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# An Evaluation of a District Level Professional Development Program for School Leaders

Swade T. Huff

*Georgia Southern University*

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AN EVALUATION OF A DISTRICT LEVEL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

by

SWADE T. HUFF

(Under the Direction of Linda Arthur)

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated a district-based leadership institute for effectiveness of role transition for newly appointed administrators. The researcher used a non-experimental descriptive design utilizing a mixed-method approach of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the program. The population surveyed included a convenience sample of 23 administrators who participated in a district-based professional development program implemented for school leaders.

A survey was devised based upon Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) and Human Capital Development & Education Leader Performance Support's (H-ELPS), 8 Roles Assessment-District survey. The instrument focused on the key roles of school leaders used to distinguish the type of leadership skills one possesses including; the curriculum, assessment and instruction leader, data analysis leader, relationship leader, operational/process /process leader and the change leader.

The study results from the data indicated the favorability and homogenous rating of the 6 leadership domains perceived by the respondents. These findings suggest that the perception of the Leaders Institute was overall effective for the participants in the district.

Overwhelmingly most participants would be willing to continue employment in the district for 5 more years as a result of the program. Follow-up studies are advised to garner higher response rates to determine if the results are similar.

INDEX WORDS: District-based leadership institute, Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI)

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PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

by

SWADE T. HUFF

B.A., Piedmont College, 2000

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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SWADE T. HUFF

Major Professor: Linda Arthur

Committee: Steve Jenkins  
Ron Leslie

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## DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to God for providing me with a strong conviction to understand He would see more through this process. His faith surely helped me to understand that I was being carried when I felt like succumbing to the demands of the program.

Also, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful wife, Jaime, for her perseverance with what seems like an eternity of my personal, professional, and educational obligations. Thanks for your persistent motivation and support. Adonis and Addisyn definitely supported me in many aspects, to include the good and the bad. “There goes my babies!”

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is vital for any organization to operate proficiently and public school leadership is no exception. In a heightened political season, our national leaders, educators, parents and students collectively are demanding reform to improve our educational institutions and they rely heavily on the public education system to mold millions of students into productive individuals of society. Georgia, like many other states throughout the nation, continues to focus on the value of great leadership by public educational administrators to support teachers with improving student achievement and implementing reform. The implementation of *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) in 2001 has also renewed the public's awareness of the importance of school leadership and its relationship to students' success. As more school site and district level administrators are reaching retirement status, along with other attrition factors, there will be a heightened effort to replace these experienced administrators to secure continuing leadership.

Most administrators emerge from the ranks of teachers, and historically, this has been an advantageous process for the educational institution because leaders will have first hand knowledge of school-level process issues, assenting relationships and empathy for their subordinates and departmental or committee leadership experience, to name a few. In addition, teachers view the transition as career advancement with an opportunity to grow professionally and financially. Ironically, many scholars dispute the assumption that the roles of teaching and administration have significant association. As a consequence, novice administrators often face reality shock as they attempt to surpass the learning curve. Today's principals are pulled in different directions and some are

breaking under the stress (Ripley, 1997). Therefore, many public education districts are utilizing district-based leadership institutes for preparation of school administrators for position succession. By having a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the district-based leadership institutes in comparison to traditional university-based preparation programs, school districts will be better positioned to ensure that all newly appointed administrators participate in the district-based programs. In this study, participants from a district-based learning institute will be assessed for their perception of the program and its effectiveness in preparing them for their positions. The investigation will focus on the participants' current position and perception of their performance.

#### District-Based Leadership Institutes

School districts need to provide special programs designed to support the work of beginning school administrators (Daresh & Playko, 1992, 1994; Normore 2001). School administrators can not be expected to effectively embrace their roles and functions as school administrators without the appropriate support structures, resources, and administrative training in place at the district level (Normore, 2004). Administrators, more than ever, must know, understand, and be prepared to meet the complexities and challenging demands the administrative position entails before considering the job. With the current school leadership shortage looming across North America, it becomes vitally important that school districts provide leadership training, ongoing professional leadership development and preparation for increasing the levels of effectiveness of aspiring and practicing school administrators.

Scholarly literature on school reform emphasizes the critical role of school districts in setting the context for professional development activities (Elmore & Burner,

1996; Spillane, 1996; Spillane & Thompson, 1997). A major challenge that districts face is making high quality professional development activities consistent with the district and state reform goals (Massess, 1998). In the culture of state-driven reform efforts, districts continue to play a major role facilitating in communicating the state's instructional policy and influencing the type and nature of professional development opportunities available to teachers (Spillane, 1996).

Recent research focuses on the importance of district-based professional development that is embedded in the daily life of teachers (Corcoran, 1995). The implementation of district-based leadership institutes offers a systematic process for preparing and developing leaders specifically for the culture of the district. It also provides an effective "learning community" for networking and feedback purposes. The district-based program plays a central role in conveying to participants the implications of state and local standards.

#### *Transition Issues Faced by New Administrators*

One of the major milestones of an educator is the decision to transition into administration. New administrators are challenged on a multifarious basis while trying to master the day-to-day operations of a school. Ronkowski and Iannacone (1989) states it is believed that one of the most intricate concerns for the new administrator is the development of a professional reputation as a leader to produce positive results. These individuals want to be viewed as practical leaders who are contributors to the success of schools. This professional self image is attained through a continuous process of dialogue, collaboration and mentoring by an experienced administrator which usually begins prior to becoming an administrator (Kaye, 1995). Weindling and Ealey (1995)

further explained that self image is developed through participation in leadership certification courses, direct involvement in leadership tasks, modeling and social learning. In addition, it is important for new administrators to receive purposeful mentorship from current administrators who appreciate their role in preparing and transitioning the new administrator.

In 1999, Larkin described the struggles of newly appointed early childhood level administrators transitioning from teaching roles. While exploring the nature of complex administrative roles, the study concluded that isolation without a peer group was a major concern for the 16 pre-school directors included in the study. The overall theme captured in the study illustrated that there were more reported internal issues versus organization problems experienced by the subjects. Surprisingly, at the conclusion of the study none of the administrators were supporters of formal educational administrative programs despite their overwhelming conflicts through learning by experience. These results imply that together practical experience and formal instruction are needed to produce effective administrators and support the classroom teachers' transition into a leadership position.

#### *Administrative Training Programs*

Daresh and Playko (1994) found that many U.S. school districts use Administrative Training Programs (ATP) for leadership development. The programs include candidates applying for and completing a leadership course which focuses on skill development, communication and interpersonal skills. However, scholars suggest these training programs based solely on college curriculums have not been efficient with producing quality leaders. Playko, Marse, and Daresh (1990) conducted a case study analysis of four highly experienced classroom teachers matriculating through leadership



programs sponsored by two different universities. The participants, as well as other witnesses, were interviewed periodically throughout their progression with emphasis on personal insights and feelings experienced. The study found that while all four participants viewed themselves as leaders, three were less prone to seek formal administrative positions after participating in the program.

School administrators often support ongoing professional development because they support explicit training before holding the individual accountable for expected duties and responsibilities. This association should drive the school district to dissect more closely the most effective training models and experiences for future and practicing educational administrators (Hart, 1993). In addition, school districts should not hesitate to revamp administrative preparation programs as they currently exist.

#### *Culture of the Institution*

Hart (1993) established that assimilation with the culture of an organization should begin immediately after appointment, but it should be unique to the individual school. Though school districts have a paradigm that supports the infrastructure of the institution as a whole, each individual school may have special policies, processes and/or procedures needed for day-to-day operations. Often there may be a conflict with an individual's professional socialization versus the "real life" practices, with the latter taking precedence. In addition, the newly appointed administrator becomes interdependent of other co-workers during this delicate time in the transition process. Greenfield (1985) reveals that there are mediating influences on the administrators' integration into the organizational culture including work setting and conditions, peer and superior relationships, district policies and procedures, formal training and outcomes.

In addition, researchers have found that districts should take accountability for providing opportunities for organizational socialization during teacher transition into administrative positions. McCarthy (1999) advocates for the adoption of a long-term view for a school district with the preparation and development of organizational socialization for new administrators. These opportunities include comprehensive orientation programs, implementation of a “buddy system,” structure beginners’ workload, providing ongoing feedback for the individual, establishing a plan for professional growth for the individual, and facilitating reflective activities (Daresh et. al., 1992; Riordan & Hildebrandt, 1995; Normore, 2001).

#### *Current Societal Influences*

Today, the transition of a teacher into an administrative role may present different issues in comparison to the past. The job description has become more multi-faceted with influences from social problems including the prevalence of school violence, increase need for student services, recent national economic hardship, lack of community support and the fear of legal repercussions. Fein (1990) reports that the job and working conditions today are becoming increasingly difficult, complex and stressful for the education institution. More specific, school violence continues to rise and often administrators spend their focus trying to create policies and procedures aim at preventing and mediating the problem. Subsequently, these factors impact teachers’ with aspirations to transition into administration because of the intense demands and dynamic expectations placed upon them.

Leithwood, Steinbach, Ross, and Hamilton (1991) conducted a study that indicated an administrator’s socialization patterns are important because they contribute

to instructional leadership. The study also noted that formal training programs are essential for the socialization of new administrators. It is imperative that school districts recognize the magnitude of the social trends and incorporate interventions centered on them to improve recruitment and retention in education administration. Normone (2001) emphasizes that school districts must stay abreast of best practices to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to hold administrators accountable for their roles and functions as leaders. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) surveyed 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students in one school district to explore the relative effects of transformational leadership practices on selected organizational conditions and student engagement with school. The results of the study illustrated strong significant effects on leadership and organizational conditions and significant total effects on student engagement. In essence, school districts need to ensure that all leadership and development activities for school administrators promote effective practices which will lead to student achievement.

### *Professional Development*

Today in education, there is a growing appreciation for the significance of school administrators. In addition, one can appreciate the fact that efforts are being made toward improving ways for preparing principals for this critical leadership role. It has well been established that classroom teacher's benefit from professional development but it is equally important for teachers transitioning into administrative roles to engage in staff development as well. The opportunities should have a variety of focuses, but one of high importance is support through reflective practice. It needs to include opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with colleagues while allowing aspiring principals the

chance to meet in setting and reflect on current school and leadership topics (Drake & Roe, 2002).

Foley (2001) conducts a study to examine secondary school principals' perceptions of their professional development needs to effectively and efficiently serve as school leaders. Of the 13 principals who participated voluntarily in the study, approximately 40% of them indicated a need for additional training in methods for empowering and supporting teachers in collaborative activities. This study further reiterates the need for continuous staff development for the new administrator.

Many school districts offer professional development for administrators but may be met with opposition because participants feel that the learning opportunities are not conducive for adult learners. According to Hord, Jolly, and Mendez-Morse (1992) identifying strategies and circumstances that promote as well as hinder learning experiences for educators is key to transforming education. The learning opportunities offered should be innovative and pertinent to the job description of the newly appointed school administrator transitioning from a teaching position. Staff development opportunities will then facilitate growth and confidence in the administrator as they are faced with the changing dynamics in our school systems. Another key area of focus should ensure that development activities are appropriate for the career stage of the participants (Van Berkum, Richardson & Lane, 1994).

Researchers have identified various frameworks or approaches to facilitate staff development for educators including traditional approach, craft model, social reconstructionist approach and the reflective inquiry approach (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 2007). All have agreed that traditional philosophy of in-service training needs

to be replaced by innovative opportunities for knowledge sharing of real life situations. Whether formal or informal, all approaches for professional development must be flexible and able to respond to the dynamic needs of administrators assimilating into a new role.

The traditional approach for professional development entails attending a university/college program that presents the general principles of management. It encourages a passive position for the individuals and generally is not geared to the unique learning needs of the newly appointed or practicing administrator. Leaders Institutes select this model based on their desire to obtain an advanced degree, explore an area of interest or upgrade their administrative licensure (Daresh, 2002). In contrast to the traditional model, many districts create leadership academies that include a series of meetings with highly focused topics based on a needs assessment basis. These academies promote more personal motivation and desire to learn and grow professionally versus requirements to obtain certification (Daresb, 2002).

The craft model has proven advantageous for new administrators transitioning into new roles. It highlights the experience of current administrators by allowing the new administrators to “buddy” or shadow them. The purpose is for newly appointed leaders to gain real life and practical experience. With this approach, the practical wisdom of experienced practitioners and the context for learning takes place in a real school setting (Daresh, 2002).

The reflective inquiry approach involves administrators being active participants in their learning and the source of the knowledge is in self-reflection and engagement (Daresh, 2002). The overall objective of the approach is to encourage administrators to

reflect on their values regarding school administration, develop new ideals and implement new strategies. The premises of the approach include networking, mentoring and reflective reading.

Another premise of the reflective approach is engagement in professional and scholarly literature. Reading selections should be based on the assumption that the information will enlighten the administrator about leadership, management, evidenced-based best practices and trends in education administration. Though scholarly articles are of high importance, other relevant writings including novels, plays and poetry can facilitate this approach (Kaye, 1995).

Educational networking is defined as the exchange of information between colleagues who have been linked together for some common purpose (Porter, 2002). It involves communicating with others with the hopes of creating or discovering new opportunities. Networking is an informal approach which allows colleagues to bounce ideas and discuss similar issues and concerns. It allows administrators to discuss their expectations, share information that they know and link new concepts and strategies to their own unique positions. Owens (2002) reports that organizational effectiveness indicates the presence of mutual support from peers. In addition collegiality results in greater leadership longevity and productivity. This approach centers on the idea that collegial roundtables and support is vital for an individual to become an effective school leader and even more so, for the newly appointed administrator transitioning into a leadership role. Though networking events are usually informal meetings, they should carry more substance by making certain the administrators are moving toward improving professional performance (Daresh, 2002).

Mentoring is an instructional strategy that provides opportunities for development, growth, and support to less experienced individuals. Daresh (2002) found that more than half of the nation's states require that all newly appointed administrators complete at the minimum one year of mentor support with their first leadership position. The ideal mentor is customarily a seasoned and experienced person who assumes the responsibility of helping promote a protégé with the goal of promoting the individual for advancement in their career. Clift (1992) reports that the mentor also oversees the professional development of the protégé by ensuring he/she is placed in increasingly challenging situations.

Fenwick and Pierce (2002) reveal that the goal of the social reconstructionist approach is for the participant to learn strategies for the eradication of structures that enable inequalities such as racism, classism and sexism. It is based on the belief that leadership plays a significant role engaging the underserved into education. According to Evans and Mohr (1999), reinforcing old patterns and hearing speakers who mouth familiar platitudes about the "effective principals" does not lead to substantive change. When "real problems of schools" are identified, educational outcomes improve for the lowest performing students and schools and professional development for administrators focus more on resolving those problems.

## Conclusion

The transition of an educator into an administrative role is multi-faceted. Scholars and practitioners strive to understand the succession process with a goal to improve outcomes. Historically, school districts have focused efforts to facilitate the transition of classroom teachers into leadership roles on the basis of experience. However, with the changing dynamics in our society organizations must explore the context of these individuals to the leadership team. Effective transition and succession planning examines how each aspiring leader would contribute to the established leadership team. The explicit planning for the succession assures continuity of leadership styles, guides development activities of administrative teams and more importantly eliminates transition problems.

## Problem Statement

While educational leadership preparation programs at colleges and universities are the primary training sources, school districts are continuing the learning process through district-based leadership development programs. A few national studies indicate that these programs do impact the district in a positive manner, but trends indicate that filling open principal positions has become increasingly more difficult as retirement rates of principals increase, high percentages of certified administrators move into non-administrative roles, and the number of qualified candidates who choose to become school leader wanes. Therefore, it is imperative that school districts evaluate the outcomes of their district-based leadership institute to ensure the programs are meeting the needs of the participants as well as the school district. School districts need effective and high quality leadership preparation and development programs in place to ensure that



newly appointed administrators feel comfortable in their new roles. In addition, these programs need to be evaluated for cost-efficiency with many districts mandating cuts in their budgets. The purpose of this study is to evaluate a district-based leadership institute for effectiveness in role transition for newly hired administrators to improve self perception of job performance and confidence. Subsequently, this study will provide feedback for the enhancement of the professional development experience for the school district.

### Research Questions

The overarching research question that will be addressed in this study: What is the influence of a district-based leadership institutes on effectiveness of new school-based administrators in one South Georgia school district? The following sub questions will be used to guide the research:

1. What is the perceived effectiveness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute?
2. How do the topics in the Aspiring Leaders Institute relate to practical experiences in the Administrator's current role?

### Significance of the Study

The implementation of district-based leadership institutes has been a method to recruit and retain aspiring educational leaders. Though there is a wealth of knowledge regarding the need for such programs, there is minimal empirical data on the effectiveness of the district-based leadership institutes.

Research indicates that training capable leaders must begin long before they are needed (Daresh & Playko, 1994; Crow & Glascock, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Crow & Matthews, 1998). The district-based leadership institutes are only the first step

in hiring administrators. Effective leadership development and succession planning practices that include recruitment, selection, and induction are other essential components in comprehensive systems that train, obtain, and retain the most capable school leaders (Hart 1993). Heck (1995) has asserted that during leadership succession, when the relationships and patterns that shape a principal's impact on the school and district are formed, the organization and the new principal exert influence on each other.

### *Design*

The primary researcher will conduct a program evaluation of a South Georgia school district called the Aspiring Leaders Institute (ALI). The program evaluation design will be a descriptive study using a mixed- method approach of qualitative and quantitative data. The primary approach will be quantitative while adding qualitative strategies to increase chances to control or at least assess some of the threats to validity (Caracelli & Greene, 1997). Data will be collected from participants to answer the following over-arching question: What is the influence of district-based leadership institutes on effectiveness of new school-based administrators in one South Georgia school district? How do the topics discussed in the program related to practical experiences in the administrator's current role. The perceived effectiveness of the professional development program process and outcome will be the focus of the assessment.

### *Conceptual Framework*

Donabedian's (1966) structure-process-outcome framework will serve as the foundation for this evaluation. This framework has guided three decades of program evaluations and research studies (Mitchell, Feddrick, & Jennings 1988). The

Donabedian's model is linear (outputs proportional to inputs) assuming that the three premises are interrelated; structures affect processes, which in turn affect outcomes.

The first premise, structure, can be represented as participants or characteristics of the participants in the study. The researcher has identified newly appointed administrators in the school district as the structure of the evaluation. The second premise, process is the technical or interpersonal style of the structure. For this study, a district-based leadership program will represent the process. Outcomes, the final premise, are illustrated by program end points and satisfaction with content. The outcomes to be addressed in this evaluation will include perceived strengths of the program by the participants and perceived weaknesses of the program by the participants. These three dimensions can be conceptualized as independent but interrelated, whereby system and process are necessary but not sufficient to explain quality. Therefore, this model will help guide the belief district based leadership programs that provide accessible and acceptable guidance to the newly appointed administrators may be instrumental in the participants' transition into the new position and inadvertently improve their confidence in their role performance (see Appendix A).

### *Setting*

The setting for the program evaluation is an urban school district in South Georgia. The county serves a student population of over 30,000 students who attend over 45 schools. There are 300 administrators employed in the county which encourages participation in the district-based leadership institute for new administrators called the *Aspiring Leaders Institute*. The goal of the program is to help in the transition of newly appointed administrators into leadership roles specific to the culture of the district while

subsequently identifying the advantages of a district-based leadership program. The participants are invited into the one year program after they have formally accepted a leadership position within any level of the district. The group meets bi-monthly during normal work hours and does not offer additional compensation for the individuals.

### *Sample*

There are over 500 educators in the county currently holding leadership certifications. Administrators include instructional coaches, principals, assistant principals and associate principals. The inclusion criteria for the convenient sample will be newly appointed administrators who successfully completed the one year Aspiring Leaders Institute and currently working within the district. The sample will consist of those who have participated in the ALI (N =27).

### *Data Collection*

After approval from the institutional review board from Georgia Southern University and the district, the data collection process will begin. A satisfaction survey was emailed to all of the participants who completed the Aspiring Leaders Institute whom are currently working within the district. The survey included likert-scale questions and demographics including; age, years of experience and highest degree obtained. The instrument was created by the principal investigator and reviewed by an expert panel of educators. The participants will have one week to complete the survey and they were sent a friendly reminder email every two days by the principal investigator. The subjects were given the option to email the results of the survey or mail to a physical location (see Appendix B).

*Analysis*

The data from this study was computed using a SPSS and Microsoft excel. This software was used to increase the simplicity of the data calculation process. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data in order to describe it in a simpler or abbreviated summarized format (Sprinthall, 2003). In addition, the data from the open-ended questions were analyzed for similar themes among the participant.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### General Introduction

Current demands for school leaders as well as reported administrator shortages resulted in the implementation of district-based aspiring leaders programs to promote teacher leaders into administration. This chapter presents a pertinent review of literature which explores the history of leadership training programs, the effectiveness of the leadership training programs and the participants' perception of the leadership programs. The general areas of research focus included in this chapter are

- A. The history of district-based leadership programs.
- B. Criteria used to decide on areas of focus in leadership programs
- C. Various types of leadership training programs
- D. The effectiveness of the district-based leadership programs
- E. Program evaluations.

School districts across our nation face a multitude of struggles. Contrary to the past, many school district officials have a heightened concern to secure high performing administrators. Some dilemmas for the public school districts is multifaceted including; growing school districts, smaller budgets, demanding positions as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and lack of qualified applicants to name a few (Wallace, 1999). As a solution, many districts are developing quality programs for teachers aspiring to become leaders to shift gears from the classroom setting into school administration.

### Preparation in the College or University Setting

Traditionally, colleges and universities' schools of education solely have taught and certified individuals for becoming school administrators. Upon completion of the pertinent core classes and a field related practicum, students are awarded a degree and/or certification to become a public school administrator.

Often there is a perception by practicing administrators that professors in Departments in Education Leadership (DEL) who do not have K-12 experience are not 'up to par' with those who do. Practicing administrators feel that there is a great difference between theory emphasized in traditional leadership programs and the world of reality. They even go so far as to express skepticism about educational leadership theories in general (O'Keefe, 1994). According to a study by Styron, Maulding, and Hull (2006), specialist and doctoral students in a school of education unanimously agreed that professors should have adequate knowledge of content which must be acquired mostly from having several years of experience as a school administrator and reported having a difficult time relating to professors who teach only what they have read about without the experience to back it up. Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. The information appeared to indicate, by a narrow margin, that students participating in this study prefer professors with strong backgrounds in K-12 administration, but with less emphasis grounded in theory. Administrators, more than ever, must grasp and be primed to meet the complexities and challenging demands the administrative position entails before considering the job that often may be omitted in traditional DEL programs.

Newly appointed principals and assistant principals can not be expected to successfully clinch their roles and functions as school administrators without the appropriate support structures, resources, and administrative training in place at district level (Tyack & Cuban, 2005). With the current school leadership shortage looming across our nation, it becomes vitally important that school districts provide leadership training, ongoing professional development and preparation for increasing the levels of effectiveness of aspiring and practicing school administration. From a historical perspective, school institutions embrace change slowly even under extreme pressure, but the current unprecedented level of dissatisfaction with the schools and the public's insistence that schools do a better job of preparing students suggest that change is inevitable (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, Roher & Wormwell, 2000). School administrators are feeling the effects of the public's changing expectations in the push to adopt new and expanded administrative roles, including instructional leaders, constructive political leaders, and responsible managers. Administrators are in a vital position to influence the direction of change and must respond to the public's demands without losing site of the need to protect the children's interests (Roher & Wormwell, 2000; Gutherie & Saunders, 2001).

After two decades of the most sustained school reform efforts in the history of the United States, millions of children are still being left behind (National Leadership Network Study Group on Restructuring Schools 1991; Tyack & Cuban 1995; Wallace-Reader's Digest, 2003). According to Wallace-Reader's Digest (2003), one reason for this failure is lack of quality leadership, a vital factor in achieving system-wide, educational renewal. According to Gutherie and Saunders (2001), education leaders face



neglect in the low quality of training and professional preparation they receive, currently with little support, and even outright hostility from politicians and other stakeholders. The results show a shortage of people willing and able to lead our public schools to improved academic performance (Darling-Hammond 1995; Forsyth & Murphy, 1999; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). According to Wallace-Reader's Digest (2003), three-fifths of all districts report an inability to attract enough quality candidates for vacant administrator positions. Nearly half the nation's superintendents are expected to retire or leave their jobs in the next five years (Tallerico 2000; Gutherie & Saunders, 2001).

Trends indicate that filling open principalships has become increasingly more difficult as retirement rates of experienced principals increase, high percentages of current principals move into non-administrative positions, and the number of qualified candidates who choose to become school leaders declines (Educational Research Service, 1998; McAdams, 1998; Educational Research Service, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2000). According to various researchers (Normore, 2001; Browne-Gerrigno, 2003) the reasons for the declining pool of aspiring administrative candidates are interrelated and confounding. Nevertheless, replacement of school leaders who leave the profession requires a concerted effort to attract and train candidates to the field. While educational leadership preparation programs at colleges and leadership development programs in school districts are developing varied and innovative instructional strategies and organizational structures to prepare school administrators to lead schools in these challenging times, a few national studies indicate that these programs do indeed make a

positive difference (Forsyth & Murphy, 1999; Bogotch, 2001; Glasman, et al., 2002). School leaders are being held more accountable than ever for assuring that students meet new learning standards, but frequently they lack the resources, support, training and authority at the school district level to achieve results (Parkay & Currie, 1992; McAdams 1998; Young, et al., 2002). Without the emotional and financial support of the central office, the prospects for preparing a qualified pool of new principals who can effectively lead future schools are highly unlikely. School districts need effective and high quality leadership preparation and development programs in place in order to attract and retain school leaders (Baltzell & Dentler, 1992). The extent to which the school system invests in the preparation of principals is an index of other aspects of system quality, including socialization opportunities for training and preparation for leadership roles.

The transition from being a teacher to becoming an administrator is an intricate process of reflection and learning that requires socialization into a new community of practice and role identification. This process requires an investment of time and costs to ensure that there is a careful balance of knowledge and development through classroom activities, and skills development through situated learning activities and opportunities guided by qualified professionals (Capasso & Daresh, 200; Kelly & Peterson 2002; Brown-Ferrigno, 2003). A teacher becomes an administrator when his/her attributes and capabilities successfully merge with the organization's efforts to support them. Many school districts are not willing to make such an investment; and consequently, do not have a qualified pool of candidates from which to choose when an opening occurs.

### District Leadership Development and Preparation

In the past, organizations have focused succession planning efforts on the preparation of high leadership potential individuals (Hagberg Consulting Group, 1998; Elmen, 2000). Today, school organizations are learning that quality leadership preparation must be not only on these high potential individuals, but also on the school district context and on the leadership team (Corbett & Wilson, 1992; Bogotch, 2001; Kelly & Peterson, 2002). According to the Hagberg Consulting Group (1998), succession planning and clear expectations help school districts by: engaging senior management in a disciplined review of leadership talent; guiding development activities of administrative teams; bringing selection systems, rewards systems and leadership development into alignment with the process of leadership renewal; assuring continuity of leadership; avoiding transition problems and; preventing premature promotion of principals by providing appropriate professional development. There is a notion that clear expectations are essential to school administrators in order for effective succession planning to occur. In a study conducted in two of the largest urban school districts in Ontario, Normore (2001) found that organizational structures and a clear set of guiding principles have a profound effect on the effectiveness of school administrators as they prepare to lead schools.

Activities have been used by some school districts in the United States for leadership development include administrative training programs, where potential principals apply for and take a 10-week after-work course on leadership (Daresh & Playko, 1990, 1992, 1996; Daresh, 1994, 1997, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Capasso & Daresh, 1998). Darling-Hammond (1995) explains that graduates of these programs

then opt for a second 18-week, three credit course in administrative leadership, which includes skill development. Candidates are then invited to administrative competence seminars where their interpersonal skills, communication and conceptual skills, and group leadership skills are formally assessed by a panel of senior administrators. Top-ranked individuals are then placed in internships as full-time assistant principals for one full year under the guidance of successful administrators, where they obtain experience in areas such as instructional leadership, staff development, and pupil personnel management, community involvement, and professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 1995). Research indicates that training capable leaders must begin long before they are needed (Daresh & Playko, 1994; Crow & Glasco, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Daresh, 1997; Crow & Matthews, 1998). Effective training programs are only the first step in hiring capable principals.

Effective leadership development and succession planning practices that include recruitment, selection, and introduction are other essential components in comprehensive systems that train, obtain, and retain the most capable school leaders (Hart 1993). Heck (1995) asserts that during leadership succession, when the relationships and patterns that shape a principal's impact on the school are formed, the organization and the new principals exert influence on each other. A successor who possesses knowledge about social influencing processes and skill in applying that knowledge can have a substantial impact on the outcomes of his/her own succession experience (Hart, 1993). District leaders can use the same body of knowledge to plan succession processes and design support activities for principals in order to achieve the results they desire. These district leaders can use knowledge about the interactions between a new member and the

organization to modify principal evaluation processes and refocus principal's attention (Coleman & Laroque, 1990; Crowson & Morris, 1992; Block, 1993; Walker, 1999, 2000).

School district leaders can assess their current practices and design flexible processes that support principals undergoing succession and lead to outcomes that advance district policies and goals. They can re-examine their use of mentors and match the design of their mentor programs to the outcomes appropriate to each school, provide systematic support and time for visits, diagnosis, and plan activities for principals that facilitate their transition to a new school, and consciously work to improve the outcomes of succession beyond the careful search for and appointment of the best principal for a school (Hart 1993). Other research indicates that these programs include training and support specifically designed to assist principals who are taking charge in a new assignment, recognizing that they face challenges common to major transitions, acknowledging that a unique mix between the principal and the school influence the outcomes, and preparing the principals for the impact the school will have on them and the impact they hope to have on the school (Corbett & Wilson, 1992; Heck, 1995; Corbett, et al., 1996).

District office personnel can also capitalize on the expectations for change that succession brings to implement new programs and work toward the improvement of schools (Crowson & Morris, 1992; Dimmock & Wildly, 1992; Hallinger & Edwards, 1992; Fullan, 1993; Weiss & Cambone, 1994; Angus, 1998; Elmin, 2000; Normore, 2001). They can seize the opportunity that this major role transition presents to shape and expand the professional orientation, knowledge, and skills, both moral and technical,

of the administrators who lead their schools. It is essential then that school administrators understand the expectations of school districts. Districts are encouraged to fully and clearly articulate the specific demands of the position and changing expectations for administrators in their districts or schools before embarking on specific recruitment and selection procedures (Pounder & Young, 2000; Normore, 2001). Changing expectations have implications for the selection and training of school administrators. The articulation of expectations and their training implications become an integral part of the socialization of the administrator (Pounder & Young, 1996; Normore, 2001).

Professional development is shifting from university campuses to district offices (Smith & Piele, 1989). Personnel in the school districts are playing an increasingly important role in planning and implementing professional development for teachers and administrators. School districts need to provide special programs designed to support the work of beginning school administrators (Daresh & Playko, 1992, 1994; Normore, 2001). Novice school leaders will be well-served when efforts are made to help them through their early professional duties.

Educational organizations face issues with succession planning efforts for training classroom teachers into the role of administrator. Naturally, most administrators emerge from the ranks of teachers. Historically, this has been an advantageous process for the educational institution because leaders will have first hand knowledge of school-level process issues, assenting relationships and empathy for their subordinates and departmental leadership experience to name a few. In addition, teachers view the transition as career advancement with an opportunity to grow professionally and

financially. Ironically, many scholars dispute the assumption that the roles of teaching and administration have significant association. One of the main roles of the teacher includes illustrating knowledge in various subjects, whereas administrators are required to show expertise while making decisions. As a consequence, neophyte administrators often face reality shock as they attempt to surpass the learning curve. Today's principals are pulled in different directions and some are breaking under the stress (Ripley, 1997). Therefore, the question must be answered of whether experience is the best preparation or matriculation through a leadership program for administrators. It is important to initially identify trends of teacher transition into administrative positions to answer the aforementioned question. The purpose of this paper is to explore scholarly literature regarding professional development for teacher transition into administrative positions within school districts.

#### Transition Issues Faced by New Administrators

One of the major milestones of an educator is the decision to transition into administration. New administrators are challenged on a multifarious basis while trying to master the day-to-day operations of a school. According to Ronkowski and Iannacone (1989), it is believed that one of the most intricate concerns for the new administrator is the development of a professional reputation as a leader to produce positive results. These individuals want to be viewed as practical leaders who are contributors to the success of schools. This professional self image is attained through a continuous process of dialogue, collaboration and mentoring by an experienced administrator which usually begins prior to becoming an administrator (Kaye, 1995). Weindling and Ealey (1995) further explained that self image is developed through participation in leadership

certification courses, direct involvement in leadership tasks, modeling and social learning. In addition, it is important for new administrators to receive purposeful mentorship from current administrators who appreciate their role in preparing and transitioning the new administrator.

In 1999, Larkin described the struggles of newly appointed early childhood level administrators transitioning from teaching roles. While exploring the nature of complex administrative roles the study concluded that isolation without a peer group was a major concern for the 16 pre-school directors included in the study. The overall theme captured in the study illustrated that there were more reported internal issues versus organization problems experienced by the subjects. Surprisingly, at the conclusion of the study none of the administrators were supporters of formal educational administrative programs despite their overwhelming conflicts through learning by experience. These results imply that together practical experience and pedagogical instruction are needed to produce effective administrators and support the classroom teachers' transition into a leadership position.

#### Administrative Training Programs

Daresh & Playko (1994) found that many school districts in the United States use Administrative Training Programs (ATP) for leadership development. The programs include candidates applying for and completing a leadership course which focuses on skill development, communication and interpersonal skills. However, scholars have suggested these training programs based solely on college curriculums have not been efficient with producing quality leaders. Playko, Marse, and Daresh (1990) conducted a prospective case study analysis of four highly experienced classroom teachers matriculating through leadership programs sponsored by two different universities. The



participants, as well as other witnesses, were interviewed periodically through-out their progression with emphasis on personal insights and feelings experienced. The study found that while all four participants viewed themselves as leaders, three were less prone to seek formal administrative positions after participating in the program. If school districts find that training programs are not meeting the needs of the new administrator, the next step would be to assess the expectations of the newly appointed school administrator compared to the training programs' learning outcomes.

School administrators often support ongoing professional development because they support explicit training before holding the individual accountable for expected duties and responsibilities. This association should drive the school district to dissect more closely the most effective training models and experiences for future and practicing educational administrators (Hart, 1993). School districts should not hesitate to revamp administrative preparation programs as they currently exist.

#### Culture of the Institution

Hart (1993) establishes that assimilation with the culture of an organization should begin immediately after appointment but is unique to the individual school. Though school districts have a paradigm that supports the infrastructure of the institution as a whole, each individual school may have special policies, processes and/or procedures needed for day-to-day operations. Often times there may be a conflict with an individual's professional socialization versus the "real life" practices with the latter taking precedence. In addition, the newly appointed administrator becomes interdependent of other co-workers during this delicate time in the transition process. Greenfield (1985) reveals that there are mediating influences on the administrators'

integration into the organizational culture including work setting and conditions, peer and superior relationships, district policies and procedures, formal training and outcomes.

In addition, researchers have found that districts should take accountability for providing opportunities for organizational socialization during teacher transition into administrative positions. McCarthy (1999) advocates for the adoption of a long-term view for a school district with the preparation and development of organizational socialization for new administrators. These opportunities include comprehensive orientation programs, implementation of a “buddy system”, structure beginners’ workload, providing ongoing feedback for the individual, establishing a plan for professional growth for the individual, and facilitating reflective activities (Daresh et. al., 1992; Riordan & Hildebrandt, 1995; Normore, 2001).

#### Current Societal Influences

Today, the transition of a teacher into an administrative role may present different issues in comparison to the past. The job description has become more multi-faceted with influences from social problems including the prevalence of school violence, increase need for student services, recent national economic hardship, lack of community support and the fear of legal repercussions. Fein (1990) reports that the job and working conditions today are becoming increasingly difficult, complex and stressful for the education institution. More specific, school violence continues to rise and administrators often spend their focus trying to create policies and procedures aim at preventing and mediating the problem. Subsequently, these factors impact teachers’ with aspirations to transition into administration because of the intense demands and dynamic expectations placed upon them.

Leithwood, Steinbach, Ross, and Hamilton (1991) conducted a study that indicated an administrator's socialization patterns are important because they contribute to instructional leadership. The study also noted that formal training programs are essential for the socialization of new administrators. It is imperative that school districts recognize the magnitude of the social trends and incorporate interventions centered on them. Normone (2001) emphasizes school districts must stay abreast of best practices to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to hold administrators accountable for their roles and functions as leaders. Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) surveyed 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students in one school district to explore the relative effects of transformational leadership practices on selected organizational conditions and student engagement within their schools. The results of the study illustrated strong significant effects on leadership and organizational conditions and significant total effects on student engagement. In essence, school districts need to ensure that all leadership and development activities for school administrators promote effective practices which will lead to student achievement.

### Professional Development

Today, there is a growing appreciation for the significance of effective in-school leadership in education. In addition, one can appreciate the fact that efforts are being made toward improving ways for preparing principals for this critical leadership role. It has well been established that classroom teacher's benefit from professional development but it is equally important for teachers transitioning into administrative roles to engage in staff development as well. The opportunities should have a variety of focuses but providing support through reflective practice is highly important. It needs to include opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with colleagues while allowing

aspiring principals the chance to meet in setting and reflect on current school and leadership topics (Drake and Roe, 2002).

Foley (2001) conducted a study to examine secondary school principals' perceptions of their professional development needs to effectively and efficiently serve as school leaders. Of the 13 principals who participated voluntarily in the study, approximately 40% of them indicated a need for additional training in methods for empowering and supporting teachers in collaborative activities. This study further reiterates the need for continuous staff development for the new administrator.

Many school districts offer professional development for administrators but may be met with opposition because participants feel that the learning opportunities are not conducive for adult learners. According to Hord, Jolly & Mendez-Morse (1992) identifying strategies and circumstances that promote as well as hinder learning experiences for educators is key to transforming education. The learning opportunities offered should be innovative and pertinent to the job description of the newly appointed school administrator transitioning from a teaching position. Staff development opportunities will then facilitate growth and confidence in the administrators as they are faced with the changing dynamics in our school systems. Another key area of focus should ensure that development activities are appropriate for the career stage of the participants (Van Berkum, Richardson & Lane, 1994).

Researchers have identified various frameworks or approaches to facilitate staff development for educators including the traditional approach, craft model, social reconstructionist approach and the reflective inquiry approach. All agree that traditional philosophy of in-service training needs to be replaced by innovative opportunities for

knowledge sharing of real life situations. Whether formal or informal, all approaches for professional development must be flexible and able to respond to the dynamic needs of administrators assimilating into a new role.

The traditional approach for staff development entails attending a university/college program that presents the general principles of management. It encourages a passive position for the individuals and generally is not geared to the unique learning needs of the newly appointed or practicing administrator. Aspiring leaders select this model based on their desire to obtain an advanced degree, explore an area of interest or upgrade their administrative licensure (Daresh, 2002). In contrast to the traditional model, many districts create leadership academies that include a series of meetings with highly focused topics based on a needs assessment basis. These academies promote more personal motivation and desire to learn and grow professionally versus requirements to obtain certification (Daresb, 2002).

The Craft model has proven advantageous for new administrators transitioning into new roles. It highlights the experience of current administrators by allowing the new administrators to “buddy” or shadow them. The purpose is for newly appointed leaders to gain real life and practical experience. With this approach, the practical wisdom of experienced practitioners and the context for learning takes place in a real school setting (Daresh, 2002).

The reflective inquiry approach involves administrators being active participants in their learning and the source of the knowledge is in self-reflection and engagement (Daresh, 2002). The overall objective of the approach is to encourage administrators to reflect on their values regarding school administration, develop new ideals and

implement new strategies. The premises of the approach include networking, mentoring and reflective reading.

Educational networking is defined as the exchange of information between colleagues who have been linked together for some common purpose. It involves communicating with others with the hopes of creating or discovering new opportunities. Networking is an informal approach which allows colleagues to share ideas and discuss similar issues and concerns. It allows administrators to discuss their expectations, share information that they know and link new concepts and strategies to their own unique positions. Owens (2002) reports that an organizational effectiveness indicates that the presence of norms of mutual support and collegiality results in greater leadership longevity and productivity. This approach is centered on the idea that collegial roundtables and support for an individual to become an effective school leader and even more so for the newly appointed administrator transitioning into a leadership role. Though networking events are usually informal meetings, it should carry more substance by making certain the administrators are moving toward improving professional performance (Daresh, 2002).

Mentoring is an instructional strategy that provides opportunities for development, growth, and support to less experienced individuals. Daresh (2002) found that more than half of the nation's states require that all newly appointed administrators complete at the minimal, one year of mentor support with their first leadership position. The ideal mentor is customarily a seasoned and experienced person who assumes the responsibility of helping promote a protégé with the goal of promoting the individual for advancement in their career. Clift (1992) reports that the mentor also oversees the

professional development of the protégé by ensuring he/she is placed in increasingly challenging situations.

Another premise of the reflective approach is engagement in professional and scholarly literature. Reading selections should be based on the assumption that the information will enlighten the administrator about leadership, management, evidenced-based best practices and trends in education administration. Though scholarly articles are of high importance, other relevant writings including novels, plays and poetry can facilitate this approach (Kaye, 1995).

Fenwick and Pierce (2002), reveals that the goal of the social reconstructionist approach is for the participant to learn strategies for the eradication of structures that enable inequalities such as racism, classism and sexism. It is based on the belief that leadership plays a significant role engaging the underserved into education. According to Evans and Mohr (1999), reinforcing old patterns and hearing speakers who mouth familiar platitudes about the “effective principals” does not lead to substantive change. When “real problems of schools” are identified educational outcomes improve for the lowest performing students and schools, and professional development for administrators focus more on resolving those problems.

#### Features of Effective District-Based Professional Development

One of the most well-known and widely cited models of effective professional development grew out of the national evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). The model outlines three main premises; content, active learning , and coherence.

An increasing body of literature supports the importance of content-focused professional development, including that which addresses curriculum and assessment. It has been shown that professional development activities that focus on what students are expected to learn (content knowledge) and how students best learn the curriculum (pedagogical content) appears to support the development of administrators professional learning in ways that foster improvements in instructional practice and/or student achievement (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Garet et al., 2001; Whitehurst, 2002). In addition, a review of literature conducted by Hill (2007) concluded that student achievement improves when leaders and teachers study the content, curriculum, assessments, and instructional methods they will be utilizing at the school level.

The literature also highlights that engaging participants in the professional development process enhances the administrator's learning. This can include planning curriculum for classroom implementation, reviewing student work, engaging in meaningful discussion with other colleagues, and reflection (Garet et al., 2001; Lieberman, 1996). In addition, immediate feedback provides evidence of success and can help clarify ideas and correct misconceptions.

Professional learning experiences that promote links district goals were found to be associated with improved teacher knowledge, skills, and practice in the Eisenhower study (Garet et al., 2001). Professional development activities are most effective when connected with one another to create a coherent program of learning and connected with other important aspects of teachers' own learning goals.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The researcher will collect pertinent data relative to the criteria utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of district-based leadership training for newly appointed administrators in a South Georgia county. An analysis of the data will allow the overarching research questions, “What is the influence of a district-based leadership institute on effectiveness of new school-based administrators in one South Georgia school district? This chapter reviews the supporting research questions, outlines the methods and procedures to be used in this study, and presents the intended means of data collection and analysis.

#### Research Questions

The overarching research question in this study is: “What is the influence of a district-based leadership institute on effectiveness of new school-based administrators in one South Georgia school district? The following sub questions will guide the research:

1. What is the perceived effectiveness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute?
2. How do the topics in the Aspiring Leaders Institute relate to practical experiences in the administrator’s current role?

#### Research Design

The program evaluation design will be a descriptive study using a mixed- method approach of qualitative and quantitative data. This type of research design is selected because using qualitative and quantitative research in conjunction allows the researcher to use various methods and ideas unique to each method to gain pertinent information

about the phenomena under study (Bloom, Fischer & Orme, 1999). Quantitative research provides numerical data to interpret the results from the qualitative aspects of research (Bloom Fischer & Orme, 1999). The eight roles of School Leaders District-level Assessment allow generalizations to be made regarding responses obtained from the study. Qualitative research allows inferences and characteristics to be drawn from a significant population of participants (Creswell, 1994) that have participated in the District-Based Leaders Institute.

Qualitative research is used in areas where only minimal amounts of information are known about the topic (Pattern, 2000). The effectiveness of the District-based Aspiring Leaders Institute in the South Georgia school district will be measured in part from the responses obtained during the study. Qualitative research provides the researcher the opportunity to be immersed in the environment and gain an accurate understanding of the phenomena or experiences in the environment and gain an accurate understanding of the phenomena or experiences being studied without preconceived assumptions of the subject under scrutiny (Bloom, Fischer, Orme & 1999; Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2006). The mixed-method research design will create an intimate opportunity to synthesize responses from participants in the study.

#### Population

A South Georgia school district provided the researcher with a list of the administrators who participated in the Aspiring Leaders Institute: Leadership for Learning for the 2009-2010 academic year. This convenience sample of 27 participants included instructional coaches, assistant principals, principals and other leadership roles.

There were no exclusion criteria identified within the list provided. There were surveys electronically mailed (emailed) with a cover letter soliciting participation in the study.

### Instrumentation

The researcher modified a survey based upon Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) and Human Capital Development & Education Leader Performance Support's (H-ELPS), 8 Roles Assessment-District survey and has been used since 2001. Demographic information about the participants completing the survey such as number of years as an administrator, highest degree held and number of years in current position will be included in the survey. The survey questions were aligned to a specific research question to aid in computation and the survey design is a 5 choice Likert-scale to promote the choosing of a concrete answer. The scale values were identified as follows; 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

### *Survey*

Surveys, a descriptive method, can provide immediate information that is user friendly for both the researcher and participants. Quantitative research allows an established theory to be supported by data (Corbetta, 2003), it seeks to provide participants that are representative of the sample, and it provides structure of a study (Corbetta). Surveys are widely used and popular due to their ability to reach relatively large groups by selecting sample participants that are representative of the larger population (Corbetta; Bordens & Abbot, 2005). Common themes can be identified within the small samples and can be used to make inferences with larger samples (Corbetta). Babbie (1995) recommends the use of surveys because they describe

characteristics of large populations, they make samples feasible, they are flexible, and they are generalizable.

Key roles of school leaders used to distinguish the type of leadership skills one possesses was a focus of the instrument (see Appendix A). It has been utilized by GLISI since 2001 and was designed by a cross-functional design team of experts in organizational and educational performance improvement for business, higher education, K-12 education, and educational support organizations. The key roles that have been identified include the curriculum, assessment and instruction leader, data analysis leader, relationship leader, operational/process /process leader and the change leader.

#### *Validity and Reliability of Instrument*

Truthfulness is used to measure the validity of the instrument used in a study, in this case a survey. Researchers should obtain similar results if the same instrument is distributed to the same sample group, given that the participants provide responses that are truthful in nature. An instrument is understood to be valid when it measures what is designed to measure (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Shaughnessy, 2006). Content validity refers to the extent to which selected questions are representative of the domain from which inferences will be drawn (Bloom, Fisher & Orme, 1999; Corbetta, 2003). Feedback provided experts in the field may either establish content validity or not (Bloom, Fischer, & Orme, 1999). Reliability of an instrument refers to the consistency with which an instrument measures what it is supposed to (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Shaughnessy, 2006).

### Data Collection

The researcher received permission from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After it was secured, surveys were distributed because the review board has to review and approve any study that involves human subjects to ensure no unsafe or immoral acts will occur as a result of the study. Survey packets were electronically mailed (emailed). The study packets included an introductory cover letter which introduced the researcher; explanation of the study; requested participation. Instructions were provided to inform participants on how to return their surveys. The survey packets were emailed to each identified participant of the Aspiring Leaders Institute in March of 2010 and collected over a 2-week period. The researcher emailed follow-up reminders conveying gratitude for participating in the study and requesting completion and return of uncompleted surveys. This email functioned solely as a reminder for survey participants to complete the survey and return it. Of the 27 emails sent, there were 23 who responded.

### Data Analysis

The data from this study was computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Excel on a personal computer. This software enabled the researcher to increase and simplify the process of data calculation. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, mean, and standard deviation will be used to analyze the survey in order to describe data in a simpler or abbreviated summarized format (Sprinthall, 2003). The data obtained from open-ended questions will be analyzed through content analysis to observe common themes and patterns from participants; content analysis is a technique that allows researchers to make presumptions based upon specific information

gained from various forms of messages (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Shaughnessy, 2006).

### Summary

This chapter describes the methods and procedures that will be used in evaluating the effectiveness of district-based leadership institutes for newly appointed administrators. This study was conducted using administrators who have completed the *Aspiring Leaders: Leadership for Learning in a Northeast Georgia School District*. Participants in the study received an electronic survey with instructions on how to complete and return their responses. Data collected will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and findings from the study will be presented in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a district-based leadership institute for effectiveness in role transition for newly hired administrators to improve self perception of job performance and confidence. Subsequently, this study will provide feedback for the enhancement of the professional development experience for the school district. In order to accomplish this purpose, the study answers two research questions, which are as follows:

1. What is the perceived effectiveness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute?
2. How do the topics in the Aspiring Leaders Institute relate to practical experiences in the Administrator's current role?

The instrument entitled *Evaluation of Role Performance* was administered to examine the effectiveness of district-based leadership institutes on the perception of the administrators in the categories of Curriculum and Assessment/Instruction, Data Analysis, Relationships, Operational/Process Improvement and Change leader. The survey also provided open-ended responses to elicit perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as suggestions for improvement. The survey was mailed electronically (emailed) to 27 participants in a suburban school district in Georgia. Of the 27 electronic surveys sent out, 23 respondents returned completed surveys, yielding an 85% response rate.

This chapter is organized into two sections: Quantitative Findings and Qualitative Findings. The section on Qualitative Findings is an analysis of the open-ended questions in the on-line survey. Themes that emerged from the interviews were analyzed to

understand the participants' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute.

## Quantitative Findings

### *Description of the Sample*

The results of the analysis used to answer the research questions developed for this study are presented in this section. To efficiently address the research questions, survey data were collected and summarized into tables that provide the frequencies and percentages of survey responses. Demographic variables regarding Aspiring Leaders Institute's participants are presented below in both tabular and narrative form. Demographic information was collected for the following categories: (a) years of leadership experience (b) years in current position (c) highest level of academic achievement, and current position title. In this study, there were 100% participants in the category of 0-10 leadership experience and 100% participants in the category of 0-5 years in their current position.

Table 4.1

### *Highest Degree of Respondents*

Highest Degree	Frequency	Percent
Master's degree	14	61
Post Masters	7	30
Doctorate degree	2	9
Total	23	100.0

As shown in Table 4.1, 9% of the respondents surveyed hold doctorate degrees, 30% respondents hold post masters degrees, and majority of the respondents (61.0%) hold master's degrees (see Table 4.1).



Table 4.2

*Current Position Title*

Current Position	Frequency	Percent
Instructional Coach	8	35.0
Assistant Principal	9	39.0
Other	6	26.0
Total	23	100.0

Survey respondents were asked to provide their current job title. Eight survey respondents (35.0%) were instructional coaches. Nine respondents (39.0%) were assistant principals and six respondents (26.0%) were categorized as other position titles.

Research Question 1 asked, “What is the influence of a district-based leadership institutes on effectiveness of new school-based administrators in one South Georgia school district?” As an attempt to answer this overarching question, several domains pertaining to a leadership position were assessed.

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction leaders have expectations from the State of Georgia and the federal government to adhere to standards and establish schools whose instruction is structured to support the standards. In addition, this leader engages all teachers in a study team to work in a collaborative and professional manner to improve teaching and learning.

Table 4.3

*Means and Standard Deviations for Curriculum Leader Items*

## Summary Table for Curriculum Leader

Label	Mean	Std Dev
1. Sets expectations for standards based instruction	4.13	0.34
2. Ensures opportunity for staff learning of standards	4.13	0.34
3. Appropriately implements best practices	4.30	0.70
4. Monitors implementation of standards at school level	4.47	0.84

For the curriculum, instruction, and assessment leader, 87% of respondents (M= 4.13) agreed that the program sets expectations for standards based instruction and ensures ample opportunities for staff learning of the standards with SD of 0.34. Also, 94% of the respondents (M= 4.13) strongly agreed or agreed that the program guided them with providing support and structures for implementation and sharing of best practices with a SD of 0.70 whereas 13% of respondents (M= 4.47) were undecided or disagreed regarding monitoring the implementation of standards based approaches at the school level.

A data analysis leader is required to share with the organization and its stakeholders the results that drive the mission of the organization. In addition, the leader should create an environment where the organization can begin tracking the results to ensure that the organization meets its goals.

Table 4.4

*Means and Standard Deviations for Data Analysis Leader*

Summary Table for Data Analysis Leader

Label	Mean	Std Dev
5. Emphasize use of data for school improvement	4.65	0.88
6. Analyze school data for school achievement and accountability	4.52	0.66
7. Use data to reform classroom, grade level and school results	4.33	1.01
8. Provide opportunities to practice analyzing data	3.87	0.76
9. Use data for continuous improvement	4.32	0.65

There were 78% of respondents (M=4.65) who strongly agreed that the program emphasizes the use of data for school improvement with a SD of 0.88. There were 61% of the respondents (M=4.52), with a SD of 0.66, who strongly agreed that they were able to analyze standard test scores and other school data to ensure high student achievement

and accountability. According to the 15% of the respondents (M=4.33) with the highest standard deviation in the category of curriculum, instruction and assessment of 1.01, they were undecided or strongly disagreed that the leadership institute leads the participants to analyze classroom, grade level, and school results. Over 3/4<sup>th</sup> (78%) of respondents with a SD of 0.76 (M- 3.87) agreed that the Aspiring Leaders Institute provided professional learning of data analysis to assist school personnel. Lastly, 91% of respondents (M=4.32) strongly agreed or agreed with a SD of 0.65, that the leadership institute provided opportunities to monitor data for continuous improvement of programs, and students and staff performance.

The relationship leader sets the direction, casts the vision and works to embed a set of core values in the culture of the organization to guide actions and decisions. In addition, this leader promotes positive community relations between the local school and community by providing staff support structures, establishing positive contact with the community, and improving the school's appearance.

Table 4.5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Relationship Leader*

Summary Table for Relationship Leader

Label	Mean	Std Dev
10. Builds internal and external relationships	4.35	1.07
11. Fosters the use of strengths of all staff	4.35	1.07
12. Establish relationships for continuous feedback from stakeholders	4.7	0.93
13. Communicates district's expectations for teaching and learning	4.65	0.76

There were 65% of respondents (M=4.35) strongly agreed that the Aspiring Leaders Institute encouraged the building of internal and external relations with a SD of 1.07.

There were 21% of the respondents ( $M=4.35$ ) with a SD of 1.07 who were undecided or disagreed that the leadership institute fostered the use of strengths of all staff members whereas 65% strongly agreed. There were 87% of the respondents with the highest mean of this category ( $M=4.7$ ) who strongly agreed that the program encouraged the establishment of relationships for continuous feedback from stakeholders with a SD of 0.93. Lastly, 91% of the respondents ( $M=4.65$ ) with the lowest SD in this category of 0.76 strongly agreed or agreed that the leadership institute effectively communicated the district's expectations for teaching and learning.

The operations leader demonstrates the ability to effectively and efficiently organize resources, processes, and systems to support teaching and learning. The process improvement leader demonstrates the ability to identify and map core processes and results to create action plans designed to improve student achievement.

Table 4.6

*Means and Standard Deviations for Operational/Process Improvement Leader*

Summary Table for Operational Leader

Label	Mean	Std Dev
14. Organize resources to support teachers	4.22	0.52
15. Appropriately identify highly qualified personnel	4.22	0.52
16. Maintain safe learning and teaching environments	4.22	0.52
17. Maintain positive teaching and learning environments	4.22	0.52

There were 96% of respondents ( $M=4.22$ ) strongly agreed or agreed with a SD of 0.52 for each subtopic in this domain. This includes; effectively organizing resources to support teaching and learning, providing a system to identify highly qualified personnel, implementing a plan for school wide safety and security, and maintaining positive teaching and learning environments.

The change leader demonstrates the ability to drive and sustain change in a collegial environment focused on continuous improvement in student achievement.

Table 4.7

*Means and Standard Deviations for Change Leader*

Summary Table for Change Leader

Label	Mean	Std Dev
18. Develop School wide plan for improvement	4.30	0.82
19. Continuous modification for school improvement	4.30	0.82
20. Stakeholders supported with transformational process	4.34	0.76
21. Balance pressure and support for positive change	4.30	0.82
22. Change strategies based on data analysis	4.61	0.84

There were 52% of respondents (M=4.30) with a SD of 0.82 strongly agreed that the leadership institute encouraged the development of school-wide plans for improvement. In addition, 52% of respondents (M=4.30) with a SD of 0.82 strongly agreed that the Aspiring Leaders Institute emphasized studying improvement results and making recommendations for the continuation and/or modification of processes. There were 17% of the respondents (M=4.34) with a SD of 0.76 who were undecided regarding the ability to nurture schools, staff and stakeholders as they navigate through the change process. Lastly, 52% of respondents (M= 4.30, M= 4.61) with SD of 0.82 and 0.84 strongly agreed that the leadership institute enabled participants to balance pressure and support for positive change and fostered making decision to adjust change strategies based on the analysis of results.

In addition to the leadership domains, there were questions to assess the effectiveness of the program facilitator, convenience of the program and the reliability of the resources used. Facilitating a leadership group requires skills and knowledge of the administrative roles. The participants depend on the facilitator's when asking questions,

tracking the conversation's flow, and engaging everyone's ideas. The facilitator should model good listening and should encourage the participants to respond and network with each other.

Table 4.8

*Program, Process & Facilitator*

Summary Table for Program, Process & Facilitator

Label	Mean	Std Dev
Effective Program Facilitator	4.61	0.78
Opportunities to Network	4.78	0.60
Explanation of district policies and procedures	4.04	1.02
Helpful material and resources	4.78	0.60
Information was pertinent to administrative duties	4.35	1.02
Convenient class time and location	4.30	0.82
Program completion increased knowledge base	4.39	0.72
Continue my employment in the district	4.57	0.90

There were majority of the respondents (87%) (M= 4.61) with a SD of 0.78 who strongly agreed that the program facilitator did a good job in the design and implementation of the program. In addition, 87% of the respondents with the highest mean in this sub category (M=4.78) with a SD of 0.60 strongly agreed that they were better able to network with other administrators as a result of the program.

There were 78% of the respondents (M=4.04) with a SD of 1.02 that strongly agreed or agreed that program that the program did a good job in helping them to understand district policies and procedures. There were 13% of the respondents that disagreed that they were better able to understand the district policies and procedures.

The majority, 91% of the respondents with the highest mean in the subcategory (M=4.78) with a SD of 0.60, which strongly agreed or agreed that the resources used in the program were pertinent and helpful to them as administrators. There were 96% of the respondents (M=4.35) with a SD of 1.02 who strongly agreed or agreed that the

information presented during the program was informative and guided them as new administrators.

There were approximately 1/4<sup>th</sup> (22%) of the respondents (4.30) with a SD of 0.82 who were undecided whether overall they feel better able to perform in their administrative position as a result of the program. However, 78% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that overall they feel better able to perform in their administrative position as a result of the program. Over half of the respondents 52% (M= 4.39) with a SD of 0.72 who felt the class time and location of the program was convenient.

Lastly, a majority of the respondents (78%) of the respondents (M= 4.57) with a SD of 0.90 felt as a result of the program more competent in their administrative roles. Though none of the respondents disagreed about feeling competent, there was 13% who were undecided about feeling competent as a result of the program.

### Qualitative Findings

In addition, respondent open response comments were grouped into specific categories. Through this method of analysis, significant themes emerged from the perspectives on program strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for overcoming program limitations.

These questions included the following:

1. What do you think are the major strengths of the program?
2. What do you think are the major weaknesses of the program?
3. What are suggestions to improve the perceived weaknesses of the program?

### *Research Question 2*

Research Question 2 asked, “How do the topics discussed in the Aspiring Leaders Institute relate to practical experiences in the administrator’s current role?”

### *Program Strengths*

There were 16 respondents (70%) who answered the program strengths open-ended question. For program strengths, the first theme to emerge from respondent comments was the opportunity to network with other school leaders in the district with a 68% response rate. One respondent remarked:

I feel very comfortable in my role as a result of this program because I do not feel that I am alone. I think it is excellent for us to have some sort of community or networking circle so that we can support and share ideas with our regular meetings and activities.

The second theme to emerge was the reinforcement of the importance of positive relationships between all stakeholders with a 31% response rate. One responded commented,

The majority of the program was devoted to other facets of leadership due to the needs of the district. The training in this area was appropriate for the district plan or a district leader. I would consider “leveling” the content according to the current positions.

The third theme to emerge from respondent comments was the thorough explanation of the leadership roles from the modules with an 18% response rate. The fourth theme to emerge from the respondent comments was the effectiveness of having active or recently retired school level leaders speak on various topics with a 13% response rate. The fifth



theme to emerge was the exposure to several methods of disaggregating data with a response rate of 13%.

### *Program Weaknesses*

There were 11 respondents (48%) who answered the open-ended question of weaknesses. For program weaknesses, the first theme to emerge was lack of practical examples faced by administrators with a 36% response rate. One participant wrote,

The program does not address those very real challenges that come up in day-to-day school leadership, i.e.; insistent parents, disobedient students (repeat visitors to the office), and chronically late or absent teachers!

The second theme to emerge was the concentration on district goals versus building level goals with a 27% response rate. One responded remarked,

The majority of the program was devoted to other facets of leadership due to the needs of the district. The training in this area was appropriate for the district plan or a district leader. I would consider “leveling” the content according to the current positions.

The third theme to emerge was the lack of time for hands-on development with an 18% response rate. The fourth theme to emerge from the respondents comments is the lack of exposure with the curriculum and instruction components with an 18% response rate.

One respondent commented,

The Aspiring Leaders Institute prepares school leaders to become more mindful of the implementation of standards-based instruction from a district level standpoint but more hands on with the curriculum would have been very helpful.

### *Recommendations to Improve the Program*

Respondents listed numerous examples that were needed to overcome some of the program weaknesses cited. These included: 1) provide more real-world scenarios for school based leaders; 2) Invite district leaders to the workshops to listen to the concerns by the school based leaders; 3) Allow students to analyze student data during training; 4) Follow-up with graduates and specific intervals to gauge growth; 5) Include more activities around operations; 6) Allow the group to assess instruction and debrief; 6) Use the data to design a school improvement plan; 7) Allow time for one-on-one with a mentor on operations; 8) Allow participants to design a major transformational effort and implement it with the cohort; 9) Allow participants to visit schools that are strong in curriculum and instruction ideas; 10) Allow further discussion on No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements; 11) Allow participants to give an overview of their school accountability plan; 12) Allow participants to collaborate on real-world changes that affect the district; 13) Level the content according to current positions; 14) Give more emphasis on progress monitoring with data analysis.

### Summary

The researcher analyzed data from the survey instrument to provide and answer to the overarching research question. The researcher was able to ascertain that district-based leadership professional development is favorable for role transition of a new administrator. However, the participants long for more real-life and practical examples when completing the workshops. As a result of the professional development, most participants feel more competent in their respective roles and would consider staying

within the district for another five years after completing the training. Further discussion about the findings, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a summary of the study, analysis of the research findings, discussion of research findings, and conclusions discovered from those findings, as well as the implications and recommendations based upon the data gathered.

The intent of the study was to evaluate a district-based Aspiring Leadership Institute for effectiveness in role transition for newly hired administrators to improve self perception of job performance and confidence. The research questions include: (1) What is the influence of a district-based leadership institute on effectiveness of new school administrators in one South Georgia urban school district? (2) How do the topics discussed in the program relate to practical experiences in the administrator's current role?

The study was completed through the use of survey using a likert- scale to assess the five domains of leadership roles in education; curriculum and instruction, data analysis, relations, operations, and transformational leader. The survey was designed by a cross-functional team of experts in organizational and educational performance improvement for business, higher education, K-12 education, and educational support organizations. The survey was emailed to 27 participants who had completed the Aspiring Leadership Institute. Of that 27, 23 completed surveys were returned to the researcher leaving an 85% completion rate.

The survey allowed the researcher to gather general data as it is related to the effectiveness of the Aspiring Leadership Institute, which allowed the researcher to make

some broad assumptions (Creswell, 1994). Furthermore, the open-ended questions allowed the respondents to give more specific feedback.

#### Analysis of Research Findings

In general, a strong finding which emerged from the data was the favorability and homogenous rating of the 6 leadership domains given the size of the standard deviations. Of the 24 questions asked in the survey, all of the means were above 4.0. This illustrates the favorable ratings of each question. These findings suggest that the perception of the Aspiring Leaders Institute was overall effective for the participants in the district.

A more specific finding that emerged from the study was in the domain of curriculum, instruction and assessment. In 3/4ths of the sub-questions: 1 (sets expectations for standards based instruction), 2 (ensures opportunity for staff learning of standards) and 3 (appropriately implements best practices; there were 100% of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with SD deviations of 0.34, 0.34, and 0.70 respectfully. This finding is in contrast to the literature, which states that most school administrators report that they are more comfortable in relational and operational leadership versus providing leadership in curriculum and instruction (Hans, 2007). In addition, 65% of the respondents were working in current roles other than as an instructional coach. However, this finding illustrates the emphasis of standards-based instruction in the Aspiring Leaders Institute. One respondent wrote “the program promoted the importance of curriculum, instruction and assessment being critical components”. Another respondent wrote, “the curriculum offered to us exceptional information and was very information about the supervision of instruction through the class/school keys as well as how to monitor the RTI process.” Even though the literature

reports that most leaders are more comfortable in other domains rather the curriculum, instruction, and assessment; there has been an heightened emphasis on standards-based school accountability since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) with the professional development of school leaders and their ability to meet the challenges of improving student outcomes (Salazar, 2007). It can implied that the Aspiring Leaders Institute is emphasizing the importance of developing leaders who are knowledgeable with curriculum and instruction due to this domain associated with Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and accountability.

Another significant finding was the congruency of the responses regarding the theme of networking. There were 68% of the responders who identified the opportunity to network was a strength of the program. Also, the “opportunities to network” sub-question in the process, program and facilitator category had the highest mean of 4.78 and the lowest standard deviation of 0.60. This is in alignment with the literature where veteran administrators felt networking and communicating was a necessity to survival as a school administrator (Michael & Young, 2006). These findings illustrate the practicality of the program in allowing the participants to communicate and stay connected with best practices of their colleagues.

Another significant theme which emerged was the reinforcement of relationships between administrators and all stakeholders in the school system. The literature points to a strong link between positive nurturing interpersonal relationships between administrators and all stakeholders as an important ingredient in the recipe for student success. Socially supportive relationships can have powerful and lasting effects on the lives of children (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Richman, Rosenfeld, & Bowen, 1998). One

respondent commented that the Leaders Institute emphasized to participants the constant establishment and maintaining of a professional environment that includes the modeling of positive interpersonal relationship techniques.

The researcher is hopeful that the findings obtained from this study will assist school districts with developing stronger modules within their leadership institute to improve student outcomes. The researcher will articulate the findings to interested individuals via articles, conferences, publications, professional development opportunities and other avenues that allow dissemination of the results.

#### Discussion of Research Findings

This study focused on participants who completed a district-based Leadership Institute. The participants completed a likert-style survey that included demographics and questions evaluating the five role domains of a school leader.

#### *Effectiveness of District-Based Leadership Institutes*

The results of the study qualitative study revealed that participants want to be provided with more practical issues during professional development. Historically, district-sponsored professional development as compared to other entities like universities, receives a poor reputation from school administrators and teachers. Wilson and Berne (1988) observed that ‘teachers and administrators are loathe to participate in anything offered by “outside experts” who know and care little about the day to day challenges faced by any given school. In a study by Smylie (1989) teachers ranked district sponsored staff development as last. Therefore the literature reveals that learning communities have become commonplace in education circles. Learning communities are

viewed as powerful professional development approaches that allows for participants assess and evaluate true issues faced in the workplace.

Results of the quantitative study also revealed many respondents felt better able to network with other administrators as a result of the program. This sense of community takes away from the feeling of isolation. In addition, several participants mentioned the arrangement of follow-up sessions at regular intervals to continue in fostering these relationships.

A limitation identified in the study would be the time of evaluation after completion of the Aspiring Leaders Institute. The data collected does not include the date of completion of the class in relation to the amount of time in current position. It can be implied that many of the participants have recently completed the leadership institute and many have not completed one year in their current position. Therefore, they may not be able to effectively evaluate the five domains of leadership roles because of the lack of experience.

Another limitation with the study is the small sample size. The results of the study imply that the district based Leaders Institute is effective for newly appointed school leaders, however the data cannot be extrapolated to larger populations without reservation.

### Conclusions

Although it is commonly assumed that district-based professional development opportunities are not popular among administrators (Little, 1993), the major finding of this study has refuted that notion. The results show that although the topics appear to be geared towards district-based goals versus individual school goals, the participants feel



more competent in their roles as a result of the program. However, these questions remain to be answered: Should district-based Leadership Institutes be divided based on job title? Moreover, does more experience in the school system affect the perception of effectiveness of the Leadership Institute. The first research question sought to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the program for newly appointed administrators in the district. This study did find that the leadership institutes were perceived as effective, but these findings cannot be extrapolated to other populations without reservation. Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made, with the intent of facilitating an improved district-based leadership institute for newly appointed school leaders:

1. The content of the modules format of the classes and philosophy of the program should support building level school administrators issues and concerns.
2. District Leaders should be invited to the workshops to hear the concerns of the administrators and provide first hand feed back from a district-level perspective. In addition, participants should be provided the opportunity to speak with veteran administrators or recently retired to obtain more practical feedback and suggestions. The institute should encompass a variety of building level leaders so that the administrators can begin to understand the collaboration efforts.
3. Allow the participants to analyze student data during their training. This will give them immediate feedback on their understanding of the concepts.

4. The graduates of the program should have a follow-up workshop to assess and evaluate how they are developing and handling the demands of being a school leader. This would provide an avenue to gauge the growth and to foster networking.
5. Allow more one-on-one time with a mentor on operations. Also, allow visitation as a group to schools in the district that are strong in curriculum and instruction ideas.

### Implications

Based upon the review of available literature and research findings of the study the following implications can be drawn:

1. Many school districts with district-based Leadership Institutes should be interested in the results of this study, which can be used as the basis for implementing more practical modules and examples during the workshops.
2. District level school leaders should be interested in this study, as many respondents mentioned the heavy emphasis on district level concerns and the lack of attention to practical building level issues.
3. Georgia lawmakers should be interested in this the data presented in this study of the indication of a lack of emphasis on curriculum and instruction as related to school administration. Student curriculum and achievement should be the sole purpose of all school districts and training should be geared around this vision.

4. There should be continued emphasis on curriculum and instruction with opportunities to analyze data in a group setting.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the review of literature and the findings of this study, the following recommendations for further research are made:

1. This study should be replicated in another school district with more participants compared to the district used in Georgia.
2. This study should be repeated, with extensive attempts made to include all graduates of the district-based leadership institute.
3. An evaluation of the district-based leadership institute should be conducted a year later after the participants have completed program.

#### Concluding Thoughts

As a new administrator who has completed a district-based leadership institute, the researcher believes the programs are effective. It allows the new administrator to network with other administrators in their same position which reduces some of the anxiety of a new role. It also puts the participant in alignment with the district expectations which helps with improving relations. Because many school districts may face retention and recruitment of qualified administrators in the future, it is imperative that the newly appointed administrators are cultivated with the district's vision. In addition, the face of the school administrator is rapidly changing. School districts need to ensure that they are providing culturally competent modules and information. As the

district-based leadership institutes become more popular, we must implement summative and formative evaluations to ensure the needs of the participants are being met.

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## APPENDIX A

## SUMMARY TABLE FOR FIVE DOMAINS

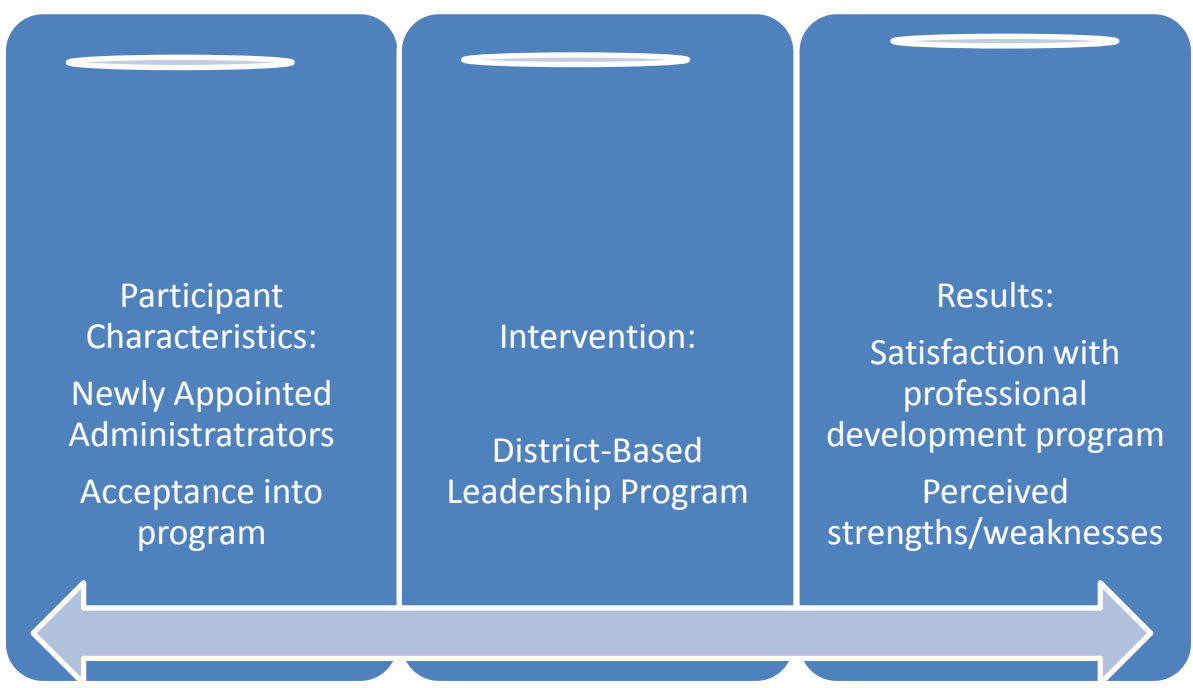
Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1	13	87			
Q2	13	87			
Q3	39	57		4	
Q4	65	22	9	4	
Q5	78	17			5
Q6	61	30	9		
Q7	57	29	10		5
Q8	9	78	9		4
Q9	41	50	9		
Q10	65	13	17		4
Q11	65	13	17		4
Q12	87	4	4		4
Q13	78	13	4	4	
Q14	26	70	4		
Q15	26	70	4		
Q16	26	70	4		
Q17	26	70	4		
Q18	52	26	22		
Q19	52	26	22		
Q20	52	30	17		
Q21	52	26	22		
Q22	78	9	9	4	
PF1	78	4	17		
PF2	87	4	9		
PF3	39	39	9	13	
PF4	87	4	9		
PF5	70	26	4		
PF6	52	26	22		
PF7	52	35	13		
PF8	78	4	13	4	

Table 4.9 shows the distribution of responses of each domain. When the level of significance is set at 0.05, the small p value (0.02) indicates significant difference in participant's rating among different leader types. The Curriculum leader, had the lowest mean score (45.58), and the Operational and Relationship leader, had the highest mean score (68.89).



APPENDIX B  
DONABEDIAN'S MODEL

AN EVALUATION OF A DISTRICT LEVEL PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



APPENDIX C  
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

### Part A. Demographics

#### I. Years of Educational Experience

0-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	21-25 Years	Greater than 25 years
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#### II. Years in Current Position

0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	Greater than 20 Years
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#### III. Highest Degree Held

Masters	Specialist	EdD/PhD
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#### IV. Current Position Title

Instructional Coach	Assistant Principal	Associate Principal	Principal
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### Part B. Roles of School Leaders

Please evaluate your mastery level as an administrator after completion of the Aspiring Leaders: Leadership for Learning Institute. Use the scale below to evaluate the following questions:

#### I. Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction Leader

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. Sets expectations for a standards-based approach to curriculum, assessment and instruction					
2. Ensure ample opportunities for staff learning of performance standards					
3. Provide support and structures for the codification, implementation, and sharing of best practices across schools					
4. Monitors the implementation of standards based approaches at the school level					

**What are the strengths and weakness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute as it pertains to curriculum and instruction?**

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**What are your recommendations to improve the Institute in this area?**

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## II. Data Analysis Leader

5. Leads the school to use data for comprehensive school improvement planning	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
6. Analyzes standardized test scores and other school data to ensure high student achievement and accountability					
7. Leads schools to analyze classroom, grade level, and school results					
8. Provides professional learning of data analysis to assist school personnel					
9. Monitors data for continuous improvement of programs, and students and staff performance					

**What are the strengths and weakness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute as it pertains to data analysis?**

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**What are your recommendations to improve the Institute in this area?**

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## III. Relationship Leader

10. Builds and sustains trust among internal and external alliances	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

11. Leads the organization to engage a unified, cohesive team that captures and utilizes the strengths of all staff					
12. Establish mechanisms and structures for continuous feedback from all stakeholders					
13. Communicate effectively the district's purpose to align teaching and learning					

**What are the strengths and weakness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute as it pertains to relational leadership?**

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**What are your recommendations to improve the Institute in this area?**

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**IV. Operational/Process Improvement Leader**

<b>14. Effectively and efficiently organize resources, processes, and systems to support teaching, learning, and organizational effectiveness</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>UNDECIDED</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>
15. Provide a system to recruit, select, hire, and retain highly qualified personnel					
16. Develop, execute, and monitor a system for school-wide safety and security.					
17. Maintain facilities to create positive learning environments that support teaching and learning					
18. Develop school-wide plans for improvement					
19. Study improvement results and make recommendations for continuation and/or modification of processes					

**What are the strengths and weakness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute as it pertains to operational leadership?**

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**What are your recommendations to improve the Institute in this area?**

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**V. Change Leader**

20. Nurture schools, staff, and stakeholders as they navigate through change process	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
21. Balance pressure and support for positive change					
22. Monitor the change process for desired results					
23. Monitor the change process for desired results					
24. Make decisions to adjust change strategy based on analysis of results					

**What are the strengths and weakness of the Aspiring Leaders Institute as it pertains to transformational leader?**

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**What are your recommendations to improve the Institute in this area?**

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## The Roles of School Leaders, DISTRICT-level ASSESSMENT

Use the scale below to evaluate the following questions:

The program facilitator did a good job in the design and implementation of the program.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I was able to network better with other administrators as a result of the program.					
The program did a good job in helping me to understand District policies and procedures.					
Materials used in the Program were pertinent and helpful to me as first year administrator.					
I understood the information that was presented during the program and feel the information was informative and guided me as first year administrator.					
As a result of the program, I feel better able to perform in my administrative position.					
Class time/location of the program was convenient.					
As a result of the program, I feel more competent.					
As a result of the program, I would be willing to continue my employment in the district for 5 more years.					