NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SURVEY:

Initial Report

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North Carolina School Leadership Survey: Initial Report

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Summary

Unlike teacher preparation, where there is an immediate transition from student teaching to classroom teacher, there is often a time lag between the completion of formal leadership preparation and assuming a principal position. These years are typically spent in assistant principal positions that can offer valuable opportunities for on-the-job learning. Despite the potential importance of the assistant principalship, the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals vary drastically across schools and seldom is the position treated as an apprenticeship in the progression towards a principal position. The assistant principalship is simultaneously an essential yet ambiguous component in the school leadership pipeline. Therefore, to better understand the assistant principalship, we created the North Carolina School Leadership Survey (NC SLS) and administered it to all principals and assistant principals in North Carolina in the 2015-16 school year. The NC SLS focuses on the quality of formal preparation and assistant principal experiences, how assistant principals allocate their time to school leadership tasks, how principals view the assistant principalship, and how principals and schools/districts support and develop their assistant principals. In this report we present descriptive results from NC SLS responses. These responses revealed five key findings: (1) compared to their formal principal preparation experiences, survey respondents indicated that their assistant principal experiences better prepared them for school leadership tasks; (2) perceptions of principal preparation quality are on the rise; (3) perceptions of principal preparation quality differ for graduates of some preparation pathways; (4) while assistant principals spend the most time on administrative tasks, those reporting high quality assistant principal experiences spend less time on administrative tasks and more time on instructional management; and (5) informal supports are important to the progression from assistant principal to principal. Future analyses will connect NC SLS responses to administrative data to assess how survey responses predict policy relevant outcomes for administrators and schools.

Introduction

Research indicates that principals are significantly associated with many educational outcomes including student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012; Clark, Martorell & Rockoff, 2009; Coelli & Green 2012; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015); the performance, development, and retention of teachers (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010); and the learning and working environments of schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). These results underscore the importance of school leadership and the need for policymakers and practitioners to strengthen the school leadership pipeline.

However, unlike the teacher pipeline, where teachers typically move in an orderly and continuous process from coursework to clinical experiences, licensure, and a teaching position, the school leadership pipeline rarely progresses from formal principal preparation to a principal position in such a timely and direct way (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012; Farley-Ripple, Raffel, & Welch, 2012; Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2015). Many aspiring principals spend some time as a classroom teacher after earning a principal license and for a majority of principals, their first administrative position is an assistant principalship. For example, first-time principals in North Carolina public schools (NCPS) wait more than five years, on average, between completing formal preparation requirements and assuming a principal position. More than four of these years are spent as an assistant principal (Bastian & Henry, 2015). This time spent as an assistant principal offers an immensely valuable opportunity for experiential (on-the-job) learning—through both mastery and vicarious school leadership experiences (Bandura, 1977)—and can build on the strong foundation of formal preparation. Essentially, formal preparation *and* assistant principal experiences may help explain the successes and shortcomings of principals.

Despite the importance of the assistant principalship to the school leadership pipeline, the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals vary drastically from school to school and seldom is the position treated as a valuable "apprenticeship" in the progression towards a principal position (Kwan, 2009; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). The assistant principalship is an essential yet ambiguous component in the school leadership pipeline. To better understand the assistant principalship and its congruence with formal principal preparation, we adopted survey data collection methods and created the North Carolina School Leadership Survey (NC SLS). The goals of the NC SLS are three-fold: (1) to inform education stakeholders in North Carolina and beyond about the assistant principalship; (2) to provide principal preparation pathways with data for accountability and improvement purposes; and (3) to collect a rich set of survey data as a basis for ongoing research analyses. To accomplish these goals the NC SLS consists of five sections that gather data on respondents' background, the efficacy of formal preparation and assistant principal experiences, how assistant principals allocate their time to school leadership tasks, how principals view the assistant principal position, and how principals and schools/districts support

and develop their assistant principals. We administered the NC SLS to all principals and assistant principals in NCPS in spring 2016 and received nearly 2,000 complete responses.

In this report, we present descriptive results for NC SLS responses. These descriptive results provide an in-depth perspective on North Carolina's school leader workforce, with a particular focus on the assistant principalship and its role as a formative, developmental experience in the school leadership pipeline. Future analyses will connect NC SLS responses to administrative data—e.g. school value-added estimates, administrator evaluation ratings—to assess how survey responses predict policy relevant outcomes for administrators and schools. In the remaining sections of this report we first describe the content of the NC SLS. Next, we detail the survey sample and our data coding procedures. Finally, we present survey results and highlight key findings and their implications.

Survey Content

Through a close study of the research literature on teacher, school, and school leader effectiveness and the professional standards for school leadership, we created an initial draft of the NC SLS during fall 2015 and early 2016. With this draft we then sought the feedback of school leadership faculty at UNC system institutions, the UNC Council of Education Deans, the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association, and current school administrators. Based on their feedback we altered survey items, finalized the survey, and administered the survey from March through June 2016.

The NC SLS consists of five main sections designed to collect background information on respondents' school leadership preparation and work history, assess how well formal principal preparation and assistant principal experiences prepared respondents for key school leadership tasks, identify how assistant principals use their time, examine how principals view and manage their assistant principals, and determine the level and efficacy of supports available to assistant principals. Specifically, the NC SLS consists of five main sections: (1) Background; (2) Quality of Preparation Experiences; (3) Assistant Principal Tasks; (4) Principal Perspectives on Assistant Principals; and (5) Mentoring and Support. Below, we describe the purpose and origins of each survey section, detail the response scales, and denote the respondents who were eligible to answer items in each section. In Appendix A, we provide a full copy of the NC SLS.

Background

The Background section of the NC SLS collects information on principal preparation, years of school administrator experience, and work history prior to moving into a school administrator position. Principal preparation items focus on the route of preparation (e.g. Masters of School Administration, Ed.D or Ph.D., Regional Leadership Academy, Principal Fellow, add-on/certification program), the location of preparation (in-state public, in-state private, or out-of-state university), and the preparation completion year. For current principals (in the 2015-16

school year), administrator experience items assess how long respondents have served as a principal and how long they previously served as an assistant principal; for current assistant principals, items focus on experience as an assistant principal and respondents' aspirations for becoming a principal. Finally, the work history items identify the licensure areas (e.g. secondary mathematics, physical education) respondents previously held, teaching awards earned, experiences mentoring/leading adults, and experiences leading student athletic teams and extracurricular activities.[1]

All school administrators were eligible to answer these background items. We display findings from these items in the results section of this report. More importantly, these background items help us filter respondents and provide descriptive results for key survey subgroups (e.g. current principals versus current assistant principals).

Quality of Preparation Experiences

In the Quality of Preparation Experiences section of the NC SLS, respondents indicate how well their formal principal preparation and their experiences as assistant principals prepared them to perform key school leadership tasks. Specifically, all respondents—both current principals and assistant principals—answered a set of 30 items with the following stem: "How well did your principal preparation program prepare you to…." Current assistant principals and principals with previous assistant principal experience also responded to a parallel set of 30 items with the following stem: "How well is (did) your assistant principal experience preparing (prepare) you to…."[2] Importantly, we placed these parallel items together, such that a respondent would indicate how well their formal principal preparation program prepared them to *develop teachers' and staff members' professional knowledge, skills, and practice* and in the following item, indicate how well their assistant principal experience is preparing (prepared) them for the same task. Responses to these survey items fell along a six-point scale—*not addressed, not well, somewhat well, well, very well*, and *exceptionally well*. Rather than six distinct answer categories, however, we supplied respondents with a sliding scale response bar, which allowed them to provide an answer at any point along the *not addressed* to *exceptionally well* continuum (e.g. between *well* and *very well*).

We aligned our Quality of Preparation Experiences items with the recently released Professional Standards for Education Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015)—formerly known as the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. There are 10 Professional Standards in this framework: (1) Mission, Vision, and Core Values; (2) Ethics and Professional Norms; (3) Equity and Cultural Responsiveness; (4) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; (5) Community of Care and

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[1] Inspiration for several work history items came from the Principal Pipeline Initiative, a collaboration between the Wallace Foundation and six urban school districts designed to address the critical challenges of supplying schools with effective leaders (see Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2015).

[2] Current principals without any prior assistant principal experience only respond to the formal principal preparation items.

Support for Students; (6) Professional Capacity of School Personnel; (7) Professional Community for Teachers and Staff; (8) Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community; (9) Operations and Management; and (10) School Improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Each of these 10 Professional Standards includes 6-12 indicators identifying tasks that effective leaders perform. For example, in the Professional Capacity of School Personnel standard, there is an indicator that states effective leaders "recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers." To create our 30 survey items in this section, we consulted teacher and school leadership research and selected a small number of indicators per Professional Standard. We acknowledge that many respondents' formal principal preparation experiences occurred long before these new Professional Standards were promulgated; nonetheless, by aligning survey items with these new Professional Standards, we can examine how well principal preparation and assistant principal experiences have prepared administrators for the current rigors of school leadership.

Assistant Principal Tasks

The Assistant Principal Tasks section of the NC SLS builds upon recent empirical research showing that principal time use matters for student and school outcomes to consider the time use of assistant principals (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Specifically, we want to know how much time assistant principals are spending on key school leadership tasks; with these data continued research can assess how time use influences assistant principal development and outcomes for students and schools. Borrowing from Grissom and Loeb (2011), we specified 28 potential tasks for assistant principals (e.g. informally coaching teachers, maintaining school facilities) and organized these tasks into the five broad skill categories—instructional management, internal relations, organization management, administration, and external relations—previously identified by exploratory factor analysis (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Under headings for these five categories, we provided this list of 28 school leadership tasks to current assistant principals and asked them to indicate the percentage of time they spent on each of the five constructs during the 2015-16 school year. For example, one assistant principal might report spending 20 percent of her time on instructional management, 30 percent of her time on internal relations, 10 percent of her time on organization management, 40 percent of her time on administration, and none of her time on external relations. For current principals (with previous assistant principal experience), we provided them the same list and asked them to report the percentage of time they allocated to each of the five skill categories during their last year as an assistant principal.

Principal Perspectives on Assistant Principals

Given that relationships between assistant principals and principals may be particularly important to the development of assistant principals and their transition into the principalship, the Principal Perspectives section of the NC SLS assesses how current principals view the assistant principal position and manage tasks of their assistant principals. Accordingly, respondents to these

items needed to be principals in 2015-16 and leading a school in which there was at least one assistant principal. This section contains nine items that target two broad conceptions of the assistant principalship: (1) as an opportunity to get exposure to many facets of school administration, gain autonomy with more experience, and develop into an effective principal or (2) as a role in which assistant principals are responsible for the same tasks each year and the needs of the school, rather than the development of the assistant principal, dictate task assignment. All items began with the prompt, "As a school principal I…" and then continued with an item to assess principals' views of the assistant principalship. For example, one survey item states: "As a school principal, I take on additional tasks to allow novice assistant principals opportunities to develop." These items have a five-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree, strongly agree*). Like the Quality of Preparation Experiences section, these are not discrete response choices; instead, respondents used a sliding scale response bar to provide an answer at any point along the *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* continuum.

Mentoring and Support

Research shows that mentoring and job supports are important components of teacher and principal development yet little is known about these services for assistant principals (Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This is particularly important to know, since many principals had previous assistant principal experience and many assistant principals will go on to serve as principals. Therefore, the Mentoring and Support section of the NC SLS includes two sets of items regarding the level and efficacy of job supports for assistant principals. Both current assistant principals and current principals completed these items, with current principals reflecting back on their time as an assistant principal.

The first set of items starts with the stem, "During my tenure as an assistant principal I worked (have worked) under principals who…" and asks respondents to reflect on their experiences working with principals. For example, one item states: "During my tenure as an assistant principal I worked (have worked) under principals who provided mentoring and feedback to improve my practice." There are five items in this set with a response scale of *never true, rarely true, sometimes true, often true,* and *always true*. As with previous survey sections, respondents used a sliding scale response bar to provide an answer at any point along the *never true* to *always true* continuum.

The second set of items starts with the stem, "How helpful were (have) the following supports (been) in your efforts to improve your practice as an assistant principal…" and provides respondents with a set of six potential supports (e.g. formally assigned mentor/coach, professional development, feedback and support from sitting principal). Respondents reflect on the efficacy of these supports during their assistant principalship and answer at any point along a five point scale—*did not receive/participate, not at all helpful, somewhat helpful, helpful,* and *very helpful.*

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Survey Sample & Finishers

To administer the NC SLS, we partnered with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to identify and contact principals and assistant principals in NCPS. Specifically, the NCDPI used object codes in the January 2016 salary data to identify individuals paid at least 50 percent full-time equivalency as a principal or assistant principal and then linked these records with administrators' school email addresses.[3] In total, the NCDPI provided us with 5,210 school administrator records—2,432 records for principals and 2,778 records for assistant principals in the 2015-16 school year. Using Qualtrics, an online survey platform, we administered the NC SLS to all of these school administrators between March and June 2016.

Regarding survey response rates, 323 survey emails (6.20%) bounced back due to district/school firewalls or inaccurate email information. Therefore, as shown in Table 1, our eligible survey population was 4,887 school administrators; 2,294 of these potential respondents were principals, 2,593 of these potential respondents were assistant principals. Overall, 39.59 percent of school administrators finished the survey. Finisher percentages were lower for principals and higher for assistant principals—31.08 percent of principals finished the NC SLS, while 47.13 percent of assistant principals finished the NC SLS. In total, we distributed the NC SLS to administrators in 2,364 schools; at least one administrator in 1,406 schools (59.50% percent of schools) finished the survey.

Table 1: NC SLS Response Rates

Category	Eligible Count	Finisher Count and Percentage
Overall	4,887	1,935 (39.59%)
Principals	2,294	713 (31.08%)
Assistant Principals	2,593	1,222 (47.13%)

Note: For all school administrators and for principals and assistant principals separately, this table displays the total number of eligible respondents and the counts/percentages of those finishing the NC SLS.

While nearly 2,000 finishers provide a large sample for descriptive and empirical analyses, it is important to assess how our sample of school administrators may differ from those who did not respond to the survey. Therefore, Table 2 presents individual and school characteristics for survey finishers and non-respondents. Regarding finishers' characteristics, nearly 63 percent were female, nearly 30 percent were a racial/ethnic minority, and their average age was almost 46. These finishers had licensure exam scores approximately 30 percent of a standard deviation above the mean, averaged 18 years of previous teaching experience, and more than 14 percent of them

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[3] Because charter school salary data is not part of the certified salary files at NCDPI, our eligible survey sample excludes principals and assistant principals working in charter schools.

were Nationally Board Certified (NBC). Finishers worked in schools where approximately 55 percent of standardized assessments were passed (performance composite), 53 percent of students were economically-disadvantaged, and 50 percent of students were a racial/ethnic minority.

Table 2: Characteristics of NC SLS Finishers and Non-Respondents

Characteristics	Finishers	Non-Respondents
Individual Characteristics		
Female	62.78	60.61
Minority	29.52	30.39
Age	45.87	45.27
Std. Licensure Exam Scores	0.287	0.355
Previous Teaching Experience	18.29	18.78
National Board Certification (NBC)	14.63	12.71
Principal Experience	---	---
Evaluation Ratings		
Strategic Leadership	3.69	3.77
Instructional Leadership	3.73	3.81
Cultural Leadership	3.76	3.84
Human Resource Leadership	3.74	3.81
Managerial Leadership	3.75	3.83
External Development Leadership	3.69	3.80
Micropolitical Leadership	3.62	3.72
School Characteristics		
Elementary School	46.98	50.60
Middle School	21.88	21.19
High School	31.13	28.22
City/Suburb	39.60	47.80
Rural/Town	60.40	52.20
School Size	727.15	759.94
Performance Composite	55.17	56.60
EVAAS Growth Status		
Did Not Meet Growth	27.57	26.06
Met Growth	43.01	42.65
Exceeded Growth	29.41	31.29
Economically-Disadvantaged	52.97	51.93
Minority	49.90	52.93

Note: This table presents individual and school characteristics for finishers and non-respondents to the NC SLS.

With a few exceptions, the major takeaway from Table 2 is that finishers and non-respondents are comparable. For example, survey finishers and non-respondents are demographically similar and have comparable licensure exam scores, years of previous teacher experience, and NBC rates. Likewise, finishers and non-respondents work in schools with similar levels of academic achievement (performance composite and growth status) and comparable

percentages of economically-disadvantaged and racial/ethnic minority students. Non-respondents have slightly higher evaluation ratings on the North Carolina Standards for School Executives and are more likely to work in urban/suburban schools and in schools with greater student enrollments. Overall, these observable differences between finishers and non-respondents should not meaningfully influence the generalizability of survey results.

Data Coding

In the findings section of this report, we present survey results for all NC SLS respondents and based on respondents' current position and/or pathway of preparation. This allows us to assess perceptions of formal preparation and assistant principal experiences, assistant principal time use, and the efficacy/availability of job supports, overall, and the extent to which these survey data may vary for those at different stages of their career or for those with different types of principal preparation. When considering current position (in 2015-16), we present survey results for principals and assistant principals, separately. For pathway of preparation, we classify respondents into seven categories:

1) UNC Masters of School Administration (UNC MSA) are those who earned a MSA from a UNC system institution and who were not Principal Fellows;
2) NC Principal Fellows (NCPF) are those who were Principal Fellows and earned a MSA from a UNC system institution;
3) UNC Add-on are those who earned an add-on (non-degree terminal) principal license from a UNC system institution;
4) NC Private MSA (NCP MSA) are those who earned a MSA from a private or independent college/university in North Carolina;
5) NC Private Add-on are those who earned an add-on (non-degree terminal) principal license from a private or independent college/university in North Carolina;
6) Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) are those who earned a principal license through one of North Carolina's three leadership academies (Northeast Leadership Academy, Piedmont-Triad Leadership Academy, or Sandhills Leadership Academy); and;
7) Out-of-State are those who earned a principal license through a program outside North Carolina.

With one exception, these preparation categories are mutually exclusive; however, those in the RLA pathway may also be in the NCPF and in-state MSA categories.[4] Finally, there are a

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[4]There are 122 Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) graduates who completed the NC SLS. 88 of these individuals are exclusively in the RLA category, 23 of these individuals are in the RLA and NCPF categories, 9 of these individuals are in the RLA and UNC MSA categories, and 2 of these individuals are in the RLA and NCP MSA categories.
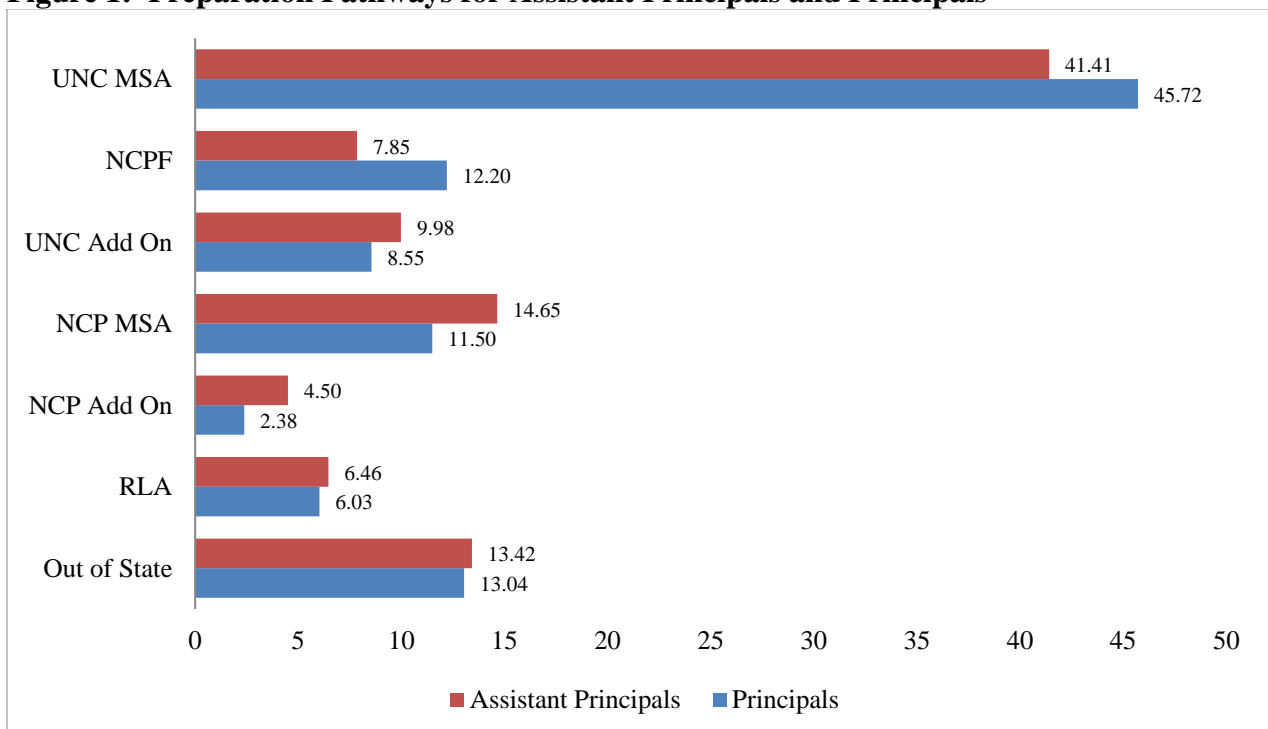
small number of survey finishers that we could not classify, as they did not provide complete information on their principal preparation.[5]

Findings

Background

To summarize responses to the Background section of the NC SLS, we focus on the following: preparation for school leadership; characteristics of survey finishers, by current position and preparation pathway; assistant principal plans to move into a principal position; and teaching licenses and leadership/mentoring roles held prior to becoming a school administrator.

Figure 1: Preparation Pathways for Assistant Principals and Principals

Note: For assistant principals and principals, separately, this figure displays the percentage of NC SLS finishers prepared through different school administration pathways. Data labels at the end of each bar display the percentages of survey finishers in each preparation category.

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[5]59 NC SLS survey finishers—approximately 3 percent of all survey finishers—did not provide complete preparation details.

For assistant principals and principals, Figure 1 displays the school leadership preparation pathways for NC SLS finishers. In our sample of school administrators, the largest preparation pathway is UNC MSA—approximately 41 percent of assistant principal respondents and 46 percent of principal respondents completed an MSA program at a UNC system institution (these values exclude Principal Fellows). Across all UNC preparation pathways—MSA, NCPF, and add-on license—approximately 59 percent of the assistant principals and 66 percent of the principals in our sample earned their principal license at a UNC system institution. Preparation at a North Carolina private college or university (MSA or add-on license) accounts for nearly 19 percent of our assistant principal sample and 14 percent of our principal sample. Lastly, RLA graduates comprise approximately 6 percent of our assistant principal and principal samples; administrators prepared out-of-state make up 13 percent of our assistant principal and principal samples.
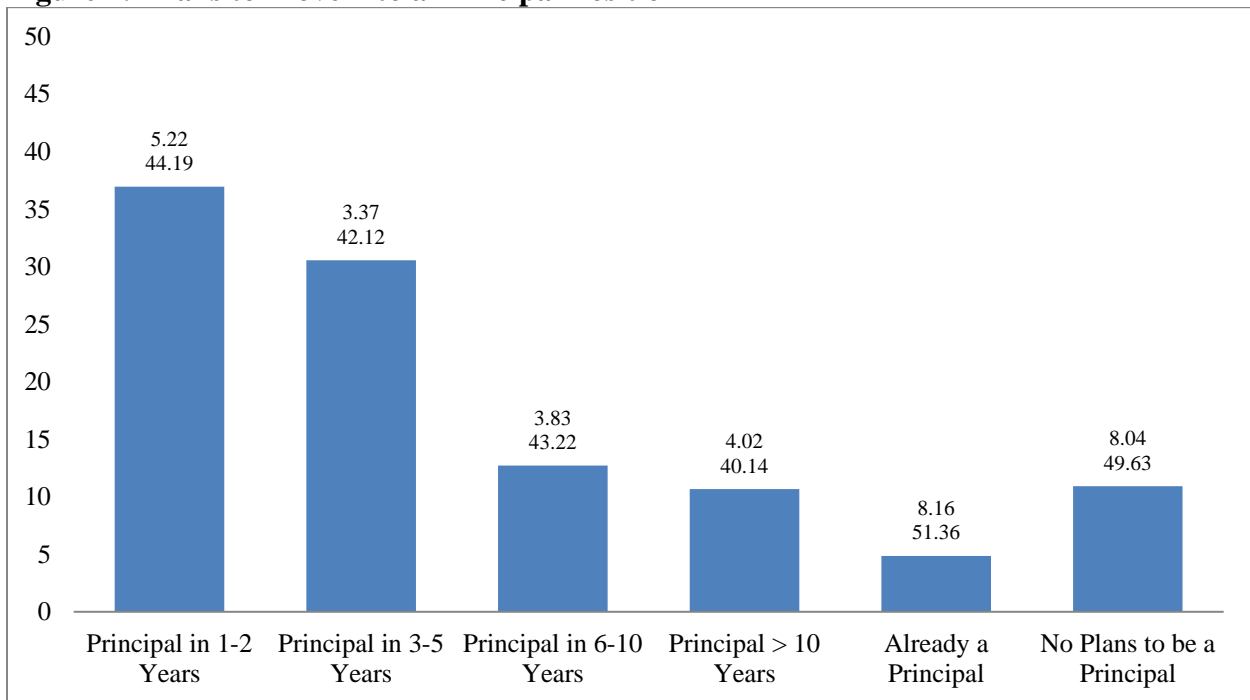
Table 3: Characteristics of NC SLS Finishers by Position and Preparation Pathway

	Current Position		Preparation Pathway						
	Assistant Principal	Principal	UNC MSA	NCPF	UNC Add-On	NCP MSA	NCP Add-On	RLA	Out-of-State
Individual Characteristics									
Female	64.07	60.56	60.07	74.87	69.94	59.30	69.44	71.31	53.30
Minority	32.44	24.54	31.83	26.11	19.77	21.57	26.76	34.71	35.83
Age	44.77	47.76	46.01	44.83	46.05	44.17	45.46	45.04	47.65
Std. Licensure Exam Scores	0.211	0.411	0.265	0.523	0.404	0.211	0.440	0.263	0.141
Teaching Experience	16.92	20.61	18.52	16.67	18.65	17.27	17.72	17.03	19.58
NBC	15.22	13.60	14.18	10.38	25.13	16.85	19.44	13.11	7.00
School Characteristics									
Elementary	39.52	59.83	46.17	51.92	45.06	43.67	55.56	58.20	45.10
Middle	23.09	19.80	22.79	23.50	20.88	21.46	18.06	22.13	20.78
High	37.39	20.37	31.03	24.59	34.07	34.87	26.39	19.67	34.12
City/Suburb	45.11	30.13	42.18	36.61	36.81	34.87	33.33	40.98	42.35
Rural/Town	54.89	69.87	57.82	63.39	63.19	65.13	66.67	59.02	57.65
School Size	840.64	531.80	732.92	679.52	732.87	724.36	771.82	701.41	762.39
Performance Composite	55.51	54.58	56.21	54.11	53.99	55.65	56.44	52.43	53.50
EVAAS									
Did Not Meet Growth	27.86	27.05	27.89	30.86	29.14	26.21	26.39	26.72	26.97
Met Growth	40.91	46.81	41.58	42.86	41.71	45.56	52.78	45.69	39.42
Exceeded Growth	31.23	26.14	27.89	26.29	29.14	28.23	20.83	27.59	33.61
Economically-Disadvantaged	51.37	55.69	51.82	55.09	54.05	53.32	52.49	54.82	52.95
Minority	50.97	48.05	51.28	51.91	46.81	40.93	48.27	56.81	52.44
Count	**1222**	**713**	**832**	**183**	**183**	**261**	**72**	**122**	**257**

Note: This table displays individual and school characteristics for finishers of the NC SLS. We display characteristics by current position and by preparation pathway.

To more fully detail the NC SLS finishers, Table 3 presents individual and school-level characteristics by current position and preparation pathway. Comparing assistant principal and principal respondents, we see that principals are slightly older and are less likely to be female or a racial/ethnic minority. Since elementary schools and rural schools are less likely to employ an assistant principal(s), it is unsurprising that principals in our sample are much more likely to be working in elementary schools and in rural/town settings. Generally, assistant principals and principals in our sample serve schools with comparable levels of performance (performance composite and EVAAS growth) and percentages of economically-disadvantaged and racial/ethnic minority students. When examining the descriptive data by principal preparation pathway there are several noteworthy characteristics for NC SLS respondents: (1) NCPF and RLA respondents are the most likely to be female; (2) UNC MSA, RLA, and out-of-state prepared respondents are the most likely to be a racial/ethnic minority; (3) befitting the competitive nature of the program, NCPF have the highest licensure exam scores; and (4) while school performance and percentages of economically-disadvantaged students are similar across preparation pathways, RLA and NCP MSA graduates are working in schools with higher and lower percentages of racial/ethnic minority students, respectively.

Figure 2: Plans to Move into a Principal Position

Note: For current assistant principals, this figure displays the percentage of NC SLS finishers who plan to move into a school principal position during a certain time period. Data labels above each column display the average years of assistant principal experience and the average age for respondents in each category.
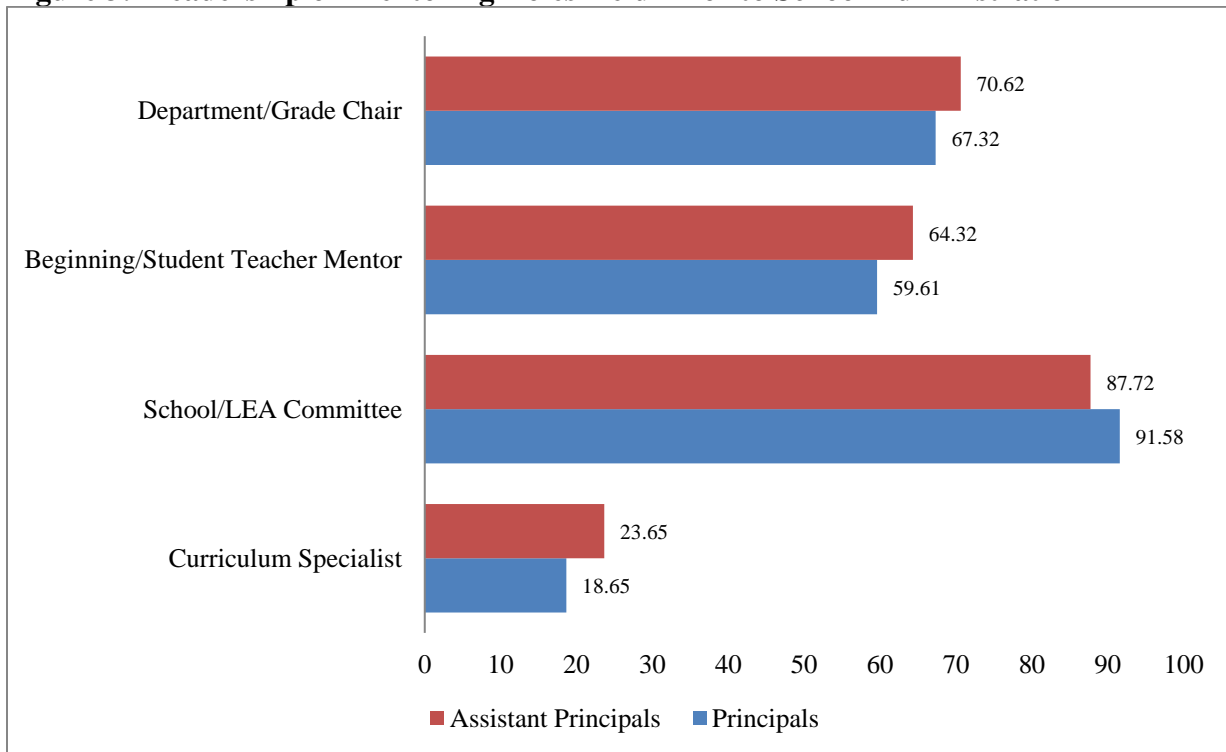
Since a primary focus of the NC SLS is to better understand assistant principals and their experiences, Figure 2 displays the plans of current assistant principals to move into a principal position. Among NC SLS respondents, the modal response is planning to be a principal in the next 1-2 school years. These assistant principals average 5.22 years of experience and are 44.19 years old. The next largest response category is planning to be a principal in 3-5 school years; together, these categories indicate that two-thirds of the assistant principal respondents plan to assume a principal position within the next five years. Lastly, five percent of our assistant principal sample had already been a principal and 11 percent had no plans to become a principal. Collectively, these aspirational timelines reinforce the developmental nature of the assistant principalship within the school leadership pipeline.

Table 4: Top Five Licensure Areas Held Prior to School Administration

Assistant Principals	Principals
Elementary Grades (36.74%)	Elementary Grades (39.69%)
Middle Grades Social Studies (13.51%)	Middle Grades Social Studies (12.03%)
Middle Grades English Language Arts (13.26%)	Exceptional Children (11.76%)
Exceptional Children (12.33%)	Middle Grades English Language Arts (11.48%)
Middle Grades Mathematics (11.32%)	Secondary Grades Social Studies (11.34%)

Note: For current assistant principals and principals, this table displays the top five licensure areas held prior to moving into a school administration position.

Figure 3: Leadership or Mentoring Roles Held Prior to School Administration

Note: For assistant principals and principals, separately, this figure displays the percentage of NC SLS finishers who held various leadership or mentoring roles prior to becoming a school administrator. Data labels at the end of each bar display the percentages of survey finishers in each category.

Finally, to describe career trajectories and leadership experiences prior to becoming a school administrator, Table 4 details teaching licenses held and Figure 3 displays percentages of respondents with previous leadership or mentoring roles. For both assistant principal and principal respondents, the most common teaching license is elementary grades (K-6); other common teaching licenses include middle grades social studies, middle grades English language arts, and exceptional children. Regarding previous leadership or mentoring roles held, percentages are generally consistent across administrator positions. The most common leadership role is serving on a school or district committee (e.g. school improvement team); a high percentage of NC SLS respondents also served as a department/grade-level chair and mentored either a beginning or student teacher. A much smaller percentage of administrators had previously held curriculum specialist or academic coach positions.

Quality of Preparation Experiences

To summarize data from the Quality of Preparation Experiences section, we aggregate survey responses up to the level of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Specifically, for the parallel set of formal preparation and assistant principal experiences survey items, we display average values on the 10 Professional Standards. These data allow us to directly compare how NC SLS respondents feel about the quality of their formal preparation and their assistant principalship.

Table 5: Quality of Preparation Experiences (Overall)

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders	Principal Preparation	Assistant Principal Experiences
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	3.29	**3.68****
Ethics and Professional Norms	3.43	**3.79****
Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	3.02	**3.75****
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.88	**3.51****
Community of Care and Support for Students	3.11	**3.74****
Professional Capacity of School Personnel	2.86	**3.53****
Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	3.04	**3.63****
Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	2.81	**3.54****
Operations and Management	2.82	**3.35****
School Improvement	2.99	**3.30****

*Note: For each of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, this table displays average responses to a set of items on formal principal preparation and a parallel set of items on assistant principal experiences. 0=not addressed; 1=not well; 2=somewhat well; 3=well; 4=very well; and 5=exceptionally well. ** indicates statistically significant differences between formal principal preparation and assistant principal experiences at the 0.01 level.*

Average responses in the middle column of Table 5 indicate that NC SLS respondents felt that their principal preparation program had done *well* in preparing them—for many standards the average values were slightly below or above three. In particular, NC SLS respondents reported higher levels of principal preparation quality for leadership tasks focused on a school's mission/vision and ethics/professional norms. Conversely, NC SLS respondents reported lower levels of preparation quality for leadership tasks focused on curriculum, instruction, and

assessment; the professional capacity of school personnel; engaging families and communities; and school operations. Essentially, respondents reported lower levels of preparation quality for leadership tasks that are more practice-based and harder to simulate within coursework and program field experiences.   In comparison to formal preparation, the right column of Table 5 shows that NC SLS respondents were more positive about the value of their assistant principal experiences. Average responses to assistant principal items ranged from 3.30 to 3.79 (between *well* and *very well*), with respondents reporting that their assistant principal experiences best prepared them to safeguard ethical/professional norms, promote equity, and create an environment in which students are cared for and engaged. For all 10 Professional Standards NC SLS respondents reported significantly higher levels of quality for their assistant principal experiences versus their formal principal preparation. The largest differentials between formal preparation and assistant principal experiences were for the equity, engagement of families/communities, and capacity of school personnel standards. Overall, these responses highlight the importance of the assistant principalship to school leadership practices.

Table 6 presents the perspectives of current principals and assistant principals on the quality of their formal preparation and assistant principal experiences. Like the overall results in Table 5, NC SLS respondents, regardless of their current position, report that their assistant principal experiences better prepared them for school leadership tasks. Comparing the quality of formal preparation versus assistant principal experiences, there are statistically significant differences across all 10 Professional Standards for current principals and current assistant principals. Rather than comparing the quality of formal preparation to the quality of assistant principal experiences, we can also assess whether current principals or current assistant principals report having higher quality experiences. Here, the results favor assistant principals for multiple Professional Standards. In comparison to current principals, current assistant principals report significantly higher quality formal preparation experiences on two standards (curriculum/instruction/assessment and engaging families/communities) and significantly higher quality assistant principal experiences on seven standards (school mission/vision, curriculum/instruction/assessment, community of care for students, capacity of school personnel, community for teachers and staff, school operations, and school improvement). These differences between principals and assistant principals suggest that recency matters: perceptions of the quality of preparation experiences are higher for those who completed formal preparation more recently and who are currently (rather than formerly) assistant principals. This is consistent with the need for formal preparation and assistant principalships to meet the rising demands of school leadership positions.
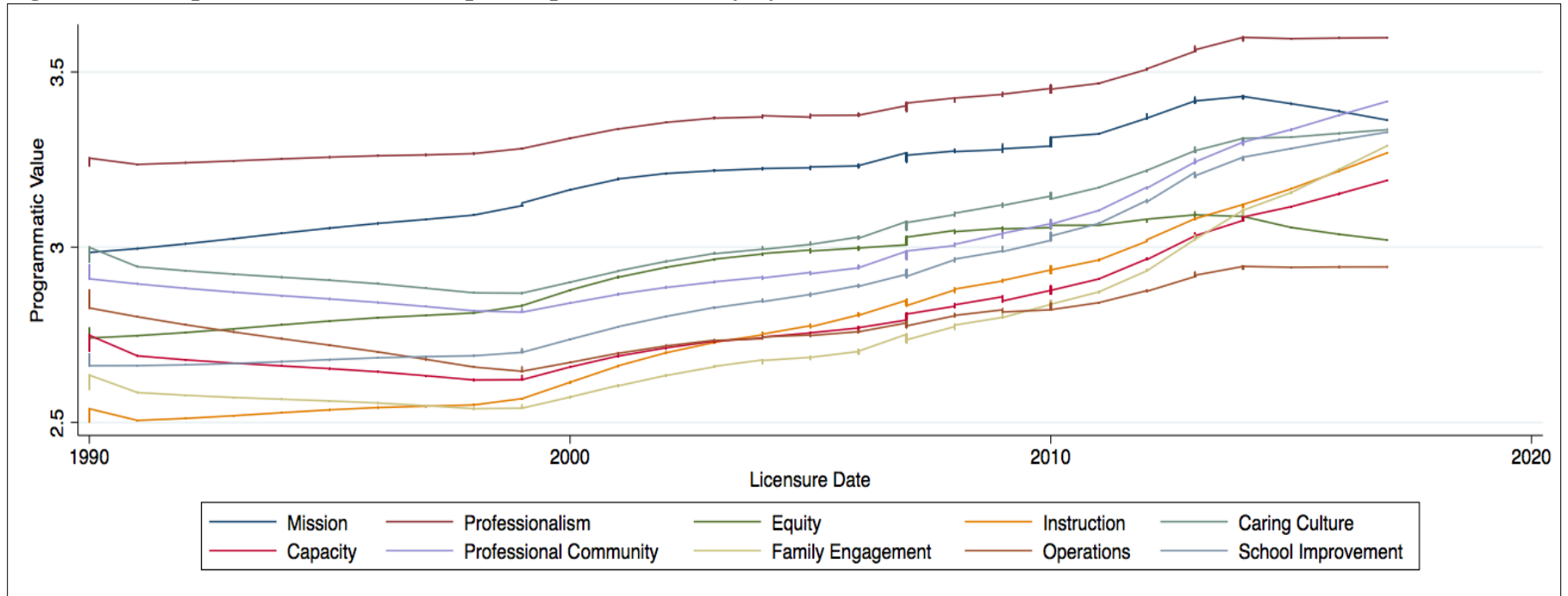
Table 6: Quality of Preparation Experiences (By Current Position)

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders	Current Principals		Current Assistant Principals	
	Principal Preparation	Assistant Principal Experiences	Principal Preparation	Assistant Principal Experiences
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	3.28	**3.59**[**]	3.29	**3.73**[**]
Ethics and Professional Norms	3.43	**3.75**[**]	3.43	**3.82**[**]
Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	3.03	**3.72**[**]	3.02	**3.77**[**]
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.80	**3.34**[**]	2.93	**3.61**[**]
Community of Care and Support for Students	3.08	**3.67**[**]	3.13	**3.78**[**]
Professional Capacity of School Personnel	2.83	**3.43**[**]	2.88	**3.58**[**]
Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	3.01	**3.56**[**]	3.07	**3.66**[**]
Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	2.74	**3.49**[**]	2.85	**3.57**[**]
Operations and Management	2.80	**3.28**[**]	2.83	**3.38**[**]
School Improvement	2.95	**3.17**[**]	3.01	**3.37**[**]

Note: For each of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, this table displays average responses to a set of items on formal principal preparation and a parallel set of items on assistant principal experiences. Responses are shown for current principals and current assistant principals separately. 0=not addressed; 1=not well; 2=somewhat well; 3=well; 4=very well; and 5=exceptionally well. Within current positions (principal and assistant principal), ** indicates statistically significant differences between formal principal preparation and assistant principal experiences at the 0.01 level. Comparing principals to assistant principals, we shade cells (in grey) in which there are statistically significant differences (e.g. for formal preparation the average response for current principals on the engagement of families standard is 2.74; for current assistant principals the average response is 2.85).

To more formally assess whether there are time trends in the quality of formal principal preparation, Figure 4 displays perceptions of formal principal preparation quality by year of principal licensure. Across all 10 Professional Standards, there is a clear uptick in reported preparation program quality. This rise generally begins for those earning a principal license around the year 2000 and continues until the present. Given that our definition of preparation quality is aligned with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (released in 2015), which delineate what effective leaders need to be able to do in an increasingly complex school environment, this suggests that preparation providers have altered their programs to better prepare graduates for the changing demands of school leadership.

Figure 4: Perceptions of Formal Principal Preparation Quality by Licensure Date

Note: For all 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, this figure displays NC SLS respondents' perceptions of the quality of their formal principal preparation by their date of principal licensure.

Finally, Tables 7 and 8 detail perceptions of formal preparation quality for graduates of different preparation pathways. Specifically, in Table 7, we present average responses on the 10 Professional Standards for graduates of UNC MSA, NCPF, UNC Add-On, NCP MSA, NCP Add-On, RLA, and out-of-state programs. This table allows readers to compare perceptions of formal preparation quality across all of our identified pathways. To formally test for statistically significant differences in perceptions of preparation quality, Table 8 displays results for four sets of policy-relevant comparisons: (1) UNC MSA versus NCPF; (2) In-state MSA (UNC MSA, NCPF, and NCP MSA) versus in-state add-on (UNC Add-On and NCP Add-On); (3) In-state public (UNC MSA, NCPF, UNC Add-On) versus In-state private (NCP MSA and NCP Add-On); and (4) In-state (UNC MSA, NCPF, UNC Add-On, NCP MSA, NCP Add-On, RLA) versus out-of-state. Results in Table 8 indicate that there are few differences in perceptions of formal preparation quality between UNC MSA and NCPF graduates or between in-state public and in-state private university graduates. However, there are significant differences in perceptions of principal preparation quality between in-state MSA and in-state add-on and between in-state and out-of-state graduates. For 9 of 10 Professional Standards, in-state MSA graduates report significantly higher perceptions of preparation quality than their in-state add-on peers. This suggests that degree-granting programs, which entail more coursework and field placement requirements, may be higher quality than a set of coursework resulting in a licensure only. For 6 of 10 Professional Standards, school leaders prepared out-of-state report significantly higher perceptions of preparation quality than their in-state prepared peers. This finding calls for further research to assess whether school leaders prepared out-of-state are more effective.

Table 7: Quality of Formal Preparation Experiences (By Preparation Pathway)

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders	Formal Principal Preparation Experiences						
	UNC MSA	NCPF	UNC Add-On	NCP MSA	NCP Add-On	RLA	Out-of-State
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	3.26	3.44	3.09	3.19	3.19	3.72	3.36
Ethics and Professional Norms	3.43	3.55	3.13	3.39	3.25	3.81	3.51
Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	3.00	3.06	2.76	2.99	2.76	3.40	3.21
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.84	2.88	2.66	2.95	2.78	3.16	3.06
Community of Care and Support for Students	3.03	3.12	2.94	3.14	3.06	3.36	3.30
Professional Capacity of School Personnel	2.81	2.90	2.61	2.86	2.79	3.20	3.03
Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	3.01	3.02	2.82	3.09	2.99	3.37	3.17
Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	2.76	2.79	2.57	2.85	2.71	3.21	2.96
Operations and Management	2.79	2.78	2.54	2.89	2.76	3.01	2.97
School Improvement	2.96	3.01	2.79	3.02	2.92	3.19	3.06

Note: For each of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, this table displays average responses to a set of items on formal principal preparation. Responses are shown for different principal preparation pathways separately. 0=not addressed; 1=not well; 2=somewhat well; 3=well; 4=very well; and 5=exceptionally well.

Table 8: Quality of Formal Preparation Experiences

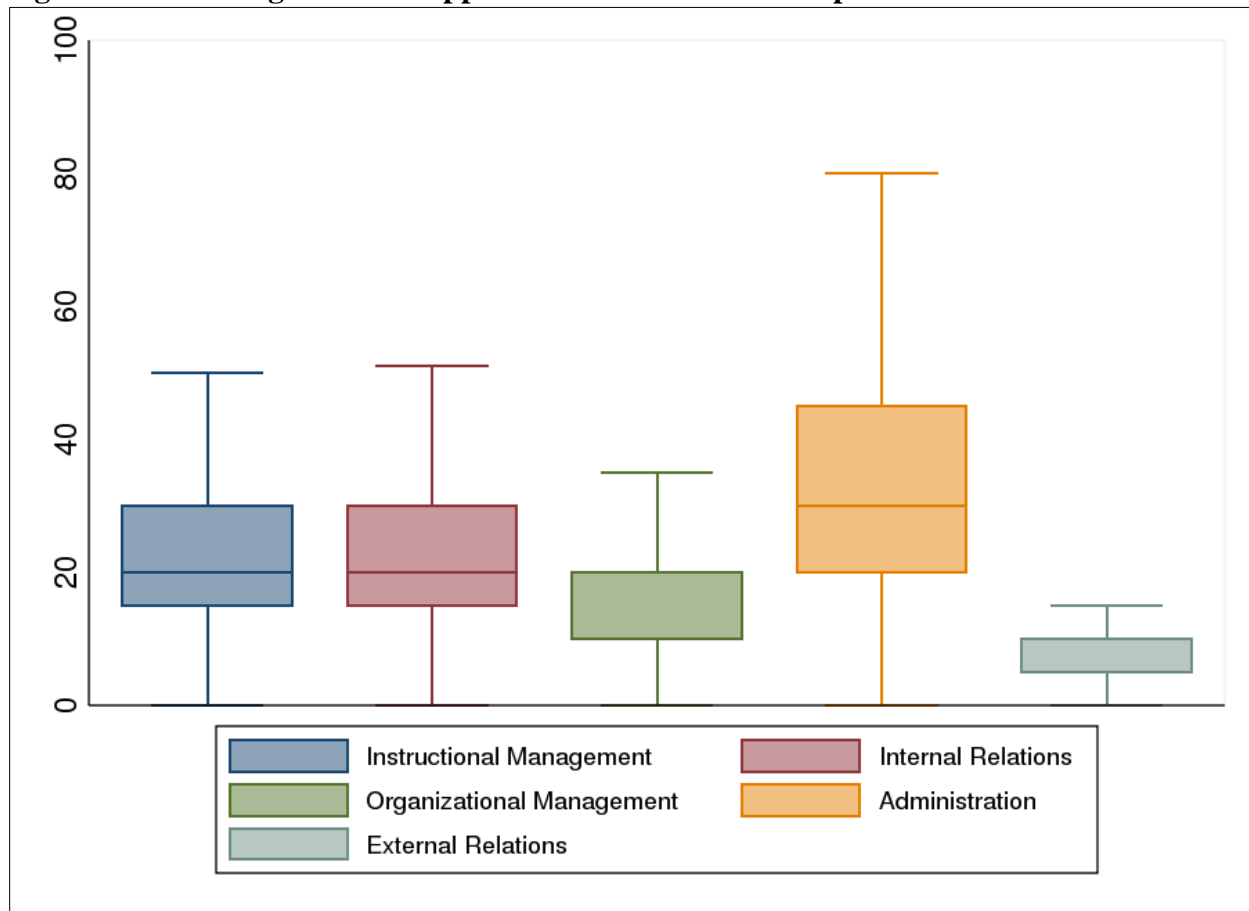| Professional Standards for Educational Leaders	Formal Principal Preparation Experiences							
	UNC MSA	NCPF	In-State MSA	In-State Add-On	In-State Public	In-State Private	In-State	Out-of-State
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	3.26	**3.44**[*]	3.27	**3.12**[*]	3.27	3.19	3.28	3.36
Ethics and Professional Norms	3.43	3.55	3.44	**3.16**[**]	3.40	3.36	3.42	3.51
Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	3.00	3.06	3.01	**2.76**[**]	2.97	2.94	3.00	**3.21**[**]
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	2.84	2.88	2.87	**2.70**[*]	2.82	2.92	2.86	**3.06**[**]
Community of Care and Support for Students	3.03	3.12	3.07	2.98	3.04	3.12	3.08	**3.30**[**]
Professional Capacity of School Personnel	2.81	2.90	2.84	**2.66**[*]	2.80	2.84	2.84	**3.03**[**]
Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	3.01	3.02	3.03	**2.87**[*]	2.98	3.07	3.03	3.17
Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community	2.76	2.79	2.78	**2.61**[*]	2.74	2.82	2.79	**2.96**[*]
Operations and Management	2.79	2.78	2.81	**2.60**[**]	2.75	2.87	2.79	**2.97**[*]
School Improvement	2.96	3.01	2.98	**2.83**[*]	2.94	3.00	2.98	3.06

*Note: For each of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, this table displays average responses to a set of items on formal principal preparation. Responses are shown for four sets of policy-relevant preparation comparisons. 0=not addressed; 1=not well; 2=somewhat well; 3=well; 4=very well; and 5=exceptionally well. * and ** indicate statistically significant differences at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels.*

Assistant Principal Tasks

If assistant principal experiences better prepare administrators for school leadership tasks (relative to formal principal preparation), an important, follow-up question is how assistant principals spend their time. To capture this line of inquiry, Figure 5 displays the distribution of assistant principal time across five leadership task domains—instructional management, internal relations, organizational management, administration, and external relations. We display this time use data for all NC SLS respondents, combined, as there are no substantive differences based on current position (assistant principal/principal) or preparation pathway. Overall, NC SLS respondents report spending the most time—an average of 34 percent of their time—on administration tasks. This category includes specific tasks such as developing/managing the school schedule, managing student discipline, and supervising students (e.g. hallways, lunch duty). These are the tasks with which assistant principals are traditionally associated (Koru, 1993). After administrative tasks, NC SLS respondents report spending an equal amount of time— approximately 22 percent—on instructional management and internal relations tasks. Specific instructional management tasks include informally coaching teachers, evaluating teachers, and coordinating the use of student assessment data; internal relations tasks include developing relationships with students and staff and communicating with parents and caregivers. Lastly, administrators report spending an average of 14 percent of their assistant principal time on organizational management—e.g. managing budgets/resources, maintaining school facilities—

and an average of 7 percent of their time on external relations—e.g. fundraising, working with local community organizations.

Figure 5: Percentage of Time Appointed To Assistant Principal Tasks

Note: This box plot displays the distribution of assistant principal time use across five leadership task categories.

While the distribution of assistant principal time is similar based on current position or preparation pathway, we hypothesize that school leaders more positive about the quality of their assistant principal experiences may have spent their time differently. To test this, we aggregated all of the assistant principal items from the Quality of Preparation Experiences section of the NC SLS to create a single, summative measure of perceptions of assistant principalship quality. In Table 9 we present the average amount of assistant principal time devoted to the five leadership task domains, overall, and for NC SLS respondents reporting high and low quality assistant principal experiences (in the top and bottom quintiles of our aggregated quality measure, respectively). These values show that those reporting high quality assistant principal experiences also report spending more time on instructional management, organizational management, and external relations tasks and less time on administration tasks. The differences for instructional management and administration are more practically significant and suggest that higher quality assistant principal experiences allow for greater connections to classroom instruction and less time

devoted to traditional assistant principal tasks (e.g. student discipline). Continued research should assess how assistant principal time use influences assistant principal development, progression into a principal position, and outcomes for students and schools.

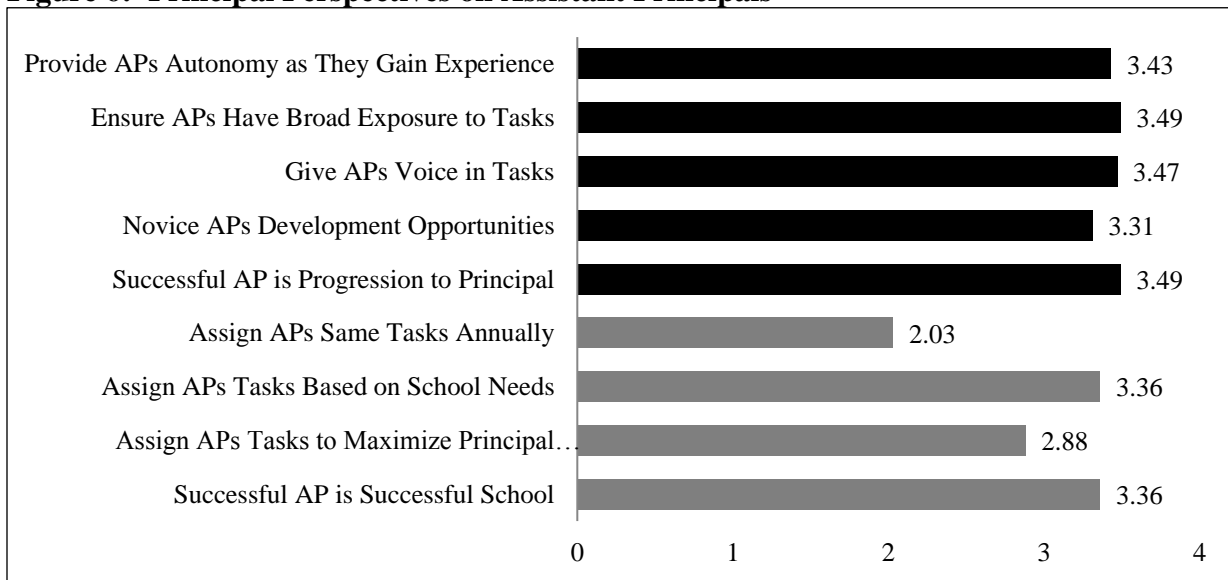**Table 9: Percentage of Time Appointed to Assistant Principal Tasks**

Leadership Task Domains	Overall	High Quality AP Experiences	Low Quality AP Experiences
Instructional Management	22.44	**24.80**[**]	19.10
Internal Relations	22.25	21.92	22.00
Organizational Management	14.16	**14.90**[*]	13.62
Administration	33.99	**30.50**[**]	38.86
External Relations	7.17	**7.91**[*]	6.43

*Note: This table displays the percentage of time appointed to assistant principal tasks, overall, and for NC SLS respondents reporting high and low quality assistant principal experiences. * and ** indicate statistically significant differences between high and low quality assistant principal experiences at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.*

Principal Perspectives on Assistant Principals

Given the potential for the assistant principalship to serve as an apprenticeship in school leadership, we assess how current principals view the assistant principal position and use assistant principals at their schools. Broadly, this section of the NC SLS targets two perspectives on the assistant principalship: (1) as an opportunity to be exposed to many facets of school administration, gain autonomy with more experience, and develop into an effective principal or (2) as a role in which assistant principals are responsible for the same tasks each year and are assigned tasks based on the needs of the school rather than their own professional development.

Figure 6: Principal Perspectives on Assistant Principals

Provide APs Autonomy as They Gain Experience	3.43
Ensure APs Have Broad Exposure to Tasks	3.49
Give APs Voice in Tasks	3.47
Novice APs Development Opportunities	3.31
Successful AP is Progression to Principal	3.49
Assign APs Same Tasks Annually	2.03
Assign APs Tasks Based on School Needs	3.36
Assign APs Tasks to Maximize Principal...	2.88
Successful AP is Successful School	3.36

Note: For principals completing the NC SLS, this figure displays their responses to a set of items about how they view the assistant principal position. The horizontal black bars loaded onto one factor; the horizontal grey bars loaded onto a separate factor. 0=strongly disagree; 1=disagree; 2=neither; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

As shown in Figure 6, analyses of these survey items revealed a two factor structure consistent with these two perspectives on the assistant principalship. The first factor, designated by the black bars, is a set of five items in which principals view the assistant principalship as an opportunity for autonomy, exposure to many facets of school administration, and development into a principal. Principals' average responses on these items ranged from 3.31 to 3.49—between *agree* and *strongly agree* on the Likert scale. The second factor, designated by the grey bars in Figure 6, is a set of four items in which principals view the assistant principalship as more of a functional rather than developmental experience. Here, average responses varied across items. Principals agreed (with average values of 3.36) that they assigned assistant principals tasks based on the needs of the school and that a successful school is the primary criterion of a successful assistant principal experience. Principal respondents to the NC SLS were less likely to agree— average values of 2.03 and 2.88, respectively—that they assigned assistant principals the same tasks annually or assigned assistant principals tasks to maximize their own effectiveness.
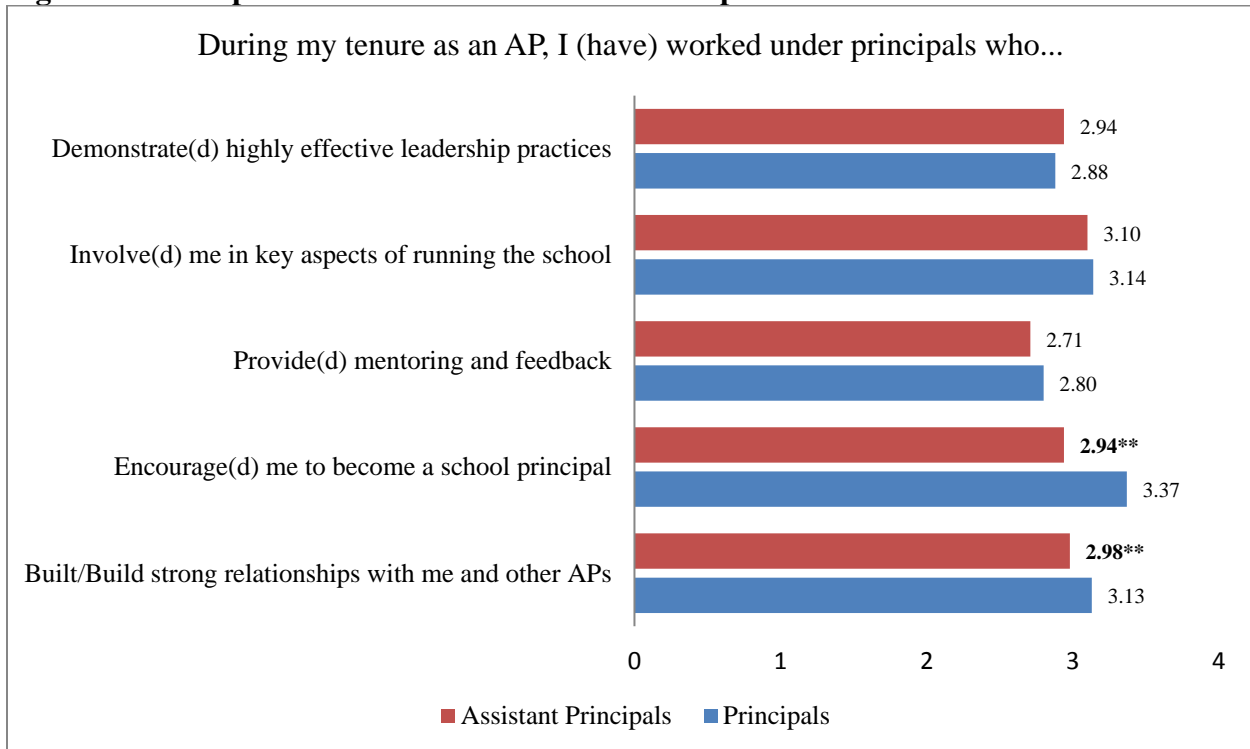
To assess whether characteristics of principals or the schools that they lead predict perspectives on the assistant principalship, we regressed the *development* and *functional* factor scores (standardized with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) on a set of principal demographics, principal credentials, and school characteristics. Overall, a key takeaway from these analyses is that few observable characteristics predict principals' perspectives on the assistant principal position. Specifically, none of the principal or school measures significantly predicted higher values for the *development* construct. For the *functional* construct there were three statistically significant results: female principals, more experienced principals, and principals with higher licensure exam scores all had significantly lower values. This suggests that these principals are less likely to view assistant principal tasks within a narrow, utilitarian context. Future analyses can assess whether principals' scores on these *development* and *functional* measures predict school outcomes or the progression of assistant principals into principal positions.

Mentoring and Support

If the assistant principalship is to serve as a valuable apprenticeship for rising school leaders, then assistant principals need mentoring and high quality supports to fully develop. Therefore, the NC SLS includes sets of items on the extent to which principals mentored assistant principals and on the efficacy/availability of supports for assistant principals. Figure 7 displays responses to the mentoring items for current assistant principals and principals, separately. Overall, assistant principal and principal responses are comparable for the first three mentoring items. For example, on a scale of *never true (0)* to *always true (4),* the average response to "… involve(d) me in key aspects of running the school," is 3.10 for assistant principals and 3.14 for principals. For the remaining items, however, average responses for current principals (who are reflecting back on their tenure as an assistant principal) are significantly higher than those for current assistant principals. Specifically, current principals are more likely to report that during their tenure as assistant principals they worked under principals who encouraged them to become

a principal and who built strong relationships with assistant principals. These significant differences persist even when only comparing principals versus more experienced assistant principals or versus assistant principals who plan to move into principal positions within five years. The higher responses for current principals are consistent with previous research indicating that "tapping"—informal recruitment and encouragement—is an effective mechanism to pull educators into school leadership (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011).
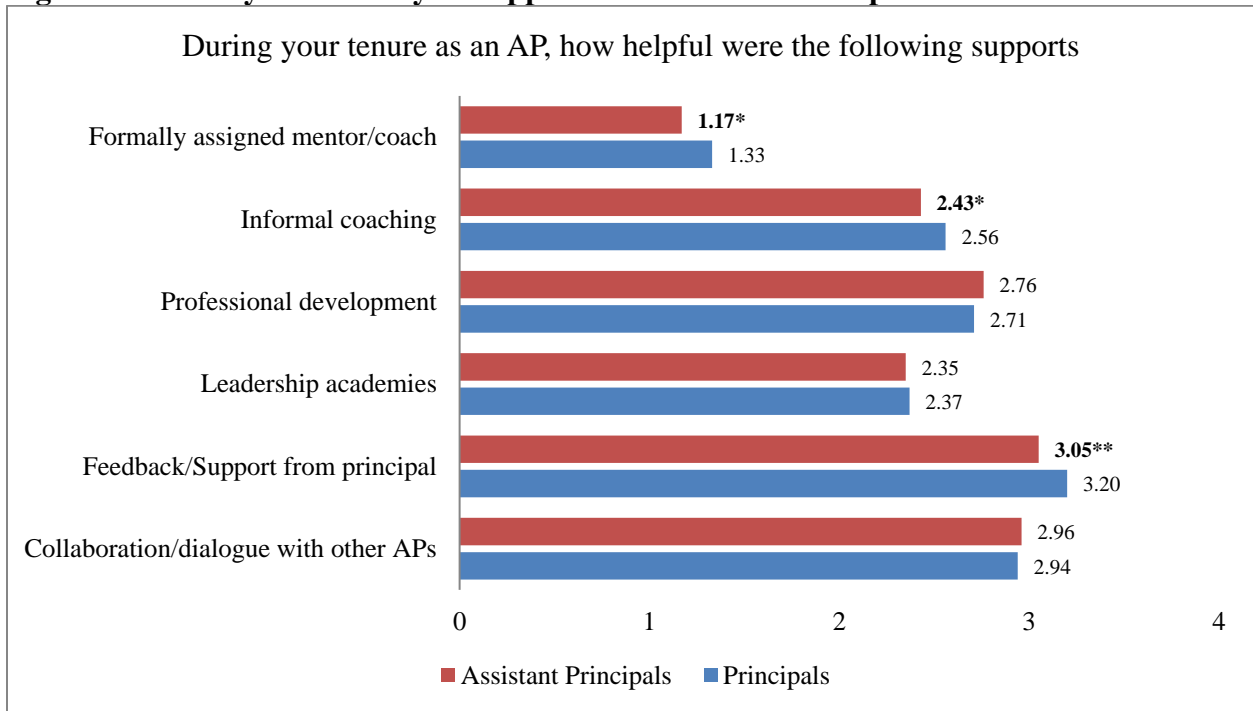
Figure 7: Principals as Mentors for Assistant Principals

During my tenure as an AP, I (have) worked under principals who...

Statement	Assistant Principals	Principals
Demonstrate(d) highly effective leadership practices	2.94	2.88
Involve(d) me in key aspects of running the school	3.10	3.14
Provide(d) mentoring and feedback	2.71	2.80
Encourage(d) me to become a school principal	2.94**	3.37
Built/Build strong relationships with me and other APs	2.98**	3.13

Note: This figure displays responses to a set of items about mentoring provided by school principals during NC SLS respondents' assistant principal tenure. 0=never true; 1=rarely true; 2=sometimes true; 3=often true; and 4=always true.
*** indicates statistically significant differences between assistant principal and principal responses at the 0.01 level.*

Figure 8 displays the reported efficacy/availability of a range of supports designed to help assistant principals develop their leadership practices. Relative to other supports, the top set of bars in Figure 8 indicate that formal mentoring programs for assistant principals are rare. This is consistent with a more traditional, functional view of the assistant principalship. Conversely, current assistant principals and principals report that feedback/support from the sitting principal and collaboration with other assistant principals is (was) helpful to their development. For several items—formally assigned mentor, informal coaching, and feedback/support from the sitting principal—the average response for current principals is significantly higher than the average response for their assistant principal peers. These higher values build on the "tapping" findings from Figure 7 to further suggest the importance of supports in the progression from assistant principal to principal.

Figure 8: Efficacy/Availability of Supports for Assistant Principals

During your tenure as an AP, how helpful were the following supports

Support	Assistant Principals	Principals
Formally assigned mentor/coach	1.17*	1.33
Informal coaching	2.43*	2.56
Professional development	2.76	2.71
Leadership academies	2.35	2.37
Feedback/Support from principal	3.05**	3.20
Collaboration/dialogue with other APs	2.96	2.94

Note: This figure displays responses to a set of items about the efficacy/availability of supports during NC SLS respondents' assistant principal tenure. 0=did not receive/participate; 1=not at all helpful; 2=somewhat helpful; 3=helpful; 4=very helpful.
* and ** indicate statistically significant differences between assistant principal and principal responses at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

Summary

Improving the performance of school administrators is a multi-faceted endeavor that involves recruiting and selecting the right people, providing high quality preparation and apprenticeship experiences, and instituting support systems to further administrator development. We created the NC SLS to target portions of this leadership pipeline—specifically, the quality of preparation experiences (formal and apprenticeship) and how assistant principals spend their time and are mentored and supported. Given the increasing demands on school leaders and the potential importance of assistant principal experiences to on-the-job learning, we believe these survey data begin to address the need for more research on the assistant principalship. Fortunately, these data also present unique opportunities for continued research by connecting survey responses to administrative data on students, schools, and school personnel.

Overall, NC SLS responses revealed five key findings. First, compared to their formal principal preparation experiences, survey respondents indicated that their assistant principal experiences better prepared them to carry out a range of school leadership tasks. Specifically, NC SLS respondents rated the quality of their assistant principal experiences significantly higher than the quality of their formal preparation experiences across all ten Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. While formal preparation programs may need improvements, these

differences do not necessarily indicate that formal principal preparation is unimportant or of low quality. Rather, these results likely reflect the structure and timing of the school leadership pipeline. Unlike teacher preparation, where there is an immediate transition from an apprenticeship to the intended position (from student teaching to classroom teacher), there is often a time lag between the completion of formal principal preparation and assuming school leadership. These years are typically spent in assistant principal positions that can offer valuable and more proximate opportunities for vicarious and mastery school leadership experiences (Bandura, 1977). Taken together, these findings suggest that we need to know more about what constitutes high-quality assistant principalship experiences so that practitioners and policymakers can be more intentional about creating and providing such experiences.

Second, NC SLS respondents report that the quality of formal principal preparation is on the rise. Across all ten Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, those completing principal preparation in more recent years rated the quality of their preparation programs higher. These trends begin for those completing principal preparation around the year 2000 and generally continue into the present with some of the largest increases for the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Professional Capacity of School Personnel; and Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community standards. These results suggest that preparation providers have altered their programs to better prepare graduates for the evolving rigors of school leadership.

Third, perceptions of formal preparation quality differ for graduates of some preparation pathways. Specifically, those completing degree-terminal MSA programs at North Carolina universities (public or private) rated the quality of their formal preparation significantly higher for nine of the ten Professional Standards than their peers completing add-on licensure programs at in-state universities. This suggests that degree-granting programs, which entail more coursework and field placement requirements, may better prepare graduates for the rigors of school leadership. Additionally, NC SLS respondents prepared out-of-state reported significantly higher perceptions of preparation quality than their in-state prepared peers for six of ten Professional Standards. There were few differences in perceptions of preparation quality between UNC MSA and NCPF graduates or between in-state public and in-state private university graduates. Future analyses should assess whether there are differences in administrator performance or persistence based on these preparation pathways.

Fourth, consistent with prior research, NC SLS responses indicate that assistant principals spend the most time on administrative tasks—e.g. managing the school schedule, handling student discipline, and supervising students. These are traditional responsibilities of the position that may not adequately prepare the assistant principal for the broader responsibilities of school principals. However, the distribution of assistant principal time differs by perceptions of assistant principal quality. Those reporting the highest quality assistant principalship experiences (top quintile) spent less of their time on administrative tasks and more of their time on instructional management tasks (e.g. observing and evaluating teachers) than their peers reporting the lowest quality assistant

principal experiences. These initial findings are important, as they suggest characteristics of quality assistant principal experiences, and call for continued research to determine whether assistant principal time use predicts outcomes of interest.

Finally, NC SLS responses suggest the importance of supports in the progression from the assistant principalship to the principalship. Reflecting back on their assistant principal experiences, current principals, compared to current assistant principals, are more likely to report that their principal encouraged them to become a school principal and built strong relationships with assistant principals. Likewise, during their time as assistant principals, current principals reported receiving more helpful informal coaching and more helpful feedback from their school principal. While these informal mechanisms for career development and advancement may be important, these results also challenge districts and schools to be more intentional about formal processes and supports to develop the knowledge and skills of assistant principals.

Overall, we believe that the NC SLS highlights the essential role of the assistant principal position in the school leadership pipeline. We look forward to continued research that explores the characteristics of high quality assistant principalships and assesses how formal preparation and assistant principal experiences predict the career trajectories, performance, and persistence of school leaders.

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Appendix A: North Carolina School Leadership Survey

BACKGROUND SECTION

1. What has your primary position been for the 2015-16 school year?
    -Assistant principal
    -Principal
    -Other

2. Principals only: Counting the 2015-16 school year, for how many school years have you been a school principal?

3. Principals only: Prior to serving as a school principal, for how many school years did you serve as an assistant principal?

4. Assistant principals only: Counting the 2015-16 school year, for how many school years have you been an assistant principal?

5. Assistant principals only: In how many years do you plan to be a school principal? Please select all that apply.
    -1 to 2 years
    -3 to 5 years
    -6 to 10 years
    -More than 10 years
    -Have already served as a school principal
    -Do not want to be a school principal

6. Please select the category that best describes the preparation that led to your principal license.
    -NC public university
    -NC private university
    -Out-of-state university
    -New Leaders for New Schools
    -Other (write-in)

7. NC public university responses (#6) only: At which NC public university did you complete the requirements for your principal license?

8.   NC private university responses (#6) only: At which NC private university did you complete the requirements for your principal license?

9. Out-of-state university responses (#6) only: In what state did you complete the requirements for your principal license?

10. Out-of-state university responses (#6) only: At which university did you complete the requirements for your principal license?

11. From the list below, please select all the categories that describe the preparation that led to your principal license.
    -Earned a Master's of School Administration (MSA)
    -Earned an Ed.D or Ph.D.
    -North Carolina Regional Leadership Academy
    -North Carolina Principal Fellow
    -Completed an add-on or certificate program (non-degree terminal)
    -Participated in a joint school leadership program between College of Education and Business school

12. In what year did you earn your principal license?

13. Please select all of the licensure areas you held prior to moving into an assistant principal or principal position.
    -Birth to kindergarten
    -Elementary
    -Reading
    -Middle grades language arts
    -Middle grades mathematics
    -Middle grades science
    -Middle grades social studies
    -Secondary English
    -Secondary mathematics
    -Secondary science (e.g. biology, chemistry, physical science, general science)
    -Secondary social studies (e.g. history, civics and economics, geography, economics)
    -World/foreign languages (e.g. Spanish, French)
    -Exceptional children
    -Art
    -Music
    -Health
    -Physical education
    -English as a Second Language
    -Career & technical education (e.g. drafting, masonry, cosmetology)
    -Instructional technology
    -Business (e.g. marketing, finance)
    -Guidance counselor
    -School social worker
    -School psychologist
    -Media coordinator/librarian

14. Please select all of the teaching awards you have earned.
    -*No teaching awards earned*
    -*North Carolina Teaching Fellow*
    -*National Board Certification*
    -*State Teacher of the Year*
    -*District Teacher of the Year*
    -*School Teacher of the Year*
    -*Other (Write in)*

15. Please select all of the mentoring/leadership roles you held prior to moving into an assistant principal or principal position.
    -*Department chair*
    -*Grade-level chair*
    -*Curriculum specialist*
    -*Literacy/math coach*
    -*Mentor (school/district assigned) for beginning teachers*
    -*Supervised student teachers*
    -*School improvement team*
    -*School committee/advisory board*
    -*School district committee/advisory board*
    -*Other (write in)*

16. Prior to moving into an assistant principal or principal position, did you coach any student athletic teams?

17. Prior to moving into an assistant principal or principal position, were you involved in any student extracurricular activities (e.g. government, robotics, academic clubs)?

QUALITY OF PREPARATION EXPERIENCES SECTION

Principal Preparation Stem: How well did your principal preparation program prepare you to…

Assistant Principal Experience Stems: (1) How well did your assistant principal experience prepare you to… (for current principals) and (2) How well is your assistant principal experience preparing you to… (for current assistant principals)

Response Categories: not addressed, not well, somewhat well, well, very well, exceptionally well

Standard 1—Mission, vision, and core values

18. Develop, enact, or review the school's mission and vision to promote the academic success and well-being of each student

Standard 2—Ethics and professional norms

19. Safeguard and promote the values of equity, social justice, community, and diversity

20. Promote ethnical and professional behavior among faculty and staff

Standard 3—Equity and cultural responsiveness

21. Address student misconduct in a positive, fair, and unbiased manner

22. Ensure that each student has equitable access to the resources necessary for academic success (e.g. effective teachers, academic and social supports)

23. Confront student marginalization related to race, class, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, and disability

Standard 4—Curriculum, instruction, and assessment

24. Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment across grade levels and subject-areas

25. Use assessment data to monitor student progress and improve instruction

26. Promote the effective use of technology in the service of teaching and learning

Standard 5—Community of care and support for students

27. Create a school environment that meets the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student

28. Cultivate and reinforce student engagement in school and positive student conduct

Standard 6—Professional capacity of school personnel

29. Recruit and hire teachers and other professional staff who are effective and caring

30. Ensure effective induction and mentoring to new personnel

31. Develop teachers' and staff members' professional knowledge, skills, and practice

32. Deliver actionable feedback about instruction and other professional practice

33. Inspire teachers to high levels of professional practice and to continuous improvement

Standard 7—Professional community for teachers and staff

34. Nurture collaborative and trusting working relationships

35. Promote a culture of mutual accountability among teachers for the success of all students

Standard 8—Meaningful engagement of families and community

36. Create and sustain relationships with families

37. Use the community's cultural, social, and intellectual resources to promote student success

Standard 9—Operations and management

38. Protect teachers' work and learning from disruption

39. Assign teachers to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity to address student needs

40. Manage fiscal and physical resources through effective budgeting and accounting practices

41. Comply with local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and policies

42. Develop and manage relationships with feeder and connecting schools

43. Develop systems for fair and equitable management of conflict among faculty, families, and community stakeholders

Standard 10—School improvement

44. Engage others in an ongoing process of evidence-based inquiry for continuous school improvement

45. Critically assess emerging educational trends and research findings

46. Develop systems of data collection, management, analysis, and use for continuous school improvement

47. Successfully lead in the midst of competing demands and uncertainty

48. Principals only: Of the success you have had as a school principal, what amount would you attribute to your principal preparation program?
    -None, hardly any, some, quite a bit, a great deal

49. Principals Only: Of the success you have had as a school principal, what amount would you attribute to your experiences as an assistant principal?
    -None, hardly any, some, quite a bit, a great deal

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL TASKS SECTION

50. Principals only (must also have AP experience, see item #3): Below, we list five broad categories of assistant principal responsibilities—instructional management, internal relations, organization management, administration, and external relations—and examples of specific tasks for each responsibility. Considering your FINAL year as an assistant principal, please indicate the percentage of time that you spent on each of these five assistant principal responsibilities. Please note that responses should sum to 100 percent.

Assistant principals only: Below, we list five broad categories of assistant principal responsibilities—instructional management, internal relations, organization management, administration, and external relations—and examples of specific tasks for each responsibility. Considering THIS school year, please indicate the percentage of time that you have spent on each of these five assistant principal responsibilities. Please note that responses should sum to 100 percent.

Instructional Management
-*Developing/reviewing the school's vision and mission*
-*Coordinate with teachers to ensure school-wide coherence of instructional programs*
-*Informally coaching teachers*
-*Formally evaluating teachers*
-*Planning and/or implementing PD for teachers*
-*Overseeing supplementary instruction programs*
-*Coordinating the use of student assessment data*

Internal Relations
-*Developing relationships with students*
-*Communicating with parents and caregivers*
-*Supervising school activities*
-*Counseling students or parents*
-*Developing relationships with staff*
-*Mediating conflicts between staff members*

Organization Management
-*Dealing with concerns from staff*
-*Managing budgets and resources*
-*Hiring teachers*
-*Maintaining school facilities*
-*Managing non-instructional staff*

Administration
-*Developing and managing school schedule*
-*Managing student discipline*
-*Fulfilling compliance requirements (e.g. IEPs) and paperwork*
-*Managing standardized test administrations*
-*Supervising students (e.g. lunch duty, hallway monitoring)*

> *-Managing student services (e.g. guidance, nursing, social workers)*
> *-Managing student attendance*

External Relations
> *-Working with local community members/organizations*
> *-Fundraising*
> *-Maintaining relationships with district, regional, and state administrators*

PRINCPAL PERSPECTIVES ON ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS SECTION

51. I currently lead a school in which there is at least one assistant principal working with me?
   -If FALSE, respondents skip items below.

Response Categories: strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree, strongly agree

52. Principals only: As a school principal, I provide APs more autonomy as they gain experience

53. Principals only: As a school principal, I ensure that APs have exposure to all facets of school administration

54. Principals only: As a school principal, I ensure that APs have a voice in the tasks they are assigned

55. Principals only: As a school principal, I take on additional tasks to allow novice assistant principals opportunities to develop

56. Principals only: As a school principal, I believe that progressing from an assistant principal to an effective principal is the primary criteria of a successful assistant principal experience

57. Principals only: As a school principal, I assign assistant principals the same tasks from year to year

58. Principals only: As a school principal, I assign assistant principals tasks based on the needs of the school

59. Principals only: As a school principal, I assign assistant principals tasks to maximize my own effectiveness

60. Principals only: As a school principal, I believe that ensuring that the school is successful is the primary criteria of a successful assistant principal experience

MENTORING AND SUPPORT SECTION

61. Please indicate the extent to which these statements are true.

   Current Principals: During my tenure as an assistant principal, I worked under principals who…
   Current Assistant Principals: During my tenure as an assistant principal, I have worked under principals who…
   -*Demonstrate(d) highly effective leadership practices*
   -*Involve(d) me in key aspects of running the school*
   -*Provide(d) mentoring and feedback to improve my practice*
   -*Encourage(d) me to become a school principal*
   -*Built/Build strong relationships with me and other assistant principals*

Response Categories: never true, rarely true, sometimes true, often true, always true

62. Principals only: During your tenure as an assistant principal, how helpful were the following supports in your efforts to improve your practice?
   Current assistant principals: How helpful have the following supports been in your efforts to improve your practice as an assistant principal?
   -*Formally assigned mentor/coach*
   -*Informal coaching and feedback*
   -*Professional development*
   -*Leadership academies*
   -*Feedback and support from sitting principal*
   -*Opportunities for collaboration and dialogue with other assistant principals*

Response Categories: did not receive/participate, not at all helpful, somewhat helpful, helpful, very helpful