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Urban School District Principals' Perceptions of Job Satisfaction

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Walden University

College of Education

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Darcy L. Woodcock

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2021

Abstract

Urban School District Principals' Perceptions of Job Satisfaction

by

Darcy L. Woodcock

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2021

Abstract

Principals in urban school districts directly and indirectly affect school communities through student achievement, teacher retention, and school climate. When a high-quality school principal leaves a school, it can negatively affect these areas due to the interruption of progress toward school improvement goals to increase student achievement. Seeking to address this issue, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The conceptual framework was Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. The key research question concerned investigating the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. Qualitative data were collected via virtual, semistructured interviews with 12 principals who had remained in their current roles and schools for 2 or more years. Themes were identified through an open, axial, selective hierarchical coding framework to guide the development of a project. The findings indicated the principals' perceptions of job satisfaction were grounded in leadership training and support. Using the findings, a training and professional development project was designed to engage principals in a mentoring program during their first 3 years as leaders. This doctoral project promoted positive social change in helping the local urban school district administrators understand what they could do to retain high-quality principals. The principals in an urban school district could feel adequately supported and prepared to work with their school communities. They could see the effects in the positive ways they can influence student achievement, school climate, and teacher retention.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my 3 daughters, husband, twin sister, older brother, and parents. My daughters have shown me the importance of modeling lifelong learning and the ability to shatter any glass ceiling that exists. My loving husband has shown me complete support and the unwavering encouragement to reach my dreams. My identical twin sister helped me to realize my strength by showing me her talent as a powerful, amazing educator. My older brother taught me how important it is to have an open mind to other perspectives. He showed me the power of listening to those who disagree. Finally, my parents always talked with me about the importance of education and being strong enough to make my own path in this world. I am so proud of earning my doctorate and hope to use it to better our education system so that it meets the needs of all children.

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Section 1: The Problem

There is long standing agreement between educational experts that principals impact school communities in direct and indirect ways (Baptiste, 2019; Bartanen et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2017; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018). The three major areas of impact are student achievement, school climate, and teacher hiring and retention (Baptiste, 2019; Bartanen et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2017; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018). The school principal affects student achievement second only to classroom instruction (Brown, 2016; Hitt et al., 2018). Another area affected by the principal is the school climate (Bartanen et al., 2019). The principal influences the school climate through setting the academic and social goals, implementing continuous improvement cycles, learning schedules, providing support to staff members and students, and developing the plan to engage the community. According to Rangel (2018), building lasting relationships fostered by trust is key in developing a supportive teaching and learning environment. Teacher hiring and retention is also a major area affected by the school principal. Schools with high teacher turnover, due to lack of leadership, struggled to grow and change due to the lack of professional relationships within the school community (Babo & Postma, 2017). In an effort to raise student achievement, retain effective teaching staff, and educate students in a warm and welcoming learning environment, retaining quality school principals is essential (Babo & Postma, 2017; Rangel, 2018).

Several systemic and policy changes have contributed to the ever-changing job responsibilities of the school principal. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was the first systemic change from the federal government in years that added accountability

measures for offering a high-quality education, in an effort for all students to reach proficiency on standards and assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Race to the Top (2009) was a federal investment in schools for school reform leading to school improvement. Lastly, Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) added accountability measures for low achieving schools on high academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Due to the increase in demands of the principalship, researchers have documented the difficulty of retaining quality principals over the last several years. A local school district documented the same concern.

The Local Problem

In this qualitative case study, the problem under study was the lack of understanding regarding the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals to remain in their current roles. Researchers have documented the difficulty of retaining quality principals over the last 20 years (Rangel, 2018). According to Babo and Postma (2017), the retention of principals has been a focus of educational experts all around the world. Approximately 50% of all principals leave their position by the end of their second year (Tran et al., 2018). Principal retention has become an even larger issue in districts of high poverty and low achievement (Wilkerson & Wilson, 2017). Four of the aspects of a school community that depend on retaining a high-quality school principal are school improvement initiatives, student achievement, teacher quality, and school climate (Bayler, 2017; Hardie, 2015). One reason why Crawford-Garrett and Riley (2016) emphasized the importance of studying effective ways to retain quality principals is that student achievement is linked to necessary school resources and services.

Retention of highly qualified principals is a problem at the local research site, which is a public school district located in the northeastern United States. According to the chief human resources officer, for the 2019–2020 school year, only 61% of the principals were retained. Within the last 2 years, 53% of school principals at the local research site remained in the same role and school. Principals often transition to other leadership positions at other schools within the district or are promoted to a central office position (Grissom & Bartenan, 2018). The chief human resources officer added that some principals retire, leave education altogether, or are demoted due to ineffective leadership. and that too many principal transitions within their first 2 years of service at many of the schools within the district has negatively affected the school community climate, student achievement, and teacher retention.

The district decisions are guided by a strategic plan with five priorities. The five priorities are family and community engagement, culturally responsive education, hiring and retaining high-quality staff members, personalized learning, and rigorous curriculum and instruction. The retention of highly qualified principals is the third priority, along with the retention of highly qualified staff in all other district roles. According to the chief human resources officer, the district administrators know that retaining highly qualified principals will positively affect student achievement, school climate, and teacher hiring and turnover. Identifying a list of job satisfaction factors, captured through the experiences and perceptions of principals staying and prospering in their current roles, could assist district administrators in retaining principals.

Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. To address the study problem, I gathered data through virtual, semistructured interviews with 12 K–12 principals who had more than 2 years of experience at the same school and were currently working in an urban school district.

At times, the challenges of urban school districts can be better understood from the community context (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Sun, 2019). The chief human resources officer stated that the leaders at the local site faced issues of high state accountability measures, hiring competition with suburban school districts, family trauma and struggles, and many more. The complex issues faced by the local site may influence the retention of highly qualified principals beyond Year 2. Per the district website, the local study site is a large school district in an urban setting with 34 schools ranging from prekindergarten through 12th grades. The district serves approximately 21,000 students from a diverse community of families speaking approximately 70 languages from over 60 countries. The statistics for the school district include:

- 19% of students are English language learners,
- 20% of students are students with special needs,
- 88% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and
- 78% are underrepresented minorities.

The majority of students in the district struggle academically, with an average graduation rate of 58%. The Grade 3–8 Assessment scores for the district show that only 13% and

15% of students were proficient on the reading assessment for the last 2 years, and 11% and 14% were proficient in math. District administration is also challenged with supporting principals of schools designated as Targeted Support and Improvement, Comprehensive Support and Improvement, or Receivership status through Every Student Succeeds Act accountability measures. According to the district's Board of Education, these 22 school principals have an even more difficult task of reporting improvement efforts on a regular basis. Supporting the principals leading the charge through several challenges will require strong, consistent leadership at all schools within the district.

Definition of Terms

Comprehensive Support and Improvement: Schools receive this designation for performing in the bottom 5% of the state, having low graduation rates, and/or having not improved after offering targeted support. The school community, including parents, write a plan for improvement.

Job satisfaction: A principal feels job satisfaction when they feel rewarded and enthusiastic about the work responsibilities and results. A principal feels the work is worth their best effort (Rangel, 2018).

Leadership: The act of influencing others to work toward and achieve the goals of the organization while providing motivation to lift others to work toward their potential (Korumaz, 2016).

Learning environment: A school's learning environment is built with the influence of the school principal by setting the organizational culture of the school, through student and adult learning, with high expectations (Tan, 2018).

Occupational growth: The ability for an individual to move on to another position within the same field that has additional responsibilities (Rangel, 2018).

Principal attrition: A reduction in numbers, as a result of resignation, retirement, or other reasons related to exiting the profession altogether (Grissom et al., 2016).

Principal retention: A principal staying at the same school, in the same role (Rangel, 2018). Retention can be measured by the number of years a principal stays at the same school.

Principal succession: The intentional planning for selecting the most effective school leader for continuity of leadership. Proper principal succession plans can increase the retention of high-quality school principals (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015).

Principal turnover: A principal changing positions within a school, becoming a principal at a different school, exiting the field of education altogether, or being promoted or demoted. (Rangel, 2018). Principal turnover can be described as leaving a school for reasons that are either voluntary or involuntary (Sun & Ni, 2016).

Receivership: A school receives this designation when it is persistently struggling, has already been categorized as Comprehensive Support and Improvement, and has not made proper improvements. The state designates an independent receiver or superintendent receiver and dramatic changes are made to the school to increase student achievement.

School climate: The overall feel of the school, and the experiences of all stakeholders. Included in school climate are instructional practices, organizational

practices, feelings of students and families, staff morale, communication, and relationships (Baptiste, 2019).

Stakeholders: Any group or individual interested in the success of a school and the well-being of its students (Rangel, 2018).

Student achievement: The extent to which students reach their short- and long-term goals in the educational setting (Brown III, 2016).

Targeted Supports and Interventions: Schools are recognized with this designation when one or more subgroups are among the lowest performing in the state.

Underrepresented groups: Those groups who have historically represented a minority of the total population (Sun, 2019).

Significance of the Study

The results of this study identified the factors influencing urban school district principals to remain in their current roles. The findings can be used to inform school district leaders wishing to put a system in place to retain high-quality school principals. Superintendents and human resource leaders can use the results to ensure principals receive the proper support and training to feel job satisfaction. Teachers, students, and parents benefit from the results of this study because of the indirect and direct impact that principals have on student achievement, school climate, and teacher hiring and retention.

Investigating the urban school district principals' perceptions of job satisfaction was important for several reasons. The first was that the perceptions of job satisfaction positively affecting principals can be scaled to other principals within the study district. Second, the principals remaining in the same role at the same school helped identify the

elements of job satisfaction that exist for their retention at the school. Due to the current lack of quality principal candidates, district leaders wanted to continue to have the identified elements in place to ensure those principals continue to be retained (see Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018). This study was unique because I investigated the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals, instead of job dissatisfaction.

This study had the potential for positive social change because the findings can be used to provide an environment that enhances principals' job satisfaction by implementing the identified supports to increase their likelihood to remain after Year 2. Increasing principals' likelihood to remain after Year 2 could support student achievement to better support the needs of diverse, underrepresented populations, often served in low achieving, urban school districts. My recommendation for additional planning of professional development and training to retain high-quality principals in an urban school district is necessary. I designed and presented a professional development and training project to the district leadership to ensure principals' job satisfaction factors are planned for effectively. The professional development and training can also be scaled to other urban school districts in the state and country to enhance the job satisfaction of principals.

Research Question

I conducted this qualitative case study to investigate urban school district principals' perceptions of job satisfaction. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory provided the conceptual framework for the development of the research question in this study. The following research question guided my study:

RQ: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals?

Review of the Literature

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of a body of knowledge by summarizing the recently published studies on a topic (Baker, 2016). The focus of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The review of the scholarly and professional literature provided an opening narrative to the problem of retaining high-quality school principals. The process of a literature review is to develop a topic, exhaust the literature, narrow the focus, and, finally, synthesize all appropriate literature on the research problem (Price, 2017). In this study, I used the job satisfaction factors described in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a way to understand why some school principals stayed in their current role and school.

I searched the Walden University Library for this literature, using the Education Source database's filter to ensure all selected articles were from peer-reviewed, scholarly journals. A variety of key term searches were used: *turnover, retention, student achievement, principals, leadership, attrition, transitions, human resources, school administrators, recruitment, social justice, qualitative research, succession planning, motivation, and job satisfaction*. This search strategy helped me find approximately 50 articles that I used to gather a comprehensive collection of literature on the topic, with at least 90% of the articles published within the last 5 years (i.e., 2016–2020). To reach

research saturation and gain alternate perspectives, I used the reference lists from related books and journal articles to locate more sources.

In the first section of this literature review, the conceptual framework most closely aligned with the research problem will be explained. The history of the conceptual framework is presented, followed by its connection to the problem at the local level and the research questions. Following the conceptual framework, I provide a critical analysis of several, current research articles on principal retention. The research on principal retention is organized thematically into four subsections: principal retention/turnover, ways a principal affects a school community, unique needs in urban school districts, and changes in the principalship.

Conceptual Framework

I used Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as the conceptual framework for this study. The motivation-hygiene theory was developed from Herzberg et al.'s (1959) seminal work of the two-factor motivation theory, stating that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two separate but parallel continua. Employees were asked to explain, in detail, events at work that felt satisfying and dissatisfying, and the results showed the opposite of job satisfaction was no job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Job satisfaction exists when an individual has an opportunity for growth as an employee (Herzberg, 1965). Herzberg, a professor of psychology, developed a list of job satisfaction factors that held true with many occupations (Boe, 1970). The six job satisfaction factors identified were task achievement, recognition for achievement, intrinsic interest in the task, increased task responsibility, advancement or occupational

growth, and the possibility of occupational growth (Herzberg, 1965). The job satisfaction factors are called motivators because if the right amount of each exists in an organization, it brings about increased motivation and satisfaction among its employees (Herzberg, 1974). Herzberg (1965) further stated that an employee's true job satisfaction factors were identified by their feelings about the specific content of the occupation. Work environments fostering Herzberg's job satisfaction factors allow for achievement opportunities, offer opportunities for increased responsibilities, value creativity, support successful decision making, and spark passion and interest (Boe, 1970). Focusing only on job satisfaction factors can lead to improved job attitudes and higher work performance, ultimately benefiting the school community (Boe, 1970).

The motivation-hygiene theory was an appropriate conceptual framework for this study because, as the researcher, I explored the job satisfaction of principals to discover the factors necessary to retain high-quality school principals. Conducting virtual, in-depth interviews with principals helped me understand their perceptions of events that feel satisfying in the work environment. Applying Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a lens through which to view the principals' perceptions of job satisfaction contributed to answering the research question.

Principal Retention and Turnover

Rangel (2018) defined principal turnover as all the changes that can occur to the head leader in a school building, including retirement, change of career, promotion to a district office position, or a demotion due to poor performance. Alternatively, principal retention is the length of time a principal stays in the same role at the same school before

leaving for any reason (Rangel, 2018). Principal turnover has been widely studied in existing research because of how crucial leaders are to the success of an organization (Babo & Postma, 2017). However, the factors supporting principal retention, especially in urban school districts, were not found in the research as extensively.

A major review of the literature on principal turnover and retention was published in 2018, even though educational experts researching the topic since the 1990s have recognized it as a concern. Each year, between 20%–30% of school principals turnover (Babo & Postma, 2017; Hanselman et al., 2016; Rangel, 2018; Simon et al., 2019). These numbers were even higher in low income, diverse areas (Simon et al., 2019). Half of new principals leave their positions before their third year (Tran et al., 2018). There are several reasons for these high levels of turnover, including the increased levels of demands on principals, lack of overall support from district office administrators, and a low-quality pool of candidates who can succeed in the position.

The principalship in the United States has become more demanding and is deemed as a less desirable position by some (Hardie, 2015). The increase in stress and demand comes from increases in accountability measures from federal and state governments. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001), Race to the Top (2010), and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) are examples of the policies put in to place to raise accountability measures for students, teachers, and principals (Babo & Postma, 2017; Mitani, 2018; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Wells & Klocko, 2018). A school principal must also be able to manage the constant changes to the role while demonstrating growth in their school improvement efforts (Korumaz, 2016; Rangel, 2018; Simon et al., 2019).

The lack of support from district office administrators was noted extensively in the research as a cause of turnover. Rangel (2018) stated that the lack of support is two-fold. Principals noted a lack of training and emotional support as one side of the issue, while the lack of proper compensation is the other (Kachel, 2018; Korumaz, 2016; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Rangel, 2018; Simon et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2018). Isolation was also identified as a major area of concern for principals trying to navigate the difficult role without the proper support (Korumaz, 2016; Simon et al., 2019). In addition, new principals face even larger hurdles in this area with a lack of onboarding, mentoring, and coaching in their first year in the role (Augustine et al., 2016; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Wilkerson & Wilson, 2017).

Finally, the changes to the principalship have created a shortage of qualified principals. As described previously, the increases in stress due to accountability measures caused high levels of turnover leading to a lack of quality candidates as replacements (Korumaz, 2016; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Wells & Klocko, 2018). Simon et al. (2019) described the role as risky in the ever-changing field of education. Others have described it as a less desirable role for teachers and others qualified for promotion (Hardie, 2015; Wang et al., 2018).

Changes in the Principalship

Babo and Postma (2017) stated that the role of the school principal in the United States was recognized as one of the most difficult in the world due to the unique responsibilities and accountability measures currently in place. Principals are responsible for managerial tasks, discipline and behavior management, instructional leadership, and

accountability measures. Due to the ever-changing nature of the principalship, 75% of principals reported high levels of stress, creating a need to explore the best ways to support and attend to principals' physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Bauer et al., 2019; Beusaert et al., 2016). Researchers have emphasized that an increase in principal workload, expectations, and job complexity has led to lower levels of job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2018). Lower levels of job satisfaction have led to less retention of qualified school principals and made it more difficult to recruit and hire future principals.

Grissom et al. (2016) explained that to understand the lack of retention of quality principals, what leads to principals' job satisfaction must be understood. The definition of job satisfaction is the affective, or emotional, reaction to the job (Wang et al., 2018). The most important aspects of leadership studies in the field of education were job satisfaction because it directly impacts the entire school community and the principal's commitment to work (Wang et al., 2018). Principals have higher levels of job satisfaction when high levels of support exist (Beusaert et al., 2016). Other job satisfaction factors for principals were motivating teachers, building the capacity of others, receiving a proper salary, and having acceptable working conditions (Clark, 2017; Erdem & Cicekdemir, 2016; Grissom et al., 2016; Sun & Ni, 2016). The two principal roles with lower job satisfaction are principals in urban school districts and new principals (Wang et al., 2018). Isolation, constant pressure and stress, lack of recognition, and lack of resources were examples of factors causing lower levels of job satisfaction (Bauer et al., 2019; Beusaert et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2018).

The School Community

It has been well documented that a principal affects many aspects of the school community (Baptiste, 2019; Brown III, 2016; Hanselman et al., 2016; Kachel, 2018; Tran et al., 2018). The three main areas highlighted in the research were student achievement, school climate, and teacher turnover (Baptiste, 2019; Brown III, 2016; Hanselman et al., 2016; Kachel, 2018; Tran et al., 2018). The higher levels of accountability on school systems was the reason the principal's impact on organizational success was found so extensively in the research (Brown III, 2016). Student achievement has become one of the main interests for researchers.

There are several ways the principal indirectly influences student achievement in a school. They influence the curriculum and instructional programs the teachers use to support students in their daily learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The assessment and intervention programs also involve leadership from the principal. One of the most influential ways a principal impacts student achievement is through the recruitment, hiring, and training of teachers (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). This is a key point because teacher turnover can also affect student achievement (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Wells, 2016). In fact, a principal's influence over student achievement is second only to the instruction of the classroom teacher (Brown III, 2016; Davis et al., 2017; Hardie, 2015; Hitt et al., 2018).

When principal turnover takes place, there are negative effects on student achievement (Hitt et al., 2018; Kachel, 2018; Tran et al., 2018). The evidence shows even greater negative impact when a quality, experienced principal leaves and is replaced by a

new principal (Rangel, 2018). In addition, when there is turnover year after year, achievement levels suffer even more (Bayler, 2017). It is important to note that experts discovered that it was not the individual student achievement affected but rather the achievement of the student body as a whole that felt the negative impact (Bartanen et al., 2019; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The impact seemed to be greatest when the principal transitioned to a different school or the district office rather than those who were demoted or exited the field of education altogether (Bartanen et al., 2019).

Similar to the impact on student achievement, there is a direct link between principal turnover and negative school climate (Kachel, 2018; Rangel, 2018). The principal is key in setting clear expectations, a strong vision, and the plan for engaging with the school community (Bartanen et al., 2019; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). In addition, the principal supports the positive collaboration among staff members within the school (Hardie, 2015). The collaboration among teachers and the school principal creates shared instructional leadership within a school to enable all to work toward achieving the goals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kachel, 2018). A supportive learning environment for students and teachers to work together is a priority for a school community. A high-quality school principal protects the learning environment from disruption, ensures all necessary resources are distributed in a timely fashion, and supports the necessary interventions in place for both student and adult learning to consistently be improving (Brown III, 2016). When turnover happens with a school principal, these areas of school climate are negatively affected.

The third major area of the school community affected is the direct correlation between principal turnover and teacher turnover. There is an increase in teacher turnover at a school when a high-quality principal leaves the school for any reason (Bartanen et al., 2019; Kachel, 2018; Wills, 2016). A principal's leadership style has a direct impact on a teacher's job satisfaction (Baptiste, 2019). A high-quality school principal will develop strong working relationships built on trust and respect (Baptiste, 2019). The quality of the principal's relationships and communication has a strong influence on the teachers' job satisfaction and work performance (Baptiste, 2019; Bartanen et al., 2019).

Urban School Districts

The definitions, features, difficulties, and concerns of urban school districts were prevalent in the research (Acton, 2018; Sun, 2019). The definition of an urban education is that which has a rich, unique tapestry, high pupil density, and high diversity (Farinde-Wu, 2018). Other features include an area of dense population, with high levels of poverty and low-achieving schools (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Hitt et al., 2018; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Sun, 2019; Wronowski, 2018). Unfortunately, most of the narrative was negative about urban school districts, making recruitment and retention of quality teachers and leaders difficult (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019; Farinde-Wu, 2018). Some of the characteristics of an urban school district included in the negative narrative were difficult language barriers, poor nutrition, lack of parental involvement, poor behavior, exposure to violence and drugs, low staff morale, poor standardized test scores, and high dropout rates (Acton, 2018; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Sun, 2019).

Urban school districts face complex challenges (Acton, 2018; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019; Hitt et al., 2018; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018). Noted extensively in the research were four main challenges. The first challenge was the extra time necessary for added demands and responsibilities of principals. Low achieving schools are under added pressure with state accountability measures, often requiring extra paperwork and time for oversight (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Wronowski, 2018). There is an increase in time necessary to fill out grant applications and to monitor existing grants to ensure underrepresented students are able to have ample support and opportunities (Acton, 2018). In addition, there are many community-based organizations, child advocates, and additional services to schedule, work with, and coordinate (Acton, 2018). Finally, principals must take extra time each year to hire new staff, often inexperienced and uncertified, due to high levels of turnover (Sun, 2019; Sun & Ni, 2016).

The second complex challenge was the increased focus on raising student achievement and growth. Students often enter school unprepared to learn, especially in high poverty areas. The research stated that many students enter school with thirty-million words less than their peers in lower poverty areas (Acton, 2018). This deficit leads to a need to offer more developmental classes in urban school districts (Malin & Hackmann, 2017). There is a struggle to increase graduation rates and prepare underrepresented students for college and careers (Malin & Hackmann, 2017).

The third complex challenge was the need for a focus on culturally responsive education in urban school districts. The curriculum must be culturally responsive in a way that celebrates diversity and inclusion (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Sun, 2019). Not

only does a principal need to embrace this focus, they have a large responsibility to ensure the staff members of the school do as well (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019; Hitt et al., 2018; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

The fourth complex challenge for urban school districts was the need to focus on student well-being, in addition to achievement (Acton, 2018; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019). Wronowski (2018) said, “Successful teachers in high-needs schools give their students much more than knowledge of content” (p. 556). Relationships and social-emotional well-being must be a priority. More students in urban school districts have experienced trauma, neglect, abuse, violence, and possibly access to drugs and alcohol than their peers in suburban or rural districts. Relationships, built around trust and fairness, are essential for students with these experiences to be able to learn from teachers (Acton, 2018; Wronowski, 2018). At times, it can feel overwhelming to handle the many issues and needs students bring to the school environment, and sometimes, the culture shock is just too much for teachers (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Wronowski, 2018). Principals have the challenge of attempting to reduce burnout with teachers to raise retention rates (Farinde-Wu, 2018).

The research was clear that the present situation in many urban school districts was that the students are 2 times as likely to be taught by inexperienced and uncertified teachers (Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Sun & Ni, 2016; Wronowski, 2018). In addition, the highest performing teachers with the highest levels of student achievement leave within the first 5 years (Wronowski, 2018). There were teacher and principal shortages reported; and there were reports of the schools being in a constant state of crisis (Acton, 2018;

Peter-Hawkins et al., 2018; Sun, 2019; Sun & Ni, 2016; Wronowski, 2018). There is also a sharp decline in those who want to enter the field of education as teachers and this is contributing to the teacher shortages as well (Wronowski, 2018). This is especially prevalent in people who had negative experiences in school themselves, often times in urban school districts (Farinde-Wu, 2018). Among the teacher and principal leaders, there is a lack of social justice leadership, teacher empowerment, and support in general (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019; Sun, 2019).

Implications

After conducting the literature review, I found that investigating the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals can offer insight into the necessary supports needed to retain high-quality principals at higher rates at the local site. In addition, another implication found in the literature was that principals in urban school districts need a higher level of support in place to assist with increased levels of family needs, trauma, and accountability measures in place. The project genre is a professional development resource for principals in their first 3 years as leaders. The development of this professional development project is based on these implications.

In addition to the literature review findings, I designed the content of the project on the results of the data collection and analysis. The themes that emerged are the basis for the job satisfaction elements necessary to retain high-quality principals; and are the foundation of the project deliverable. The project genre is professional development and training for principals through a 3-year, mentoring program. The specifics were designed after the principal interviews and data analysis.

Summary

The synthesis of current literature was the basis of this literature review. After the conceptual framework was described, the current literature was organized into four subsections, all necessary connections to the retention of high-quality principals in urban school districts. The first subsection addressed principal turnover and retention in the current literature. I quickly recognized that the majority of the research focused on why principal turnover happens. The second subsection focused on the ways a principal affects the school community. This section addressed that student achievement, school climate and culture, and teacher turnover. The unique characteristics of urban school districts were explored in the third subsection, and the final subsection focused on the changes in the principalship due to increased accountability measures.

Although several assumptions were made from the current research in the literature review, it was important to note that the majority of the research focused on principal turnover. The literature review found that most current research explained the reasons why principals left their role and school. These reasons were retirement, exiting the field of education, promotion, demotion, or moving to a more desirable school district. A gap in research became clear at the conclusion of this literature review. There existed a need to understand why principals remain in their current role and school. More specifically, there was a need to understand the factors influencing the retention of high-quality principals in urban school districts.

As was demonstrated in the literature, investigating the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals can lead to school districts creating

plans to increase job satisfaction for principals considering a transition. This case study focused on the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The local research site, which was a large urban school district, could use the information to create plans to increase retention rates of high-quality principals. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The guiding research question was: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals? The significance of the study was to fill a gap in practice at the local research site by presenting a project to support and increase the retention of high-quality principals. The next section of this study addressed a methodology for conducting the study to answer the research question.

Section 2: The Methodology

I used a qualitative case study approach in this study. Researchers started to use the qualitative research method in 1980, and its popularity has grown consistently since then (Jamali, 2018). Qualitative research offers an in-depth understanding of real-life settings and problems through the participants' feelings and perceptions on a particular topic (Astroth & Chung, 2018). The perceptions of those participants provide a possible explanation on the phenomenon being studied (Jamali, 2018). The qualitative research method also gave insight into answering the research question of the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals (see Astroth & Chung, 2018). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the research question necessitated asking open-ended interview questions to understand the perceptions of principals currently working in an urban school district for 2 years or more (see Yin, 2018).

Qualitative Research Design: Case Study

In this study, I used a qualitative research method with a case study design. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used to analyze phenomena, but researchers select a quantitative design when they include a larger sample size in an attempt to remove bias, remain objective, and control the study through statistical data (Park & Park, 2016). This study had a smaller sample size and statistical data were not used, so I rejected the quantitative research method. The qualitative research approach was chosen based on the nature of the research question, the dynamics of the research phenomenon, and to explore the perceptions of participants in the real-life setting (see

Astroth & Chung, 2018). The data collected through the qualitative case study focused on the motivation and actions of participants and organizational phenomena (see Rijnsoever, 2017).

In qualitative research, a case study is appropriate to use when there is little information on the phenomena because of the richness of information (Yin, 2018). A case study was appropriate for this study because the approach of collecting data through in-depth interviews, gathering a description of the participants' experiences, coding these experiences, and then grouping them into themes until data saturation was reached assisted in answering the research question (see Yin, 2018). The alignment of the case study with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory was important because I was looking to understand the motivating factors for principals to be retained at an urban school district. Grounded theory and phenomenology were also considered for the study design. Grounded theory is building theory from the ground up (Martin et al., 2018). The purpose of this study was not to develop a theory about social phenomena but rather study the phenomena using an existing theory. Phenomenology is the study of individuals and how they construct and understand meaning (Donalek, 2004). The goal of this study was to understand the motivation of principals, not to construct new meaning. As the researcher, I rejected both grounded theory and phenomenology as designs and selected a basic case study design as the most suitable.

Participants

The research took place after IRB approval was granted through Walden University (#12-04-20-0728689). In qualitative research, finding an appropriate sample

size is different than the process for the quantitative approach (Astroth & Chung, 2018). The sample size is determined by the number of participants necessary to answer the research question of the study and reach data saturation. The sample size of participants was justified when, as the researcher, I could not discover any new codes or concepts from the interview transcripts (see Rijnsoever, 2017). Out of the 34 principals in the target population, I selected the participants who met the criteria and lived the experiences necessary to understand the phenomenon (see Astroth & Chung, 2018). Most researchers who aim for data saturation through themes and codes use purposive sampling (Rijnsoever, 2017).

I used purposive sampling, a widely used technique in qualitative research, to choose a sample of 12 K–12 participants out of the 34 principals in the target population. The target sample was selected based on specific criteria from all levels of the district to ensure information-rich cases (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The inclusion criteria were (a) having 2 or more years in a principalship, (b) leading in an urban school district, and (c) remaining at the same school. This sampling process allowed the richest and most pertinent information to be collected (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I conducted virtual, one-on-one, semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to allow for the natural unfolding of each principal's perspective.

To gain access to the participants, I wrote a letter to the district office administration at the local research site to request permission to conduct the study. Once I received the letter of cooperation from the district administration, I worked with the administrators in human resources to determine eligible principal names and email

addresses. I emailed the 18 principals who met the criteria and provided them with information about the study, the criteria for participating, time requirements, terms of confidentiality, and a consent form. The principals who volunteered to participate were asked to reply to the email stating, "I consent." Establishing a working relationship with each participant is essential (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Those who consented to participate received a calendar survey to set up interview dates and times. I sent an invite for a virtual interview to the participant for the agreed upon date and time.

As a researcher, I followed a researcher-produced protocol to conduct each interview. The protocol listed the questions that were asked of each participant. I also asked probing questions when needed to ensure the most effective data were collected (see Turner, 2010). The interview protocol I developed was based on literature on job satisfaction (Boe, 1970; Herzberg, 1965, 1974; Herzberg et al., 1959), principal effects on school communities (Baptiste, 2019; Bayler, 2017; Brown III, 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kachel, 2018), retention (Babo & Postma, 2017; Rangel, 2018; Simon et al., 2019; Wells & Kelocho, 2018), and leadership in urban school districts (Acton, 2018; Brennan & MacRuaric, 2019; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Hitt et al., 2018; Sun, 2019).

In the interviews, the participants shared experiences about the local research site, so, to ensure confidentiality, I used a numeric identifier for each participant. The interviews were open ended so the responses varied slightly based on the experiences and knowledge of each participant (see Turner, 2010). Before beginning the interview, I explained the problem and purpose of the study as well as confidentiality and their protection from harm (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants were also informed

that they could withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

Finally, I answered any questions the participants had about the study.

Researcher's Role

In the past, I worked as an administrator in the district office of the local research site. I oversaw the professional development department. During my time in the district, I did not supervise any building principals or administrators at any level. I was a colleague and collaborator to the principals and developed effective working relationships with many. These working relationships helped me recruit participants and collect data for this study. As a district administrator, I was a member of the leadership team who coordinated the implementation of a strategic plan. The third priority of the strategic plan was to recruit, hire, and retain high-quality principals. I noticed quickly that there was no specific plan for supporting and retaining high-quality principals. The information gleaned from semistructured interviews with principals was used to develop a professional development and training module to fill that gap in practice at the local research site.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were the primary source of data for the study. I also kept notes in a researcher log. The researcher log is a daily record of observations, thoughts, questions, and actions taken (Houghton & Houghton, 2018). The researcher log was a notebook in which I took handwritten notes throughout the data collection and analysis process and used for the bracketing process in data coding. This notebook was

scanned to an external hard drive at the conclusion of the study and will be stored there for 5 years. The notebook itself was shredded for confidentiality.

The communication with the local research site administration to gain permission and access to the principals took place over email. The study information and consent form were sent to eligible principals through email during the recruitment stage. The data from the semistructured interviews were collected virtually during the interviews. I used an audio recorder to capture the interviews so I could review them to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. The transcripts and all other resources are stored on a password-protected, external hard drive. Within 48 hours of the interview concluding, I emailed the transcripts to each participant to review for accuracy. In addition to accuracy, credibility is essential. I ensured credibility with member checking as well. The data that were collected should be closer to reality because the principals were current practitioners.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data analysis is the process of making sense of the data to answer the research question. Qualitative data analysis helped me discover urban school district principals' perceptions of job satisfaction. The preferred method of data analysis for qualitative research is to collect data and analyze data simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I followed this preferred method to make the volume of data manageable. Before beginning data analysis, I reviewed the purpose and research question of the study.

The data analysis process occurred in several stages. During Stage 1, each principal interview was transcribed and shared with the participant to ensure accuracy

through member checking. Member checking was one strategy I used to establish credibility (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose to transcribe the interviews manually from the audio recordings. Coding to identify the emergence of themes was Stage 2 of analyzing data for this qualitative research. I used an open, axial, and selective hierarchical coding framework to code the data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I manually coded the data to ensure accuracy. To manually code, I read through the transcripts multiple times and kept a separate memo of thoughts, reflections, and possible themes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Round 1 of coding was an initial round of open, descriptive coding with basic categorization to provide the foundation for the second round of coding. The second round of coding was axial coding. Axial coding further refined the open coding completed by placing codes into categories (see Williams & Moser, 2019). Categorization was useful in this study to formulate possible factors influencing retention. The last round of coding was selective coding with the development of themes as codes and categories were analyzed. Selective coding was when meaning was constructed (see Williams & Moser, 2019). The final stage was to use inductive reasoning to draw conclusions and generalizations about the necessary job satisfaction needed to support the retention of quality principals. Using a priori themes and inductive themes gave the information needed to answer the research question (see Houghton & Houghton, 2018).

Throughout the data analysis process, I was aware of the biases I brought to the study and worked diligently to keep them out of the data analysis. To help avoid bias, I checked the findings back with the participants for their feedback and reactions (see

Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To deal with discrepant cases, I stayed focused on the preponderance of evidence while staying aware of the disconfirming data because that helped build confidence in the initial emergence of an explanation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation occurred by collecting data from various principals with different perspectives on the same topic. Triangulation also occurred between interview transcripts and researcher notes. Data saturation was reached after interview 10 when no new themes or codes emerged from the transcripts and researcher notes (see Rijnsoever, 2017). To complete the data analysis, I clearly communicated the results.

Data Analysis Results

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix B) that helped me to maintain focus on the urban school district principals' perceptions of job satisfaction. I also created a list of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C) aligned with the study problem, research question, and conceptual framework with available probes if needed. Data triangulation was used to strengthen the study. In addition to the various perspectives of the participants, I used a researcher's journal to record my thoughts, questions, surprises, and emerging ideas (see Houghton & Houghton, 2018).

I sent emails to 18 potential participants, and 13 emailed back consenting to participate in the study. One of the participants then backed out prior to scheduling the interview due to health reasons. The other 12 participants scheduled a date and time at their convenience. All interviews took place virtually, allowing participants to select a comfortable location from which to be interviewed.

Data collection during the interviews took place in a couple ways. The first was the audio recording of each virtual interview. The cameras were turned off and the participants' names were not used to maintain confidentiality. Each interview was transcribed during the interview through the utilization of closed captioning on the virtual platform. I also took notes in my researcher's journal throughout the interview and at the conclusion as needed. The list of available probing questions was located right next to the interview questions so I could probe the participant if more detail or explanation was needed. Within 48 hours, each transcript was cleaned of errors and emailed to the participant for feedback to account for member checking. Member checking was explained to each participant prior to beginning the interview and a reminder was given again at the end. Out of the 12 participants, 10 emailed a response stating that the transcript was accurate. Two of the participants suggested minor edits such as an extra word or typo that was found. The revisions were made and the transcript was accepted as accurate the second time it was sent to the participant.

The process of analyzing the data occurred in several stages. An electronic database of each interview transcript was maintained on a password-protected external hard drive. Each interview question was then sorted and added to a separate page of the database with the corresponding responses from all 12 participants. The responses to each question were coded through open, descriptive coding. After completing the first round of coding, the codes were all combined in the database and used to begin the second round of coding with axial coding, creating categories out of similar codes (see Williams & Moser, 2019). The third round of coding took more time as each category and the

corresponding codes were analyzed to begin the creation of themes through selective coding. After the third round of coding, four themes emerged that were aligned to the study's problem and research question. After the themes emerged, I continued to compare the participant responses to the codes, categories, themes, and researcher's journal to ensure data saturation was reached. With this triangulation, no new themes emerged and data saturation was reached (see Rijnsoever, 2017). The four themes were studied, in addition to the relationships and patterns present in the data, to begin to draw conclusions and generalizations about the answer to the study's research question (see Houghton & Houghton, 2018). All of the conclusions and generalizations were compared with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Finally, a detailed summary of the conclusions was shared as the final step of data analysis.

Discrepant cases are those that are disconfirming or negate the ideas of other participants, and as the researcher I paid close attention to any discrepant cases that arose (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The only discrepant case was when P2 share that this will be his last year as a principal. This was a response to the final question asking participants if they have any further information to share. Upon further follow-up and clarification, he explained that he was moving on to a position at a district office that would support principals. This was different than the rest of the participants whose attitudes were very loyal to the position. Though this data were disconfirming, it was not part of the ten main interview questions. I remained aware of the data but stayed focused on the preponderance of evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There were no other discrepant cases among the data collected from the 12 participants. All of the participants

work in the same district and follow the same systems and processes. Each participant leads a separate building which could add to the lack of any further discrepant cases. Their responses were similar in nature and aligned for the most part.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. There were 12 principals who participated in the study. The research findings were built from the following research question:

RQ: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals?

The problem in this study was the lack of retention of highly qualified principals at the local research site which is an urban school district. The lack of retention is negatively affecting the school community climate, student achievement, and teacher retention. Identifying a list of job satisfaction factors, captured through the experiences and perceptions of principals staying and prospering in their current roles, could assist district administrators in retaining principals. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory separated job satisfaction and dissatisfaction on two separate continua. Herzberg discovered the opposite of job satisfaction as the lack of job satisfaction. They also found job satisfaction existed when employees felt motivated and inspired to work harder, often brought about by the ability to grow, achieve, and be recognized for both (Herzberg, 1974). The conclusions and description of themes are described through Herzberg's theory. To get to the root of the problem, I interviewed twelve current principals who have led at the same school for more than 2 years. The interviews were conducted

virtually and lasted between 30-45 minutes each. Overall, the principals shared their perceptions and experiences of job satisfaction. Themes emerged from the data analysis. By grouping categories together, four major themes that influence job satisfaction for urban school district principals were identified. The four major themes that emerged were:

- Leadership support and training
- Feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment
- Student and teacher growth and achievement
- School culture and climate

The first interview question asked each principal to describe the role of an urban school district principal. The two major areas discussed were taking care of people in a safe and positive environment. The principals specifically listed students, staff members, families, and community members as the people they serve. The second area was the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral growth and achievement of their students. The second question of the interview asked principals to describe job satisfaction in general. Seven of the 12 talked about growth and improvement bringing feelings of job satisfaction. Principal 7 (P7) described it as, "...motivated and inspired to do better each day to me that desire to improve and desire to learn more and grow each day." Six of the principals shared that feelings of enjoyment and fulfillment bring job satisfaction. P10 stated, "Enjoying what you do, and feeling fulfilled from it." Finally, P11 described job satisfaction as:

Oh, wow. Well, I mean, I think everyone enters the field that they think they're passionate about and they're interested in and they really enjoy doing. I think job satisfaction would be actually feeling happy each day with what you do and inspired to do better, not wanting to quit, not wanting to leave, making it through tough times, and sticking with it because you believe in what you do.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory listed several elements of job satisfaction experienced in many occupations. The three most common responses from the participants aligned with Herzberg's theory. They were growth, achievement, and enjoyment or feelings of fulfillment.

Theme 1: Leadership Support and Training

Questions 5 and 9 in the interview asked the participants about the support, resources, or training needed to feel job satisfaction as an urban school district principal. All 12 principals interviewed shared experiences when their supervisors and/or colleagues supported them in their work. P10 said, "You know having other principals to talk to in the area of an urban environment, you know a strong mentor and a strong peer group. And support, you know a support system and network..." P12 shared a similar response, "My mentor, my PLC, my directors, I need to know that I can trust them and depend on them and that they're more loyal to each other and loyal to the district." P9 shared, "I think the biggest thing is having an administrative team that I can depend on..." Leadership support was a common thread through all of the interviews and three main support roles were identified. Mentors, supervisors, and colleagues were the identified roles that would support job satisfaction as principals. Six out of the 12

principals shared the need for a strong mentor support system for newer principals. P1 emphasized the need for new principals to have a strong mentoring experience. P9 agreed and stated, “Well, definitely having people to talk to so whether that’s a mentor or just a peer group, that’s huge.” P11 shared that they did not have a strong mentor and “would have loved to have somebody right by my side who I could contact at all times.” Ten out of the 12 principals noted both supportive supervisors and a network of colleagues help aid in job satisfaction. P1 talked of a supervisor meeting with them weekly and offering regular support and feedback. P2 and P7 both added that their team of colleagues act as a network to ask questions and talk freely in an effort to support each other and learn from one another.

All of the principals mentioned at least one training that would help them find and maintain job satisfaction in the role of urban school district principal. The trainings suggested most often were antiracism, culturally responsive practices, family engagement, community outreach, instructional leadership to close academic gaps, social-emotional learning, and updates from the state or federal level for accountability and reporting measures. Many of these trainings were described as those newer principals must have. P9 summarized it as:

I think we have to have a level of consistent meetings where we learn and we gain new knowledge and we are able to pick up new information and updates...having those consistent meetings for the year, consistent supports, a consistent mentor around being able to predict those resources is huge.

Theme 2: Feelings of Accomplishment and Fulfillment

During the interviews, Question 3 asked each participant to describe examples when they felt job satisfaction as a principal. P2 talked of the times they were able to feel enjoyment when helping students. Helping students made them feel fulfilled in their role. P8 shared similar experiences, “It makes me feel good to help students learn.” P1 shared feelings of accomplishment that caused them to feel fulfilled in their role:

Growth is one of the most rewarding aspects of my role. Either seeing a child grow on an assessment or an adult show progress on an evaluation, it is a satisfying feeling. Growth allows our school to see the benefits of our work.

Students show us growth through their actions, effort, interactions, conversations, and work. I am elated when positive growth is happening right before my eyes.

A different perspective came from P11 when insight was shared about feeling fulfilled from others showing appreciation. They stated, “So, whether that comes from a child going home happy or staff member going home happy or someone actually just appreciating you and words or in action. There's a lot of fulfillment that comes from that.” Overall, participants shared experiences of watching others grow and accomplish their goals, and hearing others appreciate what they do as bringing about feelings of job satisfaction as a principal.

Theme 3: Student and Teacher Growth and Achievement

Facilitating learning for both the students and teaching staff in school was a prevalent pattern in the data. Many of the principals spoke of student learning and instructional leadership being the core of the role. P1 said, “Growth allows our school to

see the benefits of our work.” For students, reaching academic goals and showing growth behaviorally are cause for celebration. P5 described it as, “Student success. The purpose for being an educator is to support student learning.” P1, P4, P7, and P10 described experiences that brought feelings of job satisfaction like teachers growing on evaluations, offering teachers feedback after watching them teach, staff members who love to learn and want to improve, and observation cycles bringing about teacher improvement. P12 shared examples of systems they have created in their school to help teachers improve. They said that because they have been at the same school for several years, there is a lack of turnover and a lot of trust within the staff. The teachers watch teacher leaders teach in a lab classroom and then meet to discuss the instructional decisions. They said, “watching that whole process in the works and become successful that has created a lot of satisfaction.” P12 also discussed teacher promotion:

Then also I think watching teachers become leaders as well feels like job satisfaction as they move onto departments at the district office, whether they become a math coach or English as a New Language coach, or whatever it may be. Watching those teacher leaders become more formal leaders, that creates a lot of satisfaction as well.

Theme 4: School Culture and Climate

School culture and climate was mentioned by all 12 principals in the study. Whether it was a discussion on the importance of building trusting relationships with teachers, offering necessary resources to families, or following safety and security measures so that the learning environment was safe and comfortable for students the

importance of building and maintaining a positive school culture and climate was a priority. P1 shared their thoughts on building a positive school climate:

Relationships are the third most rewarding part of my job. I have the chance to interact with everyone associated with the school. It is such a pleasure to be able to get to know our students, families, and staff and to be able to be a part of their lives.

P7 talked of the times that families put their trust in the school staff to take care of their children and the importance of never breaking that trust. They also mentioned the vision, mission, and goals help unite the school community. P11 shared their thoughts about trust as well. They said that it is important to build trust with your teaching staff and then working hard to retain those team members so that the trust does not have to be rebuilt each year. They said one way to do that is to ensure, “staff feels cared for and supported.” P9 spoke of their school being an urban community school which offers several services to families in need. This helps build relationships and trust between families and the school. They said:

Oh resources! Being a community school, we are able to give out warm clothing and food. We're able to help folks secure jobs, help with resources such as diapers or necessities, helping to talk to families about, you know, different benefits and where different resources can be found. So that's one impactful thing we do for the community.

P11 shared a similar thought about the synergy one feels when the school staff members, families, and community come together. One of the most important aspects of school

culture and climate according to P8 was maintaining and modeling a positive attitude at all times:

I think maintaining positivity. I think when a leader has that positive attitude, it goes to everybody else. It kind of disseminates... Everything kind of trickles down. If we're having a positive day, then the teachers will have a positive day and so do the students. It just follows like a trickle effect so it's just really important to maintain that positivity even in the hard times.

P10 and P2 talked of the logistics of maintaining a positive school culture and climate. P2 said that when the operations and management of the school go smoothly, the climate is positively affected. Similarly, P10 shared that following all safety measures was an important factor in building school community and trust.

Interpretation of Findings

The problem of this qualitative case study was the lack of understanding regarding the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals to remain in their current roles. Therefore, the purpose was to investigate the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The research question was grounded in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory stating that job satisfaction is on a separate continuum than job dissatisfaction and, when exists, motivates employees to work harder and achieve more. The study's research question was: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals? Twelve participants volunteered to a virtual interview of 10 open ended questions. The findings

were categorized into four themes. The perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals were based on:

- Leadership support and training
- Feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment
- Student and teacher growth and achievement
- School culture and climate

Leadership support and training was the first theme and all 12 participants described experiences when they felt supported by their peers, mentors, and/or supervisors as times they felt satisfied as a principal. Many of the principals shared the mentor experience that is necessary for new principals to serve a support network. They also described several trainings needed to be effective as an urban school district principal and noted that they should occur on a consistent basis. The second theme was feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment. The principals shared that this could be their own accomplishments or those of their school community. They described experiences of watching students reach goals, teachers become leaders, or helping their colleagues achieve their goals as times they felt fulfilled and satisfied in their current roles.

Student and teacher growth and achievement was mentioned by all principals as well. As the third theme, participants perceived student learning and instructional leadership as one of the most important aspects of the principal role. They shared experiences of setting academic goals and reaching them or watching a student grow through the year and the satisfaction that brings. They also talked of leading teachers and facilitating their growth into teacher leaders or to an administrative promotion. The final

theme was school culture and climate. This theme was mentioned by all principals and incorporated several aspects of the school community from safety and security to building relationships. Principals described experiences working in community schools and offering many needed resources to families, as well as the care and support offered to students and staff members to provide a positive and safe learning environment.

Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory as the conceptual framework supports the findings based on the elements of employment that bring about job satisfaction and when employees are satisfied, they are motivated to grow and achieve more. Based on the findings of this study, I recommend a 3-year mentoring program for all new principals hired at the local site. Included in the mentoring program would be 3 full days of professional development and training each summer with monthly follow up throughout the school year.

Conclusion

The problem of this study was the lack of understanding regarding the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals to remain in their current roles. The research question was: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction of urban school district principals? After collecting, transcribing, member checking, and analyzing twelve open-ended interviews, four major themes emerged offering insight into the perceptions of job satisfaction. The recommended project, if used with new principals, could increase their job satisfaction and assist district administrators in retaining principals past Year 2 at the local research site. The next section addresses the project in depth.

Section 3: The Project

The project chosen to address the problem of this qualitative case study was a 3-year mentoring program for new principals working in the local urban school district study site. The problem at the local site was the retention of highly qualified principals beyond Year 2. According to the chief human resources officer, too many principal transitions within the first 2 years of service at many of the schools within the district negatively affected the school community climate, student achievement, and teacher retention. The 3-year mentoring program is based on the findings of the study and the recent related literature. In Section 3, I describe how the project will address the themes that emerged from the 12 principal interviews conducted.

After careful data analysis of the interview transcripts and the notes in my researcher's journal, it was evident that the goals of the 3-year mentoring program should be:

- To onboard new administrators to the district with the knowledge, resources, and support necessary for an effective first year.
- To offer a network of support through mentors, peers, and supervisors for the first 3 years of the principalship.
- To engage in learning on a consistent, regularly scheduled basis for the first 3 years of the principalship.

Rationale

After conducting 12 one-on-one, virtual interviews with principals, the data revealed that job satisfaction was attained when certain supports and resources were

present. The main theme that emerged from the responses of all 12 principals was the need for leadership support and training. Throughout that support and training, the other three major themes (i.e., feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment, student and teacher achievement and growth, and school culture and climate) would be addressed and supported as well. Therefore, I developed a 3-year mentoring program to address the findings and the problem at the local research site.

Year 1 of the program will be an induction year for new principals. It will consist of a 3-day onboarding in the summer and then 1 day per month of professional development and networking for the rest of the year. New principals will also be connected with a mentor with whom they will meet with every other week. Years 2 and 3 will comprise mentoring years consisting of a 3-day professional development session each summer and then 1 day per month of professional development and networking. There will also be informal mentors for the second and third year who will attend the monthly sessions and be available as needed for follow up and support.

A 3-year mentoring program will allow the participating school district to hire new principals, effectively support them for the first 3 years, and, hopefully, retain them for a longer period of time. The educational articles and journals I reviewed for this study highlighted the need for induction, mentoring, and consistent support for urban school district principals.

Review of the Literature

The question that guided the research project was: What are the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals? To address this question, I

interviewed 12 principals at the local site who had stayed at the same school for 2 or more years. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. The data analysis revealed that principals felt consistent leadership support and training was the key to feelings of fulfillment and job satisfaction as a principal. The focus of this literature review was on the effective delivery model for a mentoring program and consistent support and trainings for urban school district principals.

Similar to the first literature review, I searched the Walden Library databases for this literature. The following keyword search terms were used: *mentors, mentees, induction, novice principals, new school leaders, professional development, principal supervisors, training for urban school district principals, and leadership support*. This search strategy helped me find a comprehensive collection of literature made up of approximately 25 peer-reviewed articles that were published within the last 5 years. Once again to reach research saturation, I gained alternate perspectives by using the reference lists from related books and journal articles.

Leadership Support and Training

The theme of leadership support and training was overwhelmingly the most mentioned theme from all 12 principals. The participants talked of a routine, consistent schedule of meeting opportunities and the need for support from their supervisors and peers; an increase in professional development and trainings; and a strong, multiyear mentoring/induction program. All four specific needs are demonstrated in the 3-year mentor program to assist new principals and, at times, veteran principals. If done well, the program will not only benefit the new principal but those attending the program, such

as mentors and supervisors, as well (see Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020). A routine, consistent schedule is essential when planning a support program for new principals (Barnett et al., 2017; Honig & Rainey, 2019; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019; Thessin, 2019). The schedule should be predictable for leaders each year and communicated prior to the start of the year (Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019; Meyer et al., 2019; Service & Thornton, 2021; Thessin et al., 2020). In addition to in-person opportunities to collaborate, job-embedded supports and coaching are essential (Barnett et al., 2017; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Thessin, 2019). In-person opportunities to collaborate could include mentor and mentee time, question and answer sessions, important updates, trainings, and professional development (Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020; Thessin et al., 2020).

The principals interviewed spoke often of the need for more professional development and training. It was evident from the data analysis and recent research that new principals need this on a regular basis and veteran principals should be included when appropriate (Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019; Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020; Service & Thornton, 2021; Thessin et al., 2020). The professional development should focus on instructional leadership, especially with the shift to principals as leaders of learning (Barnett et al., 2017; Honig & Rainey, 2019; Thessin, 2019; Tuma & Spillane, 2019). The instructional leadership learning opportunities can be facilitated from the content experts in the district so that principals are able to receive updates and new necessary knowledge in each content (Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Hayes, 2019; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020). An increase in professional development

for new and veteran principals can lead to higher levels of growth for principals (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020; Service & Thornton, 2021; Tuma & Spillane, 2019). They can then communicate the information they receive to the teachers within their buildings (Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020).

A collaborative and collegial network of peers helps principals acclimate to new roles and stay supported and up to date as veterans (Bertrand et al., 2018; Edwards & Gammell, 2018; Simon et al., 2019). New principals cannot successfully navigate and tackle their new role alone and in isolation (Bickmore & Davenport, 2019; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Liljenberg & Andersson, 2020). The network should include mentors, supervisors, and the rest of the district administrative team for a holistic approach of support (Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). This group can also offer the essential emotional support to reduce a principal's feelings of isolation (Bauer & Silver, 2018; Bickmore & Davenport, 2019; Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Kwan, 2019; Oplatka, 2017). Feelings of isolation are felt often by principals due to the nature of the role and can be detrimental to retaining high-quality principals (Oplatka, 2017; Tuma & Spillane, 2019; Wise & Cavazos, 2017). Additionally, the network of support can help principals solve problems and learn from each other's experiences and perspectives (Bauer & Silver, 2018; Martin et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2019). For new principals, leadership training and support can help them develop their emerging identities, prioritize the responsibility of the role, gather feedback, and build their capacity as a school leader (Eckert, 2018; Kwan, 2019; Meyer et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2019; Thessin et al., 2020; Tuma & Spillane, 2019).

Mentor and Induction Programs

For new principals, the participation in a multiyear mentor program is essential (Bertrand et al., 2018; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018). Mentoring is when a more experienced person supports and guides a less experienced person in a common role by learning through experiences (Bertrand et al., 2018; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Hayes, 2019; Martin et al., 2016). Bickmore and Davenport (2019) stated that mentoring is, “a bridge between classwork, theory, and the realities of practice” (p. 236). Mentoring first began to decrease the high turnover rates of teachers in the 1980s; mentoring was not established for new principals until several years later (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018). A mentor program is required in half of the country for new principals, but even when required, it is often a 1-year mentor relationship (Bertrand et al., 2018; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Wise & Cavazos, 2017). Researchers have recommended going beyond the 1-year time limit with the same mentor if possible (Eckert, 2018; Hayes, 2019; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). The program should be thoughtful, well designed, and begin when the leader is first hired prior to the start of the school year if possible (Barnett et al., 2017; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018). The first step to building an effective mentor program is to match the mentor and mentee correctly and offer ample opportunities for the partnership to build a trusting relationship (Bertrand et al., 2018; Bickmore & Davenport, 2019; Hayes, 2019; Simon et al., 2019; Thessin et al., 2020). Similar to the leadership support and training, it is necessary to create a routine, consistent schedule for a mentor program that is on-going past Year 1 (Bertrand et al., 2018; Bush, 2018; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Honig & Rainey, 2019).

Strong mentor programs incorporate professional development and training as a central component (Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Hayes, 2019). They also include question and answer sessions, time to collaborate with their mentors, feedback, self-reflection, review of managerial tasks, and guidance from mentors and other administrative staff members (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Hayes, 2019; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Thessin et al., 2020). A strong program for new principals will help them build confidence, understand the role, solve problems, and build leadership competencies (Bickmore & Davenport, 2019; Hayes, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2019; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019; Wise & Cavazos, 2017).

Support and Training in Urban School Districts

With the complex issues urban school districts face, support and training for principals should be specific to those issues (Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). Some of these complex issues are high levels of poverty, diversity of race and ethnicity, English language learners, and increased mandates and accountability measures (Honig & Rainey, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). As the complexities of urban school districts continue to increase so does the need effective principals (Honig & Rainey, 2019; Martin et al., 2016). Many of the same components of an effective mentoring program should be found in urban school districts. Components such as a consistent schedule, routine opportunities for collaboration and communication, a forum for questions and answers, and a safe space to network are all essential. There is a need for training specific to urban school district principals on culturally responsive education, community resources, safety

measures, and connecting with families (Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). With the increased pressure to meet accountability measures with academic achievement and growth, there is a need to increase principals' capacity for instructional leadership (Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019; Thessin, 2019).

Project Description

This research led to the creation of a 3-year mentor program for all new principals in the urban school district study site to serve as the foundation of effective working relationships built on trust and a shared leadership vision of collaboration and support for the district. The veteran principals will also be invited to several aspects of the program for additional support, professional development, and training. Each year, the program will consist of a full, 3-day orientation in the summer and full-day, monthly meetings throughout the entire school year. The first year a principal joins the program, it will include biweekly meetings with their assigned mentor as informal support between the more formal meetings. The 3-year mentor program materials include a Google Slides presentation for each day of the program, current supporting research, agendas, hands-on activities, exit slips for each day, a yearly evaluation, and an end of program evaluation (see Appendix A).

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The resources necessary for the 3-year mentor program are a central location for the 3-day orientation each summer and 1-day monthly meeting for the remainder of the school year. The central location will need to be air conditioned for the comfort of our

mentees, mentors, and administrative staff during the summer orientation days. It will also need to have several break-out rooms available to small groups of principals and district-level administrators as needed. Technology resources and support will be needed as well. The central location will need a projector and projection screen, internet access, and necessary computer wires for facilitators to connect to the projector. There will also need to be a technology specialist available each meeting day to ensure smooth accessibility to technology and assistance with trouble shooting if necessary.

Light snacks and water will be provided for each full day of meeting as a way to ensure the participants are comfortable and hydrated. In addition, all members of the administrative team will need to be available for each of the meeting days. The district's curriculum, instruction, and assessment resource and paper handouts/activities will also need to be supplied.

Potential Barriers and Solution

There are three potential barriers to the implementation of the 3-year mentor program at the local site. The first is the possible conflicts in scheduling the dates for each year. There will be many departments scheduling meetings and events for the year. The potential solution for this barrier is to schedule the meetings well in advance, immediately after the calendar is approved by the Board of Education and communicate all dates clearly to the administrative team. The dates will need to be during non-student days as much as possible. All participants will then have the opportunity to schedule days off and vacations around the mentor program to reduce the risk of conflict.

The second potential barrier is the amount of time necessary to run a 3-year mentor program. This is time for mentors, mentees, and the administrative staff. A potential solution to this barrier would be to limit the time commitment for the administrative staff and alternate or stagger their participation to cut down on time. Also, stay focused on the benefits of the time commitment during the program rather than the barrier. If the program increases the retention of highly qualified principals, there could be less of a need to run the program after a few years. The third potential barrier could be the possible turnover of members of the administrative team during a 3-year cycle for the program. The potential solution is to carefully create an outline for each session with all resources well-archived. This could allow for an easier transition if turnover happens.

Implementation Proposal and Timeline

The 3-year mentor program would take place several times a year, but would look similar year to year. Each year will start with a 3-day orientation session in August. This session will be in a central location and will include mentees all three days. Mentors, other peers, and district-level administrative team will join throughout depending on the agenda. Beginning in September, a 1-day session will occur each month. At the end of the 3-year mentor program, there will have been 39 days of support and training offered to new principals at the local site.

Each day will run from 8:00 until 4:30 which are the contractual hours for administrators at the local site. There will be an option to order in for lunch or enjoy a networking lunch with colleagues at local restaurants. Coffee and light breakfast will be served in addition to water and candy on each table. The days will be broken into sections

consisting of building knowledge and capacity, open question and answer forum, brainstorming and coplanning with peers and mentors, feedback, and reflection. Break-out rooms will be utilized to engage participants in small group discussions and activities as needed. There will be an opportunity each afternoon for participants to evaluate the day and offer suggestions for improvement. In between the monthly sessions during the school year, participants will check-in with their mentors and will have job-embedded support opportunities for targeted, individualized feedback and training.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role is to develop the 3-year mentor program with the outline of the progression and themes of each year. I will create the agenda for each session, prepare the activities, and all paper hand-outs. In collaboration with the district administrative team, I will develop the session content as well. I will create the evaluations for the end of each session, the end of each year, and the full program evaluation. I will also collect the data and compile the results to share with the administrative team. Prior to the start of the program, I will communicate all dates to the mentees, mentors, and administrative team. During the implementation of the program, I will be present to facilitate each session. The mentee's responsibility will be to be present and actively engaged in each session. They will need to evaluate the program and willing to share critical feedback. The mentors will be asked to commit to the program and attend each appropriate session for their role. Finally, the district-level administrative staff will be asked to plan, facilitate, and attend sessions as needed.

Project Evaluation Plan

The project evaluation plan consists of three parts. There will be formative, summative, and goal-based evaluation and each will serve a unique purpose. The evaluation timeline will be throughout the 3-year mentor program, at the end of each year, and at the end of the program. There will be a follow up with participants 2 years after the completion to evaluate the long-term effect of the program.

Formative Evaluation

The formative assessment will be used to improve the quality of the program throughout its implementation. Formative evaluation will be done in two ways. The first is through reflective prompts with open-ended questions and through discussion with the participants. This will give me the information needed to adjust the delivery method or content of the sessions as needed. The other way is a paper evaluation at the end of each day. This will be completed by all participants and the results will be compiled, shared at the beginning of the next day, and used to drive decisions as needed.

Summative Evaluation

The summative evaluation is used to evaluate the effectiveness of each year's program as well as the 3-year program overall. To complete the summative evaluation, I will create a Google Form for all participants to complete digitally at the end of each year and the end of the 3 years. The evaluation will revisit the three goals of the program to determine the extent to which each goal was reached. The goals of the project were:

- To onboard new administrators to the district with the knowledge, resources, and support necessary for an effective first year.

- To offer a network of support through mentors, peers, and supervisors for the first 3 years of the principalship.
- To engage in learning on a consistent, regularly scheduled basis for the first 3 years of the principalship.

At the conclusion of each year and at the end of the 3-year cycle, the evaluation results will be shared with all participants including the mentees, mentors, and district administrators. I will also plan to meet with the mentees a couple years following the end of the full 3-year program to check in on their progress and measure the long-term effects of the program.

Project Implications

Local Setting

This project will influence positive social change because principals in an urban school district will feel adequately supported and prepared to work with their school communities. They will see the effects in the positive ways they can influence student achievement, climate and culture, and teacher turnover rates when they stay in their current role and school. The participants of the 3-year mentor program will be able to effectively work with their colleagues and supervisors for their own feelings of job satisfaction and toward the greater good of the organization.

Another positive social change will be for the urban school district hiring departments in regard to the retention of highly qualified principals. This could increase these rates and the local site, reducing the negative consequences within the schools. The

program will provide participants with current research, updates on state requirements, and the capacity to be effective instructional leaders.

Larger Context

Urban school districts face many complex challenges, often exceeding those of suburban and rural districts (Cowin & Newcomer, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). A few of those challenges are higher rates of poverty, higher rates of diversity, lower achievement and growth, high turnover rates (Honig & Rainey, 2019; Martin et al., 2016; Swaminathan & Reed, 2019). Helping urban school district administrators retain high-quality principals will lead to better leadership within the schools that can foster increased achievement for students, better school climate, and may even lead to higher rates of teacher retention.

Conclusion

The 3-year mentor program for this project addresses the local problem of retaining high-quality principals past Year 2 in an urban school district. With the mentor program, I am able to create an opportunity to increase the elements necessary for urban school district principals to feel job satisfaction. These elements are support and training. This project addresses the perceptions of the 12 participants through the findings found from data analysis and the current research. Section 4 will address several aspects of reflection, including but not limited to, the importance of this work and future research needs.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The 3-year mentor program I developed as the project focused on the support and training of urban school district principals. Open-ended interviews were held with 12 principals who expressed their perceptions of what was needed for job satisfaction. I selected a 3-year mentor program as the project because the majority of the principals identified leadership support and training as a need to feel job satisfaction and stay in their current role. A review of current research continued throughout the study and supported the need for a program with continuous, regularly scheduled networking, professional development, and training, especially for new principals.

Although recent researchers have studied the turnover of principals in urban school districts, few have examined the elements necessary to retain high-quality principals; therefore, I relied on the perceptions of current principals who had remained in their role for 2 or more years. The project targets several areas of development: leadership, networking, communication, knowledge of instructional leadership, and knowledge of state requirements and reporting.

One limitation of the mentor program is the time commitment for all involved. Many of the principals shared that time to learn and grow in their role was limited due to all the other responsibilities of the role. The program will require another 39 days of commitment for new principals. To implement the program, this program will need the dedication of this time for mentees, mentors, and the rest of the administrative team.

The ability to reach the program goals and offer the proper support and training for new principals could see benefits that largely outweigh this limitation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem addressed in this qualitative case study was the lack of understanding regarding urban school district principals' perceptions of job satisfaction to remain in their current roles. According to the chief human resources officer, too many principal transitions taking place within the first 2 years of service at many of the schools within the district has negatively affected the school community climate, student achievement, and teacher retention. I addressed this problem through gathering data from 12 principal interviews in a virtual, one-on-one format and developing a 3-year mentor program of training and support. Data could have been collected through focus groups of principals, observations of principals, or interviews with district office administrators.

An alternative to the problem as defined in this study would be to look at the hiring and supervision practices of new principals at the local site. The lack of retention of high-quality principals could be a reflection on the hiring and support of principals by the district office administration. A solution to the hiring practices could be increasing the recruitment of leaders and potential leaders from the community so that loyalty to remain is high. New principals could also be given a longevity bump every 2 years to motivate and incentivize them to remain in their current roles. A second alternate solution could be to increase the training given to principal supervisors to ensure the principals receive what they need.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership Change

The process of conducting this study (i.e., developing the prospectus, developing the local problem, identifying a conceptual framework, working through the proposal, interviewing the participants, providing the findings, and developing the project) was overwhelming at times. The countless iterations and feedback cycles helped me gain the confidence and knowledge needed to complete each section. The most difficult section of the study for me was refining the prospectus. As a practitioner, I work at a fast pace to complete one task and begin another. As a scholar, I had to learn to revise sections several times before reaching a satisfactory level of writing. I had to adjust quickly because I found I was wasting time with frustration instead of accepting the process and growing with each revision. As soon as I fully understood and accepted the process, I began to see greater levels of progress.

I found the literature reviews and developing the project to be the easiest sections. The literature reviews were time consuming because of the task of finding recent, peer reviewed journal articles, but both reviews helped me gain knowledge in connecting and synthesizing multiple sources of research into organized ideas around themes. As a practitioner for 20 years, developing the project was the easiest section of the study to complete. The project is one I would develop in my role as a supervisor to principals in a neighboring suburban district. As a principal for 7 years, I was able to reflect on the support I needed my first 3 years.

The Walden Writing Center, Library, and Center for Research Quality were invaluable in understanding the process of scholarly writing. My committee members and

URR were supportive, patient, and encouraging as I worked to learn and grow to the best of my ability. The study has been rewarding and empowering to complete, and I have strengthened my abilities, not only as a scholar and project developer, but as a practitioner as well.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

This study transformed my thinking as a scholar to allow the process to happen authentically. As I started to analyze my data through coding, I was able to follow the steps and allow the themes to emerge without my biases. This was a fascinating part of the process. I thought I knew what the results were going to show, but I quickly learned I was wrong and discovered the power of qualitative research. My thinking as a practitioner was transformed as well. I was able to collect data from 12 urban school district principals through open ended, semistructured interviews. This process gave me the opportunity to learn about their perceptions and experiences as leaders. As a current supervisor of principals, I have already changed some of the ways I support principals to ensure they have the opportunity to grow, achieve, and possibly feel job satisfaction.

One of the most encouraging parts of the process for me was learning about positive social change. I was ignorant to the struggles existing for educators and families in urban school districts. My time at Walden University helped me to understand my role and responsibility to act when confronted with social injustice. In the past, I would recognize social injustice and would work to never behave in a way that added to the problem. After spending time with 12 principals, I now understand that silence is adding to the social injustices. The only way to influence injustices is to actively work toward

positive social change. As a scholar and practitioner, I plan to dedicate my remaining years in education to this work.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

A thorough presentation of the findings of the study is essential and will take place for the entire administrative team at the beginning of the 3-day orientation in Year 1 of implementing this project. This study has the potential for positive social change in changing the ways the district develops its leaders, especially in low-achieving schools. When principals are supported and trained properly, they can have a positive impact on student achievement, school culture, and the retention of highly qualified teachers. Being supported and trained properly can also impact the principals personally and increase their feelings of job satisfaction. After receiving this support and training, principals may show increased confidence and leadership capacity. With the possibility of retaining more high-quality principals, the school community's trust in the district may also increase.

Additional research connecting job satisfaction with the retention of highly qualified principals and teachers is necessary. There is an abundance of research on turnover rates and how they affect aspects of the school community, but more research is needed in the positive ways communities are affected by principals remaining in their current roles.

Conclusion

In this study, I focused on the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. After completing the literature review and data analysis, it became evident that principals were not feeling well-prepared or properly supported for the

principalship. This was especially true among new principals. There is a lot of research on the ways a principal affects a school community; the principal both directly and indirectly affects student achievement, school culture, and teacher retention rates. The struggle to retain high-quality principals is especially prevalent in urban school districts.

The project I created from this research study was a 3-year mentor program. Presenting the study findings and implementing the program for new principals at the local site will provide the entire administrative team with one possible solution to the local problem. This 3-year mentor program offers new principals the proper support and training to remain in their current role at the same school beyond Year 2. As the retention rates of principals continue to be low in urban school districts, making positive connections between leadership support and training and the retention of high-quality principals is essential.

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Appendix A: Project Implementation Plan

The following appendix provides an overview of the proposed mentor project. All 3 years contain an orientation in August lasting for 3 days and a monthly meeting lasting for 1 day for the remainder of the school year. The 3-day orientation sessions include a variety of learning experiences including planning with mentors, question and answer sessions, required trainings, keynote speakers, and more. Several sessions are held with the whole group consisting of district-level administrative team, mentors, mentees, and the rest of the school leaders. Some sessions take place in small group break-outs dividing the participants by school level of elementary, middle, and high school. Appendix B includes the detailed Google Slides for the first orientation session.

Program Purpose

- To serve as the foundation of effective working relationships built on trust and a shared leadership vision of collaboration and support for the district.
- To promote the development, growth, and support for district principals to increase job satisfaction.

Program Goals

- To onboard new administrators to the district with the knowledge, resources, and support necessary for an effective first year.
- To offer a network of support through mentors, peers, and supervisors for the first three years of the principalship.
- To engage in learning on a consistent, regularly-scheduled basis for the first three years of the principalship.

Program Learning Outcomes

By the end of the 3-Year Mentor Program, participants will be able to:

- Identify their network of peers, supervisors, and district administrative colleagues for support.
- Attend monthly training and professional development.
- Assess their growth as an instructional leader.

Target Audience

The target audience is new principals to an urban school district. This is a 3-year commitment and will include 39 days of support and training. Other participants will be mentors, who will attend many of the sessions to support and learn alongside their mentees. Other building leaders will be invited to several of the sessions as well to have support and training.

Session Styles

- Google Slide presentation
- Whole group, face-to-face collaboration
- Small group, face-to-face collaboration
- Mentor/mentee planning
- Networking
- Training with expert trainer
- Critical thinking and knowledge building with expert leaders

Materials and Equipment

- Large conference room

- Small break-out rooms
- Tables and chairs
- Audio-visual equipment (laptops, cords, projector, document camera, screen)
- Name tags
- Paper (chart paper, post-its, notebooks)
- Handouts
- Writing Utensils (pens, pencils, markers, highlighters)
- Binders
- Breakfast
- Water
- Candy for tables
- Lunch menus

Timetable

3-Year Mentor Program Year 1 Implementation Timetable 2021-2022 School Year	
August 2021	3-full day orientation Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introductions, • district overview, • who's who in district office, • cultivating trusting relationships, • culturally relevant education
September 2021	1-full day meeting Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first week preparations, • family engagement, • working with a parent-teacher organization, • setting goals • committee facilitation
October 2021	1-full day meeting Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning of year data dialogue, • response to intervention, • preparing for evaluations
November 2021	1-full day meeting Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ordering assessments • observation-cycle norming session
December 2021	1-full day meeting Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership during holidays, • self-care for staff members,
January 2022	1-full day meeting Leadership topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mid-year data dialogue • teaching assistant/support staff evaluations • mid-year goal reflection
February 2022	1-full day meeting Leadership topics:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • optional session during winter recess • topics developed by participants
March 2022	<p>1-full day meeting</p> <p>Leadership topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing for assessments
April 2022	<p>1-full day meeting</p> <p>Leadership topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • optional session during spring recess • topics developed by participants
May 2022	<p>1-full day meeting</p> <p>Leadership topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • end of the year events • finalizing evaluation cycle • end of year data dialogue • preparing for summer learning
June 2022	<p>1-full day meeting</p> <p>Leadership topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • end of year reflection • sharing successes and areas for improvement • end of year 1 evaluation

Invitation Flyer



Central School District
invites you to participate in a
3-Year Mentor Program
2021-2024



"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

-Neale Donald Walsch

Who:

The target audience is:

- New principals (at times: all district administrators)

Why:

The purpose of the program is:

- To serve as the foundation of effective working relationships built on trust and a shared leadership vision of collaboration and support for the district.
- To promote the development, growth, and support for district principals to increase job satisfaction.

When:

The timeline of the program is:

- Three years and will occur monthly throughout the school year. Each year, the program will start with a 3-day orientation.

What:

Leaders will be supported through:

- Professional development, trainings, stakeholder panels, feedback sessions, question and answer forums, brainstorming sessions, and more.

How:

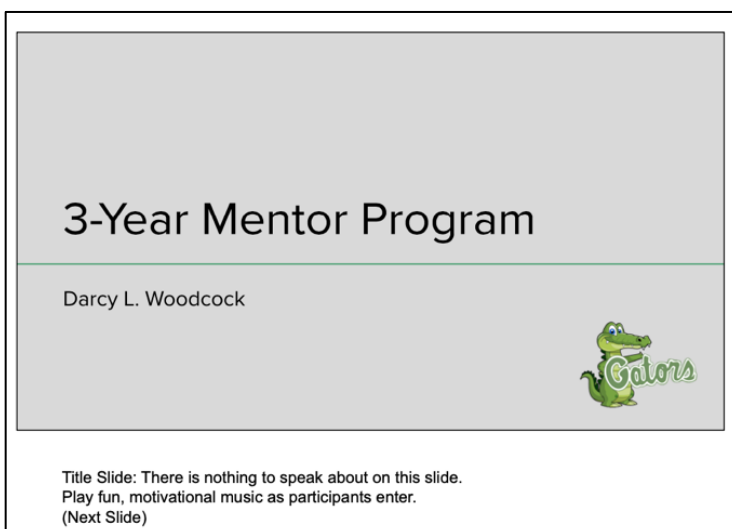
By the end of the 3-Year Mentor Program, participants will be able to:

- Identify their network of peers, supervisors, and district administrative colleagues for support.
- Attend monthly training and professional development.
- Assess their growth as an instructional leader.

Appendix B: Year 1 Orientation Presentation


This appendix contains the presentation that will be shown to participants during the Year 1 orientation session that lasts for 3-full days. The presenter notes are included as a guide of how the agenda will be implemented each day. The keynote speakers, required trainings, and stakeholder panels will be presentations by expert guests. Each day will run from 8:00-4:30 and will start with breakfast and coffee.

Slide 1



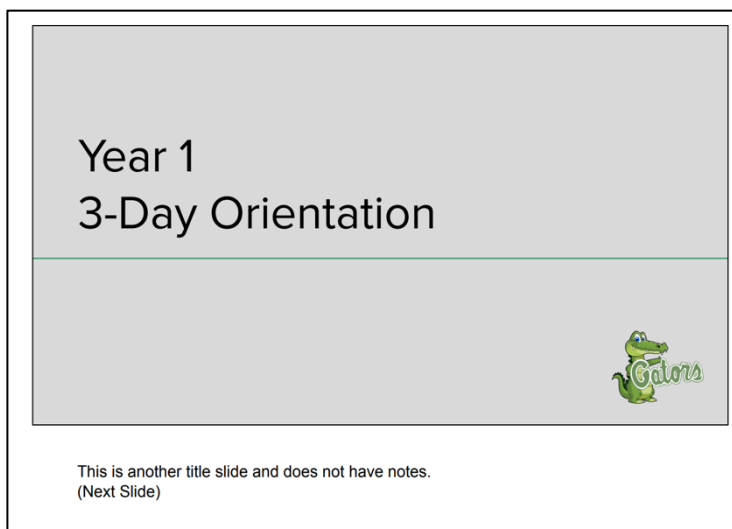
3-Year Mentor Program

Darcy L. Woodcock




Title Slide: There is nothing to speak about on this slide.
Play fun, motivational music as participants enter.
(Next Slide)

Slide 2




Year 1
3-Day Orientation



This is another title slide and does not have notes.
(Next Slide)

Slide 3

"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."
-Neale Donald Walsch



Start with this quote. Ask all participants to write on a post-it note what this quote means to them. Save for introductions.
(Net Slide)

Slide 4

Day 1




(No Notes)
(Next Slide)

Slide 5

Day 1: Agenda


8:00-8:30	Breakfast / Networking
8:30-9:00	Welcome
9:00-10:00	Program Goals, Timeline, Purpose
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:15	Keynote
11:15-11:30	Activity
11:30-12:00	Who's Who in DO
12:00-12:30	Meet Your Mentor
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:30	Training
2:30-3:30	Mentor Time
3:30-4:30	Stakeholder Panel
4:30	Day 1 Evaluation



(read through agenda)
 This is the agenda for today. I have placed times for a guide but if we have a topic or session that requires more time we can adjust as needed. Please help yourself to breakfast, coffee, and water. This is a day to stay hydrated and well-fed so that you comfortably learn alongside your team.
 This is also a day to learn so please ask questions throughout the day. We welcome all questions.
 (go through housekeeping: bathrooms, water fountains, exits, phones, etc.)
 (Next Slide)

Slide 6

Welcome & Introductions




8:30-9:00

Welcome to all participants. We are so thankful to have the opportunity to come together for this new program. Today is the first day of a commitment to each other to learn, grow, and connect with each other to better lead our schools, teachers, and, most importantly, our students. My name is Darcy Woodcock and I am the facilitator of today and in the future. Before I introduce myself further, I would like to learn more about all of you.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 7

Introductions

- Please introduce yourself to everyone at your table.
- Be prepared to introduce one member of your table group.
- Include:
 - Name
 - Number of Years in Education
 - Background Experiences
 - School
 - What the comfort quote means to you




8:30-9:00

(read slide contents) (give 15 minutes for the task which is 3 minutes per person)
 Alright, you have three minutes remaining so you should be listening to the final person at your table. Please be prepared to have each person introduce someone other than yourself.
 Time's up. Are there any table that volunteer to give introductions first.
 (go through all table, make connections among participants when possible)
 I now want to introduce myself to all of you. I have been in education for 21 years. I started as a primary teacher in Florida for three years. Then I moved back home to NY and taught 6th grade math and science for 8 years. During this time I earned my Master's in literacy and my Certificate of Advanced Study in School Building Leader and School District Leader. I began my time in administration as an elementary principal at a suburban K-6 school. I was principal there for 7 years. I was then the Director of professional Development for 1.5 years here. I am currently the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction at a local suburban school district. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about all of you as well.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 8

Goals of the 3-Year Mentor Program

- To onboard new administrators to the district with the knowledge, resources and support necessary for an effective first year
- To offer a network of support through mentors, peers, and supervisors for the first three years of the principalship
- To engage in learning on a consistent, regularly-scheduled basis for the first three years of the principalship




9:00-10:00

(read through goals)
 I would like to expand on goal one for a moment. This goal is extremely important as it will set new leaders up for success their first year. We have heard loud and clear from veteran principals that this is essential.
 For goal two, our mission over the next three year is to offer a full network of support for all of you that you trust and can reach out to as needed.
 Finally, goal three offers all of us the opportunity to learn alongside one another. The more we learn, the better able we are to lead those at our buildings and in our communities.
 All three of these goals will be evaluated at the end of each year and will be revised if needed based on that feedback.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 9

Timeline

Years 1-3
 August: 3-day orientation
 September-June: 1-day session




9:00-10:00

We have a timeline visual of the next three years for all of you. We will hold a 3-day orientation each August and a 1-day meeting each month from September through June. July will be a month for self-care and recharging. Many of the 1-day meetings will be with the entire team of school leaders because this offers the optimal experience of learning from your peers.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 10

Program Purpose: Study Findings

- To serve as the foundation of effective working relationships built on trust and a shared leadership vision of collaboration and support for the district.
- To promote the development, growth, and support for district principals to increase job satisfaction.



9:00-10:00

(Read the two program purpose statements)
 It is really important to me that you all understand the "why" behind this program. As a doctoral student, I conducted a study here with 12 of your veteran principals. My purpose was to understand the perceptions of job satisfaction among urban school district principals. The findings of that data collection, data analysis, combined with recent research will be presented to you now. Due to the confidential nature of the study, I will not share any identifying information on the 12 principals, but will share general findings.
 (Next Slide)


Slide 11

Program Purpose: Study Findings cont.

Four major themes that influence job satisfaction for urban school district principals were identified.

The four major themes that emerged were:

1. Leadership support and training
2. Feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment
3. Student and teacher growth and achievement
4. School culture and climate

9:00-10:00 


I would like you to take a couple of minutes to talk about these major themes that emerged. What are your thoughts? Would you add anything? Let's take 10 minutes to talk as a table and then I will offer large group share for anyone who wants to. (next slide)

Slide 12

Program Purpose: Study Findings cont.

Principal perspectives:

1. Leadership support and training
 - a. Networking with supervisors, principal PLC, mentors, colleagues
 - b. Attending consistent, routine meetings
 - c. Participating in a forum for questions and feedback
 - d. Attending trainings: culturally responsive leadership, content updates, and more
2. Feelings of accomplishment and fulfillment
 - a. Helping students and teachers grow
 - b. Reaching goals
3. Student and teacher growth and achievement
 - a. Growing as an instructional leader
4. School culture and climate
 - a. Building relationships
 - b. Working with families
 - c. Using community resources


9:00-10:00 

(Read through the perspectives of the principals interviewed) These are the major ideas and suggestions that came from the 12 principals interviewed in ways to increase feelings of job satisfaction for urban school district principals. You will notice that all of these suggestions will be found throughout this program. (Next Slide)

Slide 13

Break

10:00-10:15




Please take a 15 minute break.
(next slide)

Slide 14

Keynote

Dr. [REDACTED] District Superintendent




10:15-11:15

Slide 15

Activity: A Letter to My First Year Self

- Watch video
- Write a letter to your first year self
- Share parts with your mentor if comfortable
- Turn in your letter for safe-keeping




11:15-11:30

Welcome back from break. I have a very brief video for you to watch. (show video) (5 minutes)
 Please use the notebook paper and pens at your table to write a letter to your first year self. Then seal it in the envelope and sign on the seal.
 These will be saved until our last session this June. We will open the letters and reflect on what happened throughout the year. When you turn them in I will place them in a locked closet for safe-keeping.
 You have 10 minutes to write your letter.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 16

Who's Who in DO?

- Superintendent's Office
- Business Office
- Human Resource Office
- Climate and Culture
- Finance Office
- Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
- Secondary Education (7-12)
- Elementary Education (PK-6)
- Special Education
- Safety/Security




11:30-12:00

I would like to welcome our Director of Staff Services up to introduce our District Office staff. Each of the departments will introduce themselves and give you an overview of what they do and when you should reach out to them.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 17

Meet Your Mentors

- Introduce yourself
- Find two connections you share
- Discuss something you would like to learn with your mentor in the next 3 days
- Be prepared to share your connections with the whole group




12:00-12:30

This is a very important part of the day. Please take the rest of the morning until lunch to meet your mentor and complete the task on the slide. We will share out after lunch. Lunch will be from 12:30-1:30. Please either order using one of the menus on your table or go to a local restaurant of your choosing.
(Next Slide)

Slide 18

Lunch



12:30-1:30

12:30-1:30 (No Notes)
(Next Slide)

Slide 19

Meet Your Mentors - Share Out

- Introduce yourself
- Find two connections you share
- Discuss something you would like to learn with your mentor in the next 3 days
- Be prepared to share your connections with the whole group



1:30-1:45

Welcome back from lunch. Do we have any volunteers to share out?
(Next Slide)

Slide 20

Required Training

Listening to Learn: Building Trusting Relationships



1:45-2:45

I am going to have our Director of Climate and Culture and her team join us for the required training today. We have designated this as one of the most important need-to-knows for your first year as a principal. I will turn it over to their team for the next hour.
(Next Slide)

Slide 21

Planning/ Processing with Mentor

2:45-3:30

Elementary Teams:
Red Break-Out Room

Middle Level Teams:
Green Break-Out Room

High School Teams:
Blue Break-Out Room



This will be a very important section of each day of our entire program. This is your time with your mentor to process what you have learned so far, ask questions, gather feedback, and plan for implementation. We have three designated breakout rooms. Elementary level teams will go to the red break-out room, middle level teams to the green break-out room, and high school level teams to the blue break-out room. Each room has many supplies for you to use. You can also use this time to take a quick break if needed. We will come back together at 3:30.
(Next Slide)

Slide 22

Stakeholder Panel: Students


3:30-4:30

Each day we will host a panel to learn from. The first is perhaps our most treasured group, our students. We have ten students joining us today from all different levels, abilities, talents, demographics and more. They are prepared to give us a little information on who they are and what school is like for us. They will then discuss how their principals can support them. We will have time at the end for questions and answers. We have a few key trusted teachers here to help facilitate.
(Next Slide)

Slide 23

Day 1 Evaluation


4:30



On your table are the evaluation forms for today. Please take a few minutes to fill that out and turn it in. Thank you for a great day, we will see you tomorrow.

Slide 24


Day 2



(Title Slide) (No Notes)
(Next Slide)

Slide 25

Welcome & Review of Day 1


8:30-9:00


(Play fun, motivational music as participants enter)
 Welcome back to everyone. Before we get to the agenda for today, I'd like to read some of the questions and feedback from yesterday.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 26

Day 2: Agenda

8:00-8:30	Breakfast / Networking
8:30-9:00	Welcome & Review of Day 1
9:00-10:00	Keynote
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:15	Activity
11:15-12:30	Activity
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:30	Training
2:30-3:30	Mentor Time
3:30-4:30	Stakeholder Panel
4:30	Day 1 Evaluation




8:30-9:00

(Review Agenda)
 We will have another busy day of learning, collaboration, and networking. Remember that there is breakfast, coffee, and water for everyone to enjoy.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 27

Keynote


Dr. [REDACTED] District Superintendent



10:15-11:15

Slide 28

Break



10:00-10:15

Please take a 15 minute break.
(next slide)

Slide 29

Activity: District and School Safety Plans


- Part One: District Safety Plans
 - Scavenger Hunt by table

- Part Two: School Safety Plans (3 Break-Out Rooms)
 - Complete your specific school's plan.

**Elementary Teams:
Red Break-Out Room**

**Middle Level Teams:
Green Break-Out Room**

**High School Teams:
Blue Break-Out Room**



10:15-11:15

This activity has two parts. The Safety and Security Team for the district will run the first part. They have created a scavenger hunt for each table to complete. When the first part is finished, we will break-out into the same rooms as yesterday to complete your school's safety plan. The Safety and Security Team will explain exactly what parts you need to complete when part two begins.
(Next Slide)

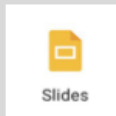
Slide 30

Activity: Welcome Back Staff Meeting Presentation


- All school leaders will have time to prepare their opening day presentation for the staff meeting.

- As a mentee/mentor pair, partner up with one other pair.
 - Create a template
 - Brainstorm list of necessities for staff meeting
 - Begin building the presentation through Google Slides

- Be prepared to come back to the whole group at 12:00 to share your necessities and learn from each other.



Slides




11:15-12:30

(Introduce activity) The opening staff meeting held when all staff members return is one of the most important times to set the tone for the school year. We are going to offer some time and ample resources to begin this large task. This will reduce isolation when working on this important event.
(Next Slide)

Slide 31

Lunch

12:30-1:30




12:30-1:30 (No Notes)
(Next Slide)

Slide 32

Required Training

Culturally Responsive Education (CRE)

1:30-2:30



I would like to welcome back up our Culture and Climate Team to conduct our CRE training. This training is essential in our urban school district to ensure all our students and families feel welcomed and accepted.

Slide 33

Planning/ Processing with Mentor

2:30-3:30

Elementary Teams:
Red Break-Out Room

Middle Level Teams:
Green Break-Out Room


High School Teams:
Blue Break-Out Room



Just like yesterday, this will be a very important section of each day of our entire program. This is your time with your mentor to process what you have learned so far, ask questions, gather feedback, and plan for implementation. We have three designated breakout rooms. Elementary level teams will go to the red break-out room, middle level teams to the green break-out room, and high school level teams to the blue break-out room. Each room has many supplies for you to use. You can also use this time to take a quick break if needed. We will come back together at 3:30. (Next Slide)

Slide 34

Stakeholder Panel: Parents




3:30-4:30

Each day we will host a panel to learn from. The second is our parent panel. The panel will work the same as yesterday and will be facilitated by two of our most veteran, trusted parent group presidents. We will have time at the end for questions and answers. (Next Slide)

Slide 35


Day 2 Evaluation

4:30 

On your table are the evaluation forms for today. Please take a few minutes to fill that out and turn it in. Thank you for a great day, we will see you tomorrow.

Slide 36


Day 3



Slide 37

Day 3: Agenda


8:00-8:30	Breakfast / Networking
8:30-9:00	Welcome & Review of Day 2
9:00-10:00	Keynote
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:15	Activity 1
11:15-12:30	Activity 2
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:30	Training
2:30-3:30	Mentor Time
3:30-4:30	Stakeholder Panel
4:30	Day 1 Evaluation



(Review Agenda)
 We will have another busy day of learning, collaboration, and networking. Remember that there is breakfast, coffee, and water for everyone to enjoy.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 38

Welcome & Review of Day 2



8:30-9:00


(Play fun, motivational music as participants enter)
 Welcome back to everyone. Before we get to the agenda for today, I'd like to read some of the questions and feedback from yesterday.
 (Next Slide)

Slide 39

Keynote

Mr. [REDACTED], Mayor

9:00-10:00




I would like to welcome our keynote speaker for today. Our city's Mayor will introduce the rest of his team. They will take time to talk of all the ways the resources of the community can assist us in our leadership. He will also introduce a few new ways for our district to partner with his team. I would like to introduce Mayor
(Next Slide)

Slide 40

Break

10:00-10:15




Please take a 15 minute break.
(Next Slide)

Slide 41


Activity 1: Building a Monthly Tickler

- Three Break-Out Rooms
- 20 Minutes/Room
- Place post-it notes on each month's chart paper of:
 - Committee Meetings
 - Staff Meeting
 - Family Events
 - PTO Meetings
 - Others
- Share out as large group



Resource: Monthly Tickler Template will be shared with all

10:15-11:15




Slide 42

Activity 2: Staff Evaluations & Observation Cycles

Human Resource Team

- Teacher and Teaching Assistant Evaluations
 - Forms
 - Timeline
 - Norming activity
- Other Role Evaluation Forms
 - Speech, OT, PT, APE, Counselor, Psychologist, Social Worker, Aides, Clerical, Custodial
 - Forms
 - Timeline
 - Norming activity

11:15-12:30




The Human Resource Team will take us through the next activity to learn about evaluating all the staff members in your buildings. They will norm all of us with some videos of teaching and practice evaluations. We will also go through the evaluation forms for all the other roles in the buildings so you are well-prepared.

Slide 43

Lunch

12:30-1:30



12:30-1:30 (No Notes)
(Next Slide)

Slide 44

Required Training

Community Resources: How to Take Full Advantage

1:30-2:30



Our required training for today will be a follow-up from our keynote from the Mayor this morning. We will work with several community centers from the district to increase family engagement and services for families in need. I will turn over the training to our Community Resource Liaison.
(Next Slide)

Slide 45


Planning/ Processing with Mentor

2:30-3:30

Elementary Teams:
Red Break-Out Room

Middle Level Teams:
Green Break-Out Room


High School Teams:
Blue Break-Out Room



Just like the past two days, this will be a very important section of each day of our entire program. This is your time with your mentor to process what you have learned so far, ask questions, gather feedback, and plan for implementation. We have three designated breakout rooms. Elementary level teams will go to the red break-out room, middle level teams to the green break-out room, and high school level teams to the blue break-out room. Each room has many supplies for you to use. You can also use this time to take a quick break if needed. We will come back together at 3:30. Two important topics for today are your needs and suggestions for your bi-weekly mentor meetings and our monthly meetings.
(Next Slide)

Slide 46


Stakeholder Panel: Teachers



Each day we will host a panel to learn from. Our final panel is our teacher panel. This panel is essential because our teachers are on our front lines of education. The panel will work similar to the last two. We will have time at the end for questions and answers.
(Next Slide)

Slide 47

Day 3 Evaluation



4:30

On your table are the evaluation forms for today. Please take a few minutes to fill that out and turn it in. Thank you for a great orientation. We will send out an agenda for our first monthly meeting soon. It will be planned based on your feedback and suggestions.

Appendix C: Evaluation Form

Date _____

Circle one: Mentee Mentor School Leader DO Administrator

Please rate each item (1-5) below on the effectiveness of the day's session(s):

1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neutral 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
The activities scheduled today were relevant to my needs.					
The environment was warm, welcoming, and safe to take risks.					
The agenda was clearly communicated.					
The objectives were relevant to my work and/or needs.					
I plan to use what was learned in my work environment.					
The presenters were well-prepared and knowledgeable about the topic(s).					

What did you find to be areas of strength from today's session(s)?

What areas of improvement could you suggest?

What questions and/or topics do you still need more information about?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

- Semi-structured Interview
- Welcome the participant
- Give introductions
- Thank the participant for coming
- Review the timeframe for the interview
- Give the participant a hard copy of the consent form and review:
 - Terms of confidentiality
 - Protection from harm
 - Right to withdraw from the study
 - Review the purpose of the research study
 - Go over the audio-recording procedures
 - Give participant a hard copy of the interview questions
 - Ask if the participant has any questions
 - Start the audio-recorder
 - Begin interview with first question
 - Ask one question at a time
 - Ask probing questions when necessary
 - Maintain flow of conversation
 - Take notes in researcher log as needed
- At the conclusion of the last question, ask if the participant would like to add anything

- Check to ensure the audio-recorder worked
- Review next steps
- Transcribing interview
- Member checking
- Answer any questions the participant asks
- Confirm participant has contact information
- Thank the participant

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Research Question

- What are the perceptions of job satisfaction of urban school district principals?

One-on-One Interview Questions

- Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?
- What do you believe to be your role as a leader in your school community?
- What is your understanding of job satisfaction?
- What are some examples of times you felt job satisfaction as a principal?
- In what ways do you think you positively affect or do not affect the school community?
- What support/resources do you think would aid in job satisfaction for principals?
- What do you believe are key elements to feel job satisfaction as a principal?
- In what ways does working in an urban school district affect or not affect your principalship?
- What skills do you possess that enable you to lead in an urban school district?
- What skills and/or training do you believe would be beneficial to principals in urban school districts?
- What do you believe are key elements to feel job satisfaction as an urban school district principal?
- Do you have any other information you would like to add?
- Probing Questions
- How did you develop your understanding of job satisfaction?

- Is there an example you would like to share?
- Is there one skill and/or training that stands out to you?
- Would you rate your perceptions in this area as: “not at all, slightly, mostly, or definitely”?
- How did this help lead to job satisfaction for you?

Appendix E: Sample Transcript

Principal 1

02:54 DW: Well, thank you for participating in this brief interview this morning. I did want to welcome you. For the purposes of this study you will be principal number one and I did want to just give introductions again. I am Darcy Woodcock, student at Walden University studying Educational Administration and Leadership. I am going to ask you not to state your name for confidentiality reasons, but just ask that you confirm that you are a principal and in the local district of the study.

03:40 P1: Yes.

03:42 DW: The time frame for this interview should be about 30 minutes but could be less than that depending on the answers and the explanation or detail that you would like to give. You have already received the consent form in your email and agreed to the study based on your scheduling of an interview. The purpose of the research study is to study the perception of job satisfaction in urban school district principals. I am going to record this interview and want to confirm with you that it is okay.

04:20 P1: Yes.

04:20 DW: Okay, so do you have any questions before we begin?

04:24 P1: No, I don't have any questions.

04:26 DW: Okay, so first what do you believe to be your role as a leader in your school community?

04:37 P1: Well, I believe that the role of principal is multifaceted and has many different pieces to it so in the community at large, I believe we are advocates for the community where advocates for the family and advocates for the children for understanding the benefits of education for understanding the importance of being in school and becoming educated becoming literate. I believe we are advocates for the supports and the resources families need in order for the children to be able to focus on school, always coming back to that focus on school. I believe my primary role is safety. So safety of children and safety of staff and once everyone in the building is safe and this year healthy, then the focus is obviously academic achievement and making sure that the very best instruction is occurring so that the very highest achievement can happen.

05:46 DW: Thank you. And in this role. What do you think? What is your understanding of job satisfaction?

05:58 PI: Um, I've always believed job satisfaction means that you don't feel like you're actually working that you get excited still to complete your responsibilities that you're motivated and inspired to do better each day. To me that desire to improve and desire to learn more and grow each day. That's one sign of satisfaction and also that you don't quit in an urban environment that you don't leave and you go through the struggles and through the difficulties that you persevere and you remain loyal to the community.

06:46 DW: In speaking of that, what are a few examples of when you have felt job satisfaction as a principal?

06:53 PI: Oh, so I feel a lot of satisfaction. It's interesting because this year the role has pieces that do not fulfill me. So, you know, I'm tracking COVID testing and looking for COVID symptoms and all of those pieces are not something that I'm particularly interested in studying but the virtual instruction that's occurring and the tasks that teachers are able to problem solve the things they're able to figure out that the instruction they're able to do and the amount of Technology we've put in in the homes in our city the number of families who are engaging and overcoming their obstacles to get their kids online the trust that the families put in us to send their children to school in person. Those things are really satisfying to me. I have a staff who loves to learn and wants to grow and get better. So anytime one of them comes to me and wants to do a professional development, wants to start their CAS program, wants to learn something or wants to ask me for advice about something. Those are satisfying things. And then, you know working with Future Leaders, you know, whether it's vice principals or administrative interns or our teacher leaders who are in their CAS program, that is something that's hugely satisfying.

08:28 DW: Okay, and do you think that you positively affect or do not affect a school community?

08:36 PI: Entirely positive affect, every principal affects the school community and climate. Is that what you said climate?

08:45 DW: The community as a whole really is.

08:46 PI: Community as a whole. Okay, every principal affects things in the full community whether it's positive or negative, you know for me, it's positive. It's our entire vision, our entire goal of the year is to remain positive, you know, we are #allaboutthelemonade. So we take any lemon thrown at us any negative, any obstacle that we crush them mix them with salt mix them with or not salt mix them with sugar mixed with sweet stuff to make delicious lemonade and we only focus on the lemonade that comes out of all of the struggles and that you know, so much of that attitude comes from the principal and you have to not only say it. You have to model it in every action and also have to genuinely believe it because people know when someone's being fake or when someone is hypocritical and you lose that trust. You lose that following

immediately when that happens because you know people are not going to follow after that.

09:53 DW: And you said climate is affected, are there other areas that you can think of that are affected by a principal?

10:00 P1: Well, even motivation. I think staff attendance. I think staff motivation to show initiative, to take risks, to stick together, to truly be positive behind the scenes and the teacher lounge, and the whole way kids pick up on that, and whatever our kids

10:24 DW: right

10:25 P1: pick up on it's important that we end up on the positive side of things.

10:32 DW: and what about support? What support do you think would help you in maintaining job satisfaction as a principal?

10:45 P1: Yeah, whether well, first of all, whether people admit it or not, everybody wants to hear a good job every once in a while. So there's that kind of emotional support people need to hear. I see what you did. It didn't go unnoticed and I appreciate you so that's one piece and I do get a lot of that from my direct supervisor. I also would say my peers the other principals in the elementary and beyond that and this District, we're like a sorority/fraternity. I mean, we are brothers and sisters and the support we get from each other, when we are permitted the time, when we're given the space, that resource in itself is huge. I had a mentor assigned and the person never met with me was always too busy. That would have been a resource. I really would have used and could have used and then beyond that, you know, we need to share ideas. What we do is really hard and the more we share ideas the more we can steal tips from each other and share work and adjust it for our own situation. That allows us to balance our time of being a human being a little.

12:04 DW: Well, so let's talk about that for a minute. You work in an urban School District.

12:07 P1: right

12:09 DW: What skills do you possess that you think enable you to lead in an urban school district?

12:15 P1: Well, I'm annoyingly positive. In my professional life and so it really doesn't matter what happens to me or what happens in this school. I'm going to be calm, cool, collected and positive about it really doesn't matter what happens. and I also have a drive that can't be stopped. So what I want to accomplish I'm going to and so that's very often to protect my staff so that they cannot protect the kids and do their very best instruction,

and I've got to protect them about what happens. I also know I have a strategic understanding of how to pick my battles. When I know something needs to be

13:05 DW: Yes.

13:07 PI: fought for or you know that I'm going to do that and then I know which things to drop and just accept because then I have favors I can collect later on. I don't know if that's a

13:19 DW: right

13:21 PI: manipulation. But I know what battles to pick is probably a more positive way to say it.

13:24 DW: What skills or training do you believe would be beneficial to principals specifically in urban school districts?

13:31 PI: Oh family engagement... family engagement and community outreach. Um, you know almost reversing the mindset of you know, so many of the bad school experiences the families have had that then trickle down to not always seeing the importance of school. Trying to reverse that and how to turn the view of school more positive. That's something that's really complicated.

14:07 DW: Okay, and I have two more questions. What do you believe are key elements to feeling job satisfaction specifically in an urban school district?

14:23 PI: um one thing that we deal with that are suburban and rural colleagues probably don't is the level of emotion so the level of anger and the level of stress, the level of crises we deal with. So one of the most important things is being encouraged to take care of ourselves and a support network. That's one of the largest pieces is that peer support network and that encourages self-care, and then just, you know outlets being able to talk to someone about it and really be heard and problem solve go through problem solving without judgment.

15:20 DW: right

15:21 PI: And then I would say one of the biggest pieces that would have made all the difference in my first three years is a strong mentor program. There's no question that having your one person who is confidential, who knows what you're going through, who's there for you as a first year, first two years. There's no question that that raises the level of satisfaction. There's no question what that would have done for me.

15:51 DW: Okay, great. Is there any other information you would like to add?

15:56 PI: No

15:57 DW: Okay, I thank you for participating today. I will send you the transcript of this interview to make sure it's accurate for you to give feedback or just let me know that it's accurate. I appreciate your time today.

16:12 PI: Well, thank you. You're welcome.

16:14 DW: Thank you.