trains mentors through professional development sessions that focus on building relationships with the mentee and facilitating program requirements. Veteran principals who serve as LELI mentors should possess certain attributes that ensure effective and proven practices that will guide new principals during their first year in their new roles and responsibilities. For example, Principal Anderson loved her mentor because she was very encouraging and kind. Principal noted similar feelings of admiration for his mentor who he described as encouraging, open, available, professional, and helpful. Principal Landry stated that his mentor was energetic and enthusiastic. Principal Istre said that his mentor was supportive, positive, and encouraging. This principal attributed his survival and success during his first year to his mentor. The attributes identified by these respondents are also found in Table 3. Although there are many more attributes of a mentor, it was apparent to this researcher that the attributes were commonly found to be those that prepared, support, and helped to build leadership in the mentees.

This research study also investigated the support provided by the mentor to the mentee. A variety of venues were identified in the LELI Program. The respondents indicated that the new principal's first year should be spent utilizing the knowledge of the mentor to guide the decision-making of the mentee. Through face-to-face meetings and on-site visitations, the respondents were provided with opportunities for reflection and discussion. Principal Nixon explained that networking was generated through emails and face-to-face meetings that provided "real tricks to the trade." Principal Grant cited on-site visitations as beneficial to her during her first year in regard to addressing areas of improvement within her school. According to a SREB report

(2006), learning opportunities such as school visitations, created by the mentor for the mentee, are meaningful, engaging, and directly related to the competencies necessary for leading school improvement efforts.

Although the face-to-face meetings and onsite visitations were acknowledged as beneficial in the first year as principal, the respondents indicated that including the application of the standards to practice should be reserved for the second year of participation in an induction program. The respondents stated that the second year of mentoring should focus on assisting the new principal with making connections between principal standards and day-to-day operations. The respondents also indicated that online discussions and networking provided solutions to challenges and issues that they faced in their own school settings. As an example, Principal Franklin said that through the mentoring process her mentor guided her in applying the principal standards to daily situations. Principal Oliver commented that her mentor made the standards relevant to her daily job performances, while Principal Anderson stated that her mentor helped her to focus on “the right expectations” of her job.

NAESP (2008) defined mentors as models of continuous learning. Mentors are responsible for increasing the knowledge, skills and leadership capacities of their mentee through reflective professional development opportunities aligned to standards. This study substantiates the significance of mentoring experiences for the development of leadership skills in new principals, setting the stage for long-term administrative success. The LELI Program pairs an experienced principal with first-year principals to share best practices, affording the new principals with opportunities to transform their school so that school excellence can be attained. In conclusion, this study has defined and substantiated the need for a mentoring component within induction programs for new administrators. True mentoring relationships extend well



beyond their initial year and can sustain administrators throughout their career. It is also valid to argue that the administrators should have a voice in creating the parameters of the programs that prepare and mentor them, matching the components to their needs and leadership styles, while pairing mentors from similar school settings with the mentees. Notations and reflections, as well as an ongoing portfolio of documents that demonstrate a deep understanding and application of the *Louisiana Standards for Educational Leaders*, should be maintained. Since many administrators learn by doing, it is imperative that the induction program allows opportunities for both the mentor and the mentee to observe, interact, and reflect on real time situations in the school settings. Although the mentoring components of the LELI Program were acknowledged as beneficial by the respondents, it is the belief of this researcher that continuous improvement of a program or school is dependent on stakeholder satisfaction and leadership capacity that sustains growth.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### PREPARATION

1. In what ways did your mentor assist you in acquiring the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances necessary to fulfill your role as an administrator?
2. How did your mentor prepare you in aligning the Standards for Louisiana Principals to your role as an administrator?
3. What modifications or recommendations would you make to improve your mentoring experience?

#### SUPPORT

4. In what ways did your assigned mentor assist you in understanding your responsibilities as an administrator?
5. What did your mentor do that was most helpful to you? Please specify.
6. The literature suggests that new administrators are under supported in their new roles. In what ways has your mentor provided support for you?

#### LEADERSHIP

7. In what ways has your mentor helped you with specific tasks in your role as an administrator? Please provide examples.
8. As a result of your participation in the mentoring process, what leadership qualities do you feel a new principal should possess?
9. From your experience, what are the benefits of mentoring?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share concerning support, preparation, or leadership?

## APPENDIX B

### PERMISSION TO CONTACT PARTICIPANTS LETTER

October 1, 2008

Mr. Lionel Johnson  
LELI State Coordinator  
Louisiana Department of Education  
2758-D Brightside Drive  
Baton Rouge, LA 70820

Dear Lionel Johnson:

I spoke with you on the telephone in August 2008 to solicit your assistance in providing pertinent information regarding the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction program. I am requesting permission to contact new principals that successfully completed the LELI Program in 2007-2008. I will randomly select two new principals from each region to conduct one-to-one interviews regarding their perspectives regarding the mentoring component of the LELI Program. I am also requesting the survey results from the End of the Year LELI conference held in June 2008. Specifically I would like to request permission to use the feedback gained from this survey for my dissertation titled, *The Perspectives of First-Year Principals Regarding Their Experiences with Mentors and the Mentoring Process*.

I would appreciate your response to my request to contact the LELI 2007-2008 graduating class and to acquire the survey results in writing, so that I may include your permission letter in my dissertation. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation in the completion of my research study. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sabrah H. Kingham  
Doctoral Candidate, University of New Orleans  
sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org  
337.802.0246 cell  
337.479.1110 fax



## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE LETTER

Dear Participant:

I am pleased to be conducting a research project based on the effects of mentors and mentoring on first-year principals. Specifically, I am interested in learning more about the new principals' experiences with the Louisiana Educators Leadership Induction program and their perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring component of this program. Through a random sampling process, you were selected as a potential participant in the study, and your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Should you agree to participate in the study, I would conduct an interview with you regarding your perspectives to the mentoring component of the LELI Program. To maintain your confidentiality, no specific questions related to your institution will be included.

A protocol test (i.e., pilot study) was conducted, and the interviews conducted ranged between 45 and 60 minutes. I expect the forthcoming interviews' durations to be fairly equivalent.

Each participant will be provided with an electronic copy of the interview protocol no less than 48 hours prior to the interview to permit him or her to become familiar with the topics to be discussed during the interview. Once the interview concludes, I will provide each participant with an electronic transcript of the interview. Each participant will be asked to review the transcript and clarify, amend, or elaborate upon any responses he or she feels are ambiguous, incorrect, or vague.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. I fully understand if you wish to decline. Please contact me by email at [sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org](mailto:sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org) or telephone at 337.802.0246 if you would like to participate in the study or have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully,

Sabrah Kingham, Doctoral Candidate  
University of New Orleans  
Daytime: (337) 802-0246 Evening: (337) 598-2458  
e-mail: [sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org](mailto:sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org)

## APPENDIX D

### RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Perspectives of First-Year Principals Regarding Their Experiences with Mentors and the Mentoring Process Within the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of mentoring and mentors on first-year principals who have completed the LELI Program successfully.

A qualitative study will be conducted. One-to-one interviews will be the research tool utilized to gather data for this study. A minimum of 16 interviews will be conducted statewide.

#### Procedures

The procedures for this study include one-to-one interviews with second-year principals who have successfully completed the LELI Program. The interview will take place at a mutually agreeable place and time that is convenient for you. Interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later time. Compressed video conferencing will be conducted for those principals in outlying regions. An opportunity will be afforded to you to review your interview transcript for accuracy. It is at that time that you may wish to add comments to its contents.

#### Risks

As a participant in this study, there are no risks to you. Any concerns or issues that you may have should be relieved by the assurance of confidentiality.

#### Benefits of this Study

The benefits of this study include providing a degree of insight into the mentor/mentee relationship of the LELI Program for first-year principals, what aspects of the mentoring component appear to be helpful in preparing new principals for their new role, and what improvements may be needed. At the conclusion of this research study, you may contact the investigator for a summary of the findings.

#### Extent of Confidentiality

Your identity as a participant in this study will be held confidential. Your first name will be used only. The name of your school and your school parish will not be used. Only the investigator will be able to identify you individually within the collected data.

The audio-tapes of interviews and the transcripts of the interviews will remain in the primary investigator's possession except when being transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's business office and will be destroyed after one year of the completion of the study.

#### Compensation

No monetary compensation will be given for participation in this study.

### Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to refuse to answer any question during the interviews process. You are also at liberty to withdraw from participating in the study at any point without penalty.

### Approval of Research

This research study involving new principals who have successfully completed the LELI Program has been approved by the UNO Institutional Review Board for Research and by the Louisiana Department of Educational Leadership.

### Participant's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I have the following responsibilities: (a) to participate in a 45-60 minute tape-recorded interview; and (b) to review the transcript of my interview for accuracy.

### Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the conditions of this study and my role within this study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. Based on the information provided in this consent form, I give my voluntary consent for participation in this study.

I understand that I may withdraw at any time without penalty, I agree to abide by the conditions set forth in this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this study, I may contact:

Sabrah H. Kingham  
(337) 802-0246  
sabrah.kingham@cpsb.org

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL NOTICE

***University Committee for the Protection  
of Human Subjects in Research  
University of New Orleans***

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*Campus Correspondence*

Principal Investigator: Tammie Causey  
Co-Investigator: Sabrah Kingham  
Date: March 11, 2009  
Protocol Title: "The Perspectives of First-Year Principals Regarding Their Experiences with Mentors and the Mentoring Process Within the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction (LELI) Program"  
IRB#: 01Apr09

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of New Orleans and federal guidelines. The above referenced human subjects protocol has been reviewed and approved using expedited procedures (under 45 CFR 46.116(a) category 7).

Approval is only valid for one year from the approval date. Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project!

Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Chair  
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

## APPENDIX F

### HUMAN PARTICIPANTS PROTECTION EDUCATION FOR RESEARCH COMPLETION CERTIFICATE



## **VITA**

Sabrah Martha Helms Kingham was born, raised and resides in Sweetlake, Louisiana. She is proud of her Cajun roots and to represent this cultural group. She graduated from McNeese State University where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education. She also received her Master's degree and Specialist's degree in Administration and Supervision at McNeese State University.

Mrs. Kingham began her educational career as a third grade teacher at Grand Lake High School in Grand Lake, Louisiana in 1987. Mrs. Kingham moved to Bell City High School where she taught grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. In 1994, she left the classroom to serve as the principal of First Methodist School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. After two years. Mrs. Kingham returned to the Calcasieu Parish School System as a fourth grade teacher at Prien Lake Elementary under the administration of Dr. Sheryl Abshire.

In 1998, Mrs. Kingham left the classroom to serve as the Pre-Kindergarten Director and Elementary Curriculum Specialist for the Calcasieu Parish School System. Mrs. Kingham wrote several state-funded grants for early childhood pre-kindergarten programs and provided professional development for elementary teachers in the areas of curriculum and instruction. She served as a state delegate for the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) and the National Educator's Association (NEA) both in 1997 and 1998 as well as an assessor for the Louisiana Distinguished Educator program in 1999.

Mrs. Kingham was elected as the Assistant Principal of Fairview Elementary located in Lake Charles, Louisiana where she served for six years. During her tenure at this school, she developed and supervised the professional development sessions in the Louisiana Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS), supported and supervised new teachers in the

Louisiana Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP), and served as the administrator for LEAP Summer School for two years. During the 2000 – 2004, Mrs. Kingham was the coordinator of Assistant Principal's for the Calcasieu Parish School System professional development meetings and served on the McNeese State University Redesign Committee in 2003. She also served as chairman for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and Quality Assurance Review Team (QART) assessments and committee chair for the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC). Mrs. Kingham was recognized as the 2005-2006 Louisiana Association of Computer Using Educators (LACUE) Administrator of the Year and began serving as a mentor for new assistant principals in the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction Program (LELI) in 2001.

In 2006, Mrs. Kingham was named the principal at St. John Elementary. She continued to serve as the coordinator of the CPSS Assistant Principal's professional development meetings as she wrote and facilitated online courses. She continued to serve as a LELI mentor for new assistant principals in Region V, served as a guest lecturer at McNeese State University for several graduate level classes. Mrs. Kingham was asked to serve on an AdvancEd ad hoc committee as the Louisiana state representative in 2007, and conduct state, national, and international AdvancEd QART visitations.

Mrs. Kingham has presented at numerous national, state, and local conferences including Region V's annual Technology and Teaching (TNT) Conference, LACUE conference, LINCS state conference, and the LAE/IPD professional development conference. Currently, Mrs. Kingham serves on the Louisiana Council for SACS CASI AdvancED board of directors, mentors new assistant principals in Region V for LELI, and instructs new principals in LEAD Tech. She also serves on the Calcasieu Parish School System's District Quality Council and is

the secretary/treasurer for the Calcasieu Association for Educators and continues to be a guest lecturer at McNeese State University.

Mrs. Kingham is actively involved in civic and professional organizations which promote teacher leadership and student success, benefitting educators and our communities worldwide.