Mentoring School Leaders: Perspectives and Practices of Mentors and Their Protégés

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MENTORING SCHOOL LEADERS: PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF MENTORS AND THEIR PROTÉGÉS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

Mentoring has the potential to be a powerful tool to help prepare future school leaders in the context of leading a school. The purpose of this study was to identify perspectives and practices employed in mentoring relationships within a principal preparation program. Through interviews, observations, and the analysis of artifacts, this study identified how these mentors supported their protégés in the development of theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice.

This study took a multiple case study approach to analyze data about leadership mentoring obtained within three cases of a mentor and the mentoring relationship with his or her protégé. Each case included a mentor, a current protégé, and one former protégé who had transitioned to a school leadership role.

This study addressed the following research question: What are the perspectives and practices of principals who mentor aspiring leaders and what do the aspiring leaders identify as effective mentor practice?

Cross-case analysis of interview, observation, and artifact data identified five mentoring practices that were consistently implemented by the mentors and recognized by protégés as being meaningful in leadership development:

- Developing trust
- Encouraging collective learning
- Engaging in real work
• Modeling and encouraging reflection

• Providing frequent and informal feedback

In addition to identifying five consistent mentoring practices among the three cases, this study ascertained that each mentor demonstrated a personalized version of mentoring through their individual conceptualization of their role and work. For these mentor principals, mentoring was more than a collection of practices. These practices were tied together by the mentors’ intentionality and focus on this identified essential component of mentoring. One mentor emphasized the connection of theory, practice, and values; the second mentor built her practice around the proximity with her protégés; and the final mentor established the importance of his protégés being able to take risks during their internship. The results of this study indicate that there are best practices for mentoring leaders. The mentor practices that emerge from this study indicate that mentoring aspiring leaders is a professional practice that consists of theoretical, practical, and moral dimensions.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Due in part to high stakes accountability, the job of the school principal has never been more complex or critical (The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003). Principals are charged with orchestrating internal and external school factors to ensure that all students achieve at high levels on standardized assessments (Schraw, 2010).

According to the United States Department of Labor, the need for school administrators increased by 10-20% between 2003 and 2005, with nearly 40% of the nation’s principals nearing retirement age (The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003; Malone, 2001). Political and cultural shifts have changed the roles of schools and school leadership, which has discouraged many potential leaders from stepping into the principalship (Malone, 2001). The need for leaders who are capable of transforming schools presents an opportunity for training and support. Educational systems can no longer afford to place individuals into the isolated and tumultuous principal role without support.

Research has identified mentoring as a powerful tool to train, recruit, and retain principals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007; Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003). Having the skills of a highly qualified teacher is no longer enough to be an effective school leader (Bush, 2009). Prospective school leaders need experience navigating and addressing authentic, complex issues with support in order to
prepare them to tackle these issues in their own schools. Quality mentoring has the potential to bridge the gap between understanding how to instruct in the classroom and understanding the wide range of issues to be addressed by a school principal (Gray, 2007).

Leadership mentoring programs are currently established in over one-third of the top companies in the United States of America, and are a strategy that is beginning to play a role in school districts (The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003). Mentoring supports leaders to develop personal values and beliefs related to learning and school leadership which in turn enables them to more effectively and consciously make decisions and ask appropriate questions when the status quo is not working (Gray, 2007). Mentoring can be an important step to prepare and retain quality leaders who are able to shift school cultures to support increased student achievement.

The practice of mentoring is becoming more common for new principals, yet these mentor relationships are often a casual “buddy system” without specific goals for the relationship (Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007). In many systems, little or no targeted training is provided for the mentors. In 2008, the General Assembly of the State of Colorado declared the importance of principal leadership in developing vision and positive school cultures while also recognizing principal leadership as a strong predictor of student achievement (COHB 08-1386 section 22-13-102, 2008). The legislative declaration goes on to recommend that the state of Colorado develop a school leadership development academy within the state department of education to “identify, recruit, train, and induct” leadership for Colorado’s public schools (COHB 08-1386, 2008). A school leadership academy board is charged with developing an induction program to support
new school leaders (SB 10-191). Induction programs are required in all of Colorado’s 178 school districts for both new teachers and new principals. In order for district induction programs to receive state approval, the school district must provide orientation; socialization and transition; technical skill development; and continuous formative assessment (Colorado Department of Education Educator Licensing Act, 1991). Both the Colorado induction mandate and mentoring recommendation are not funded.

Assigning new leaders with mentors is one strategy through which new administrators are inducted into their roles. The induction guidelines in Colorado recommend that mentors are willing participants, experienced principals, and learners with effective interpersonal skills (Colorado Department of Education Educator Licensing Act, 1991). While the induction mandates recommend mentoring as a means through which school districts many induct their new employees, the content and process for the mentoring are not defined.

Mentoring from a capable principal can prove to be key both in pre-service and in early career to promote sustainability and growth. The Stanford Study “Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs” identified effective principal preparation programs as being selective, closely tied to school districts, and emphasizing instructional leadership through hands-on experiences (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). To provide highly trained mentors, school districts, universities, and states could allocate resources to support these effective practices. Adult learners need opportunities to apply their learning in authentic contexts. Therefore, through a review of research on effective school leadership preparation, The Wallace Foundation recommends that principal preparation programs include field-based
internships, problem-based learning, cohort groups, and mentors (2005). The mentor guides the protégé in his or her development of leadership skills and problem solving through modeling, coaching, questioning, probing, and encouraging self-reflection (Davis et al., 2005).

Developing leaders as a professional practice is a learning-based process that extends beyond the sharing of information (Hargrove, 2003). As professionals, educators need to be able to use theory to inform their practice built upon an ethical and values-based foundation (Shulman, 2005). Educators need to be taught how to think, act, and behave like educators (Shulman, 2005). In Santa Cruz, California, educators have established mentoring practices for aspiring school leaders that include “ways of doing” as well as “ways of being” (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005, p. 54). Mentors need more than knowledge of the district and the role of leading a school in order to effectively support new principals. Mentoring holds great potential to bridge the knowing, doing, and being of leadership (The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003).

Mentoring has also been documented as a highly effective practice within principal preparation programs. The Stanford Study identified the practice of providing mentoring from effective principals as a characteristic of an exemplary program. The mentoring model that was reported in this study included engagement with theory, practice, and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). This model of mentoring and learning that extends beyond training about technical skill mirrors best practice in executive coaching and programs designed to develop professional practice (Bloom et al., 2005; Shulman, 2005; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011)
Statement of the Problem

Principals have a direct influence on school culture and teacher learning, both of which lead to student success (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Leithwood, Pattern & Jantzi, 2010; McGuigan, & Hoy, 2006; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Cities such as New York, New York; Louisville, Kentucky; and Santa Cruz, California are exploring ways to grow future school leaders from their ranks of teachers and assistant principals (The Wallace Foundation, 2007). A central tenet of most of these “grow your own” leadership development programs is the creation of mentorship pairs between current and future leaders (Malone, 2002). The challenge with mentoring relationships of this type is that they are often unstructured leaving both the process and the content of the mentoring to be developed by each individual mentor. The Southern Regional Education Board (Gray, 2007) established a set of standards for quality mentoring of aspiring and new principals. These standards ensure exposure to a variety of leadership challenges and the coaching necessary for the protégé to internalize not only skills and knowledge, but the ethics and tenacity to lead on their own (Gray, 2007). According to the SREB, the components of an effective mentoring process are:

- High standards and expectations for performance of the leader
- University or district commitment to a common vision, shared responsibility, clear expectations, structures and procedures to collect feedback, and recognized mutual benefits for the individual and the organization
- Problem focused learning
- Clearly defined responsibilities for mentors, supervisors and program coordinators
- Meaningful performance evaluations

(Gray, 2007, pg. 21-27)
While there are descriptive studies of mentor practices and programs, there are few studies that address protégé perspectives about mentor practice. Research does indicate that mentor practice makes a difference to protégés and indicates that mentoring skills may emotionally support protégés but may not support him or her in developing increased effectiveness (Spiro et al., 2007).

If school districts are to successfully develop future leaders, it is important to learn more about effective school-based mentoring (Spiro et al., 2007). Even the best leader is not necessarily an effective mentor. There is growing interest in the potential of providing mentoring for leaders and recognition that mentoring is a professional practice that must be developed (Bloom et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Shulman, 2005).

**Purpose of the Study**

Mentoring has potential to be a powerful tool to support future school leaders in the context of leading a school (Bloom et al., 2003). Mentoring and coaching have been identified as effective tools in helping teachers, as well as principals, improve their practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 1997); however, little is known about the actual practices of mentors and how they are perceived by their protégés. The purpose of this study was to identify mentoring perspectives and practices employed in mentoring relationships that occurred within a principal preparation program as they were perceived by the mentors and protégés.

Mentoring can be an effective approach when training new leaders how to lead in ways that align with district priorities, yet the specific strategies and processes employed by the mentors themselves make a tremendous difference (Spiro et al., 2007).
Understanding that context does matter, it is important to examine the processes and strategies of mentors in developing leaders prepared to lead their own schools. This study investigated the complex mentoring relationships through the perspectives of mentors and their protégés.

In this study the mentoring relationship occurred within a principal preparation program. The program provided the goal for mentors to provide leadership opportunities to their protégés, yet offered no explicit strategies or menu of experiences for mentors, so each mentor created his or her own mentoring strategies. The goal of the mentor was to support the protégé in learning the work of the principal. This program has been in existence for 10 years within one school district, and several principals had mentored multiple protégés. This depth of experience provided an opportunity to explore mentoring through cases of experienced mentors and their protégés. The hope was to assert a better description of principal mentor practice and how it influenced leader development from the perspective of the protégé.

**Research Question**

This study utilized a multiple case study design with the mentor as the unit of analysis. Each case included a mentor, a current protégé, and one former protégé who had transitioned to the role of school principal.

The following research question guided this study: What are the perspectives and practices of principals who mentor aspiring leaders and what do the aspiring leaders identify as effective mentor practice?
**Theoretical Framework**

This study was grounded in the framework of the elements of professional practice. Much like the professional practices of lawyers and doctors, educators need not only the theoretical understanding and technical skills to do their jobs, but also the reflective practice to be able to apply their learning in ever changing contexts (Grady, 2005; Shulman, 1998). Through his research of the signature pedagogies for the preparations of professionals in the fields of medicine, law, and the clergy, Shulman (2005) identified that while the preparation process was unique, each had a system to instill the theory, practice, and values that professionals need to navigate ever changing contexts. Shulman’s recommendation of preparing leaders to integrate theoretical understanding, technical skill, and reflective practice aligns with the findings of the Stanford study, which examined elements of effective principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Practice, theory, and reflection are vital components of exemplary leader preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The art of mentoring must move beyond the practical and cognitive aspects of what the job requires to include the art of how one develops the internal moral compass needed to take action in often uncharted territory (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland, & Tripps., 2009). Effective coaching skills are the vehicle the mentor uses to share the content knowledge of leadership and allow the protégé to take ownership of and apply his or her new understandings with the support of a mentor. It is these processes and practices that are the focus of this dissertation.

The objective of this study was to uncover mentor practices and perceptions, and to determine alignment with both the “doing” and the “being” of school leadership.
(Bloom et al., 2005). Shulman’s analysis of professional practice (2005) included three types of apprenticeship: a cognitive apprenticeship, a practical apprenticeship, and a moral apprenticeship to address the development of theoretical understanding, technical skill, and reflective practice. These aspects of professional practice were used as the lens through which the researcher examined the practices of mentors interviewed and observed in this study.

**Assumptions**

There was an underlying assumption that since the protégés participated in a competitive selection process to participate in the preparation program, many if not all would be reflective individuals who were more likely to align theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice. Since the research was embedding in the context of a university and school district developed program, it was also assumed that the values and beliefs of both the school district and university coursework were apparent throughout the cases.

**Limitations**

The mentor relationships examined in the study were limited to those in a specific program and only included experienced mentors who had former protégés later become principals. These criteria may have limited the pool of participants to only include successful mentoring relationships. Interviews and observations took place in the spring, giving mentors and their protégés at least seven month to develop relationships prior to their participation in this study. It is probable that the depth of relationship and participant responses may have been different if the study had been conducted earlier in
the mentor relationships. Interview questions were framed around effective practice and were not designed to uncover any negative aspects of the mentoring relationship. Other mentor relationships that may have existed, both formally and informally, throughout the district were not within the scope of this research. Volunteerism needed to be taken into account both on the part of the mentors and protégés; individuals who elected to apply to and were selected for the principal preparation program had commonalities.

**Researcher Bias**

The researcher was a participant in the principal preparation program eight years prior to the study and is currently a school principal in the school district being studied. In order to control for potential bias, the researcher piloted interview questions with both mentors and protégés who participated in the examined program and mentors and protégés from other principal preparation programs to ensure that the questions were universally comprehensible. Understanding that the researcher had the ability to influence the participants, questions were carefully designed and posed in a way to minimize the influence of the researcher on participants’ responses.

While analyzing and eventually interpreting the findings, the researcher kept her bias in check by asking a third party not associated with the principal preparation program or the school district to review the coding and analysis to ensure that it was comprehensible.

In the context of this study, mentoring is used to refer to the relationship between the mentor and his or her protégé. The term coaching is used to refer to specific
Strategies mentors employed if they were helping protégés work through issues and situations. Coaching was one component of the mentoring relationship.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

**Blended Coaching:** a coaching model developed by Gary Bloom that includes instructional coaching of technical skills as well as facilitative coaching of adaptive or relational skills.

**Coaching:** a specific, situation or problem specific strategy to help individuals navigate through to a solution. Coaching strategies can be applied within a mentoring relationship and can also be applied by coaches who briefly work with an individual to reach a specific, individual end.

**Collaborative Coaching:** a coaching strategy between instructional and facilitative coaching in which the coach participates in the work alongside the protégé (Bloom et al., 2005).

**Consultative Coaching:** a coaching strategy in which the coach or mentor shares perspective, knowledge, and advice, but does not participate in any action that results from the coaching process (Bloom et al., 2005).

**Facilitative Coaching:** builds upon a protégé’s existing skills, knowledge, interpretations, and beliefs in order to construct new skills, knowledge, interpretations and beliefs (Bloom et al., 2005).

**High Stakes Accountability:** under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) states are required to develop accountability systems with consequences for lack of student performance (Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP). Funding may be withheld if schools do not make adequate progress and schools can be restructured or closed.
**Induction Program:** a program, usually embedded in the licensure process, to assist newly-licensed principals/administrators, veteran principals/administrators new to the organization, and incoming out-of-state principals/administrators in making a smooth transition into the school/district environment. The program shall increase the skills and abilities of new-to-school/district principals/administrators, and provide support to and retain effective Colorado principals/administrators. (adapted from the Colorado Principal Induction Guidelines, 2007)

**Instructional Coaching:** an approach in which the coach or mentor shares her own expertise, experience and wisdom with the protégé using traditional teaching strategies (Bloom et al., 2005).

**Mentoring:** a learning-focused process through which an experienced practitioner supports a new leader in acquiring knowledge through reflective conversations, moral support, and affirmation. In the context of this study, mentoring is the relationship developed between the mentor and protégé.

**Mentors:** support both personal and professional growth. Mentoring requires a relationship and trust.

**Protégé.** used in this study to identify the individual receiving mentoring support.

**Relational skills (also referred to as adaptive skills):** the ability to modify one’s behavior according to a situation or challenge. Skills include interpersonal skills, communication strategies, cultural proficiency, and emotional intelligence. They are often referred to as the “soft skills” of a job.

**Transformational Coaching:** coaching that focuses on the interpersonal skills, communication strategies, cultural proficiency, and emotional intelligence of the protégé
such that it addresses and transforms who the leader is, rather than just what they do (Bloom et al., 2005).

**Technical skills:** those abilities acquired through learning and practice that are often job or task specific; in other words, a particular skill set or proficiency required to perform a specific job or task. They are often referred to as the “hard skills” of a job.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Principals in the early 21st century are often charged with being the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Operating Officer of their schools while taking the lead in modeling reformed teaching and learning. High-stakes accountability for student achievement within educational organizations calls for leadership that is focused on instruction and achievement (Olson, 2007). In order to reform schools, educators need to execute practices that work for all students and families. The answers to the problems schools face might not be found within the existing practices. If schools are going to change the status quo, they will need to detect and correct problems. This type of organizational learning requires a double-loop learning model to identify the problem and change practice rather than continuing to address the same problems with the same solutions (Argyris, 1997). Given the increasing accountability measures and expectations in the United States, few individuals are as well positioned as the school principal to make a visible difference in how schools are structured to support effective teaching and learning efforts (Hess & Kelly, 2000).

This chapter begins with a review of literature exploring characteristics of effective school leadership that positively influence student achievement. This grounding in effective school leadership informs the skills and perspectives new school leaders need to develop through their mentoring experience. Second, transformational leadership
theory is explored as a foundational principle which underlies several of the characteristics of effective school leaders. Next, the review of literature moves to the body of research on principal preparation for 21st century school leadership, examining the components of successful principal preparation programs. In addition to the research on the preparation of principals, much can be learned about the preparation of professionals from the literature on preparation programs in the fields of medicine and law. This chapter examines the signature pedagogies of doctors, lawyers, architects, and clergy and how they develop the habits of mind of thinking, acting, and reflecting on their work. Mentoring has potential to be a powerful tool to foster the learning of professionals. Literature in the areas of professional mentoring and coaching as well as the mentoring and coaching of education professionals are discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with a review of the research on adult learning theories and how these theories can serve as a foundation for the learning of school leaders.

**School Leadership**

The definition of a school principal has shifted from being a manager to an instructional leader responsible for generating student achievement results. Leadership is second only to classroom teaching in influencing student learning. In fact, no documented instance of a school improving its student achievement has occurred without a strong leader (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walstrom, 2004). In previous generations, having been an effective teacher was the key component for being thought to be an effective principal. The job of the principal has become increasingly specialized in the 21st century, with expanding roles and more complex school contexts (Bush, 2009). Accountability pressures often fall at the school level due to more states and districts
encouraging site-based management (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Across the globe, countries are recognizing education as the key to nations becoming and remaining competitive in the world marketplace. Today’s principals need to be:

... educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 3).

Principal preparation that is limited to managerial tasks leaves prospective leaders unprepared for the complexities of the job. In fact, 96% of principals surveyed in a 2003 Public Agenda Poll cite on-the-job experience and mentoring from colleagues as being more effective in preparing them for their work than their graduate studies (Hess & Kelly, 2005). The preparation and selection of school leaders who are equipped to challenge the status quo in order to keep students at the center of all decisions is a critical component for school improvement and reform (Schleter & Walker, 2008).

In the search for a direct correlation between principal leadership and student achievement, several studies have confirmed that principal leadership directly impacts the school climate and the work of teachers, which both directly impact student achievement (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Supovitz et al., 2009). This indirect influence on student achievement calls for school leaders to prioritize their work around building a strong and positive school culture with an “academic optimism” that all students can learn, while supporting teachers and encouraging teachers to collaborate and take leadership (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Supovitz et al., 2009).
Among all school factors that impact student achievement, school leadership accounts for a quarter of these effects (Leithwood et al, 2004). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found the leader’s efficacy in developing the school conditions of shared values, safety, open communication, support for instruction, and deprivatized teaching as having the strongest relationship with increased student achievement. The leadership actions that set direction for the school account for the greatest amount of the principals’ impact on student achievement, followed by the development of people, and the redesign of the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004).

With the responsibilities of school leaders increasing in our current age of accountability, several studies have examined which leadership moves are most likely to indirectly impact student achievement in an effort to help principals prioritize their time and focus their efforts (Fullan, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). These findings somewhat parallel those discussed above, while being more specific in the core practices principals should prioritize among the noise of demands from the government, district leadership, and the greater community. Themes among these studies include an emphasis on instructional leadership, building capacity and a sense of efficacy among teachers, keeping the focus on student learning, and systematically creating structures for success.

Other studies turn to the teachers to determine which leadership moves and characteristics make the greatest impact on student achievement (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). By surveying teachers, these researchers found trust in leadership and collective responsibility that led to the development of a professional learning community as making the greatest impact on student achievement. Leithwood,
Pattern, and Jantzi (2010) identified and tested four paths through which principals influence student learning. These four paths are rational, emotional, organizational, and familial.

In order to be successful in leading the schools of today, principals need solid preparation in not only the knowledge and skills to keep the school moving forward, but also the flexibility and morality to make real time decisions and adjustments in their work (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Since one cannot be an effective leader simply by following a manual or a textbook, today’s school leaders need individualized preparation and support. Mentoring is one way to make the learning personalized by supporting the new leader in navigating real issues as they arise (Silver et al., 2009).

**Transformational Leadership Theory**

The theory of transformational leadership aligns with the findings of effective school leadership as well as with the theoretical understanding and reflective practice emphasized in the study of professional practice. First defined by Downton in 1973, transformational leadership is an approach that emphasizes values, ethics, and long term goals in order to motivate followers to find intrinsic satisfaction in their work (Northouse, 2010). Transformational leaders develop well-functioning teams that work collaboratively in order reach collective goals through charisma, inspiration to achieve a shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and efforts to assist each individual in reaching his or her potential (Northouse, 2010). Dussault, Payette, and LeRoux (2008) found that the transformational leadership factors of charisma, intellectual stimulation, and attending to individual needs were even more effective in developing a staff’s sense of collective
efficacy when teamed with the transactional factors of setting goals with rewards and corrective action when individuals act in ways that are detrimental to the collective goal.

After interviewing 1,300 middle and senior-level leaders in the public and private sector about their “personal bests” as leaders, Kouzes and Posner (2007) identified five practices of exemplary leadership. These practices of “modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart” align with transformational leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 14). Fields and Herold (2012) compared the relative fit between Kouses and Posner’s five practices and both transformational and transactional leadership. They found that challenging the process and inspiring a shared vision aligned with transformational leadership, enabling others to act aligned with transactional leadership and encouraging the heart and modeling the way fit into both transformational and transactional leadership. These five practices also correspond to the elements of leadership needed for successful school change developed by Fullan (2006). These practices are defining a clear and common goal, connecting with individuals’ dignity, taking a social and action oriented approach, and building internal and external accountability (Fullan, 2006).

Transformational leadership has the potential to inspire and motivate school teams to respond to the increasing pressures and challenges faced by today’s public schools, however being a transformational leader requires more than knowledge and skill. In order to provide the leadership to transform our schools, principals must also tap the moral obligation of their work, and inspire this morality in others.

Applying emotional intelligence in leadership is one way to inspire and connect with the morality in others. This speaks to the moral reflection of professional practice.
Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) stated that emotion is the foundational and most important skill of a leader. How leaders lead makes a difference. In order to be a transformational leader, one must be attuned to the emotions of others. The four domains of emotional intelligence, and their corresponding competencies, to be balanced by a leader are:

- **Self-awareness (Personal Competence)**
  - Emotional self-awareness
  - Accurate self-assessment
  - Self-confidence

- **Self-management (Personal Competence)**
  - Emotional self-control
  - Transparency
  - Adaptability
  - Achievement
  - Initiative
  - Optimism

- **Social Awareness (Social Competence)**
  - Empathy
  - Organizational awareness
  - Service

- **Relationship Management (Social Competence)**
  - Inspirational leadership
  - Influence
  - Developing others
  - Change catalyst
  - Building bonds
  - Teamwork and collaboration

(Goleman et al., 2002, p. 39)

Effective leadership has complexities beyond having the knowledge and skill to make decisions. Developing emotional competencies may require the support of a professional community or mentor.

While transformational leadership identifies some practices that show promise for today’s schools, charismatic leaders can face stress and burn-out. A study by the Illinois Education Research Council found that just over 28% of first time principals were still
leading the same school after six years (http://ierc.siue.edu, 2001). If school districts are going to invest in developing effective principals, it is vital that they also pay attention to the sustainability of these leaders. Hargreaves and Fink (2006), identified seven principles of sustainability to preserve not only the work of the leader but the leader him or herself. By prioritizing deep leadership for learning; length of leadership beyond the individual leader; distributed leadership; justice; diversity of thinking; resourcefulness of time, money, and people; and a conservation of institutional memory, principals can establish “authentic improvement and achievement for all children that matters, spreads and lasts” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 20). Sustainable leadership gives time to developing theory and practice, as well as providing time for moral reflection. Resonant Leadership by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) addressed the leadership cycle of stress, sacrifice, and dissonance. In order to manage the stress of the principal that can lead to burn-out and turnover of leadership, mindfulness, hope, and compassion were identified as keys to renewal and sustainability (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Preparation Principals for 21st Century Leadership

If transformational, primal, and sustainable leadership theories demonstrate qualities necessary for today’s school leaders, these theories should inform principal preparation programs as well. “There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.4). Leadership is about building capacity in a team and motivating that team toward shared goals. Three leadership practices consistently linked to increased student learning are setting high expectations for meeting a shared purpose, developing effective
teachers, and strengthening the school organizational structure and practices to achieve the shared vision (Mitgang, 2008). Effective leadership is shared leadership that focuses all efforts on common goals for student learning.

School leaders have the greatest impact on student achievement through the development of people, setting direction for the organization, and redesigning the school through a positive culture and collaborative structures (Leithwood et al., 2004). Despite extensive research of the elements of effective school leadership, very few principal preparation programs provide adequate preparation for effective leadership (Levine, 2005). A survey of course syllabi of 56 of the largest and most prestigious educational administration programs in the United States, revealed that these programs focus on managing for results, managing personnel, and teaching technical knowledge. These principal preparation programs had little to no emphasis on school culture, instruction, and data analysis, all of which are aspects of leadership identified as having high leverage in school reform (Hess & Kelly, 2000).

In response to the incongruence between the qualities of effective school leadership and the scope and sequence of educational administration programs, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) established a set of professional standards for school leaders that define the skills, knowledge, and adaptability necessary to lead schools today (Davis et al., 2005). As of 2005, over 40 states had adopted these standards, yet the degree to which they inform licensure, preparation, and policy varies greatly by state.

In order to align the content of principal preparation programs with the research on effective school leadership, the curriculum should include instruction, organizational
development, and change management so that leaders are equipped to build a collaborative learning culture and have the skills to increase the capacity of teachers (Davis et al., 2005). An effective school leadership program aligns all coursework, experiences, and assessments around a clear set of shared values and beliefs.

There is no single model for quality principal preparation, although The Wallace Foundation (2007) examined effective programs across the United States and identified four common lessons. Effective principal preparation programs are selective, closely tied to school districts, and emphasize instructional leadership through hands-on experiences (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Coaching from a trusted mentor can prove to be key both in pre-service and in early career to promote sustainability and growth. To provide coaching by highly trained mentors, school districts, universities, and states need to allocate resources to support these practices. Ultimately, school districts and policy makers need to support school leaders by removing obstacles that can impede even the most effective leader (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Adult learners need opportunities to apply their learning in authentic contexts. Therefore, through a review of research on effective school leadership preparation, The Wallace Foundation recommends that principal preparation programs include field-based internships, problem-based learning, cohort groups, and mentors (2005). The mentor guides the protégé in his or her development of leadership skills and problem solving through modeling, coaching, questioning, probing, and encouraging self-reflection (Davis et al., 2005).

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), a nonprofit organization offering an alternative route to principal licensure, is finding success in preparing leaders to improve failing schools (Maxwell, 2007). NLNS aligns with the research on effect school
leadership and emphasizes instructional leadership through frequent data-analysis and the use of case studies. Mentors offer ongoing professional development and are central to the format of the program.

**Preparation of Professionals**

In 1904, Dewey advocated that traditional practice-centered educator preparation programs should also include the learning of theory. Dewey argued that the theoretical understanding and technical skills of being an educator have a reciprocal relationship, with theory informing practice as well as practice further informing the development of theory. Without theory, a focus on solely technical skills can tend to perpetuate the status quo. The goal of practice should be to extend theoretical understandings through inquiry and reflection (Dewey, 1904). Theory needs to be applied through practice in order to be understood, tested, and refined. This is why Dewey encouraged a laboratory approach to preparing educators to experiment with new theories in order to advance the practice of teaching, thus creating innovative practitioners with knowledge that was transferable beyond the single context of their apprenticeship.

Shulman (1998) extended Dewey’s inquiry into the preparation of professionals to the current context. He defined a profession as “a special set of circumstances for deep understanding, complex practice, ethical conduct, and higher-order learning, circumstances that define the complexity of the enterprise and explain the difficulties of prescribing both policies and curriculum.” (pg. 515) In order to prepare an individual for a profession, one needed to consider both the technical and moral requirements of the role. Given the complexities of preparing professionals, Shulman (1998) developed six characteristics of a profession:
• a calling to serve others
• an understanding of theory
• skilled practice
• judgment in times of uncertainty
• learning from experience
• collective knowledge through a professional community

(Shulman, 1998, p. 516)

The complexity of these six aspects of professions illuminated the challenges of preparing professionals.

As the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Shulman (2005) built on these six aspects of professions and established that educators need to be able to, “understand in order to act, to act in order to make a difference in the minds and lives of other, to act in order to serve others responsibly and with integrity.” (pg. 3). Looking to the preparation of professionals in the professions of medicine, law and the clergy, Shulman’s work at the Carnegie Foundation identified three integrated apprenticeships: a cognitive apprenticeship (theory), a practical apprenticeship (technical skills), and a moral apprenticeship (moral reflection). The professional preparation of doctors, lawyers, and clergy acknowledged that effective professionals need to be grounded in theory and skill with the ethical ability to adapt to unforeseen situations (Shulman, 2005).

Each of these other professions established a signature pedagogy of how they prepare professionals. The signature pedagogies of medicine and law were not perfect, yet together they modeled rituals to help develop habits of thinking, doing, and ethical reflection. Educators also needed to have “technical skills and theoretical knowledge in a matrix of moral understanding” (Shulman, 1998, p. 516).
Both educational and medical professionals are practice-oriented, require interpersonal skills, demand problem-solving skills, and include information that multiplies daily (Grady, 2005). Mere lectures alone cannot provide adequate preparation for either of these fields. Content needs to be taught, and then practitioners need an opportunity for application in order to problem solve in the context of the work (Grady, 2005).

**Mentoring and Coaching Professionals**

In Homer’s Odyssey, Ulysses asked his friend Mentor to watch over his son while he was in Troy. Mentor was to be a guardian, guide, and counselor, helping Ulysses’ son “understand and embrace the difficulties that lie before him” (Malone, 2001, p. 1). A mentor is a person with experience offering support and challenge to another professional (Bush, 2009). The term coaching has roots in the French word *coacher* meaning to move a person from one place to another (Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011). Bloom defined coaching as continuing support that is safe and confidential with the goal of personal, professional, and institutional growth over time (Bloom et al., 2005). Coaching is most successful when the training is specific, the mentor-protégé pairs are well matched, and the work is set in the context of a greater learning process (Bush, Glover, & Harris, 2007).

Embedded within an induction or leadership development program, mentoring can provide differentiated support for leaders specific to the context in which they work and the specific issues they face at a given time (Silver et al., 2009). Mentoring can also serve as a socialization strategy to help new leaders develop the skill set, knowledge, behaviors, and values to navigate the complexities of leadership roles within schools.
Trust and rapport are foundational to the success of any mentoring relationship. Previous research has identified supportive relationships as being the most important aspect of mentoring programs with deliberate skill development having secondary importance (Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004). Some mentoring programs prioritize matching mentor pairs according to similar philosophy, level of school, and the type of challenges facing the school (Silver et al., 2009). This intentional pairing can increase the effectiveness of the mentoring due to the stronger relationship and immediate relevance and commonalities of the work faced by mentor and protégé. It is important to establish the mentor as someone who is not in an evaluative position in order to allow the protégé to risk sharing insecurities (Malone, 2001).

Coaching is the process a mentor may use to support the protégé in clarifying and achieving specific goals or tasks. Coaching conversations occur within the context of the mentor relationship or can take place with a coach who is not a mentor (Hargrove, 2008). According to Hargrove, a coach is an outsider who is able to help the protégé gain perspective in order to acknowledge any discrepancy between their intentions and their actions (2005). This work parallels Argyris and Shōn’s (1978) argument that achieving positive results comes from aligning one’s theory-in-use (actual actions) and one’s espoused theory (what one would like others to think they do). Within the context of this study, the focus will be on the coaching strategies being applied by identified mentors.

Leadership mentoring is being executed as a tool in many fields to help leaders develop and apply new learning, increase their self-awareness, motivate them, and increase their self-confidence (Bond & Naughton, 2011). In a study in China, mentoring helped protégés apply their personal learning in order to advance their careers. Having
high levels of personal learning affected mentoring, personal learning affected career
development, and the addition of mentoring further influenced career development (Gong

In a study of the effects of leadership coaching at a Midwestern construction materials
company, 85% of the direct reports of the managers who received coaching believed the
coaching process increased their manager’s effectiveness (Wenson, 2010). Increased
self-reflection was identified by 95% of the direct reports as the phenomenon that led to
increased manager effectiveness. This self-reflection led to increased motivation through
validation, participation, and information; the creation of a safe environment that
encouraged innovation, creativity, and teamwork; and improved communication with a
focus on time, counseling, feedback, and personal relationships (Wenson, 2010). The
importance of a mentor’s self-reflection in increasing a protégé’s motivation and
innovation; creating a safe environment for risk taking and learning; and improving
communication to develop relationships was evident in each of the cases included in this
study.

Leadership skills of the past are often inadequate for addressing the challenges
and innovation of the 21st century (Bond & Naughton, 2011). Today’s leaders are often
called to take heroic actions as defined by Campbell’s hero model (Steinhouse, 2011).
These heroes hear a call, accept the call, cross a threshold, and gain the resources and
mentoring necessary in order face their fears and obtain their goals. Throughout history,
mentoring has played a central role in heroic leadership development.

Critical components of effective leadership mentoring are a positive relationship
between the mentor and protégé, problem identification, goal setting, problem solving,
and a shift in the thinking of the protégé through self-awareness that generates new learning and perspective (Carey et al., 2011). This personal transformation strengthens the focus, commitment, and effectiveness of the leader receiving coaching.

**Mentoring and Coaching in Education**

While mentoring programs for teachers had existed for decades, principal mentoring did not have much of a presence until the late 20th century. The Wallace Foundation concluded that most leadership mentoring programs are not focused enough to produce positive results (Spiro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007). A central tenet of mentor program success was ongoing training and support for the mentors (Silver et al., 2009). Exemplary leadership mentors see their work as an opportunity to give back to the education system and felt their participation validated their previous work (Silver et al., 2009). Mentors deserve the support of mentoring themselves. In order for mentors to effectively support new leaders in their skill development, they must have strong skills in coaching and understand the processes that are most supportive in a mentoring relationship. Ongoing professional development provided for the mentors to develop their coaching skills and to meet with fellow mentors to brainstorm ways to best support their protégés can be effective.

Hargrove identified five compass points of Masterful Coaching designed to support leaders in “reinventing their organizations by reinventing themselves first.” (Hargrove, 2008, pg. 11). Using these compass points as a guide, Masterful Coaches are:
partners with their protégés
- help their protégés see an impossible future in order to take the risks to realize it
- guide their protégés to reinvent themselves first
- see their work as being a thinking partner for their protégés
- ultimately increase their protégés’ ability to take action (Hargrove, 2008).

Hargrove’s (2008) five compass points of Masterful Coaching demonstrate the need for mentors to apply coaching strategies that extend beyond sharing technical skills. This definition of coaching allows mentors to support their protégés in using their theoretical understanding and reflective practice to develop the adaptive skills necessary to lead today’s schools.

Mentoring of principals is identified as a critical resource in preparing school leaders (Crow and Matthews, 1998; Bloom et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Silver et al., 2009). While many districts are establishing mentoring relationships to prepare individuals to become school leaders (The Wallace Foundation, 2007), many traditional internships focus solely on the technical knowledge of school leadership, or the doing, and do not include the transformational learning of how to be a leader. In order to be effective in developing new leadership, mentoring programs need to focus on both the content of leadership within a given system and the practice of effective mentoring.

Mentoring within programs to prepare new leaders often includes coaching strategies as a part of the mentoring process. The Blended Coaching model (2005) recognized the complexities of developing leadership skills and acknowledged the importance of examining both what we do (external behavior) and who we are (internal selves). Looking both within and outside of oneself can be especially important in
supporting an individual’s development of practice, theory, and reflection that are necessary for successful professional practice. Adults learn through reflection, inquiry, and social interaction (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner & Szabo, 2002). Effective mentors should not focus solely on reflection any more than they should focus only on teaching technical skills. The Blended Coaching möbius strip represents the coach’s fluid movement from taking an instructional approach to a facilitative angle. This continuum ranges from consulting to collaborating and transformation as the thinking moves from doing to being (Bloom et al., 2005). Figure 1 shows the link between instructional and facilitative coaching methods to support new leaders.

![Blended coaching model – the Mobius strip.](image)

**BLENDED COACHING STRATEGIES**

*Figure 1. Blended coaching model – the Mobius strip. (Bloom et al., 2007, p. 57)*

As is true in teaching any content, merely knowing the subject matter is not enough. Mentors should also be equipped with processes and practices to empower future leaders. Just as effective teaching involves more than understanding the content being taught, effective mentoring requires more than understanding the school system.
and having demonstrated effective leadership oneself. The Blended Coaching Model, (Bloom et al., 2005) promotes instructional, facilitative, consultative, collaborative, and transformational coaching approaches.

Bloom (2005) recommended that novice principals have the support of both a mentor to help them navigate the system and a coach to help foster personal and professional growth. If mentors are not provided support, the current system risks being perpetuated. Mentors can serve as coaches, yet most mentors are also principals who are busy leading their own schools and do not have the time to provide coaching (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). Leaders need coaching to shift to new ways of doing and thinking. Bloom identified a series of skills, namely building relationships, listening, observing, questioning, and providing feedback, and both instructional and facilitative strategies to guide coaches in supporting protégés in the acquisition of professional knowledge, emotional intelligence, and cultural proficiency (2005). This coaching process supports new leaders in strengthening both their ways of doing and their ways of being (Bloom, 2005).

An effective leader needs to be able to demonstrate both technical skills and adaptive skills. It is the responsibility of mentors to provide opportunities for their protégés to experience and learn technical skills while developing adaptive skills. The tacit knowledge of leaders are the skills of bridging the technical and adaptive, and are often so deeply seeded in the person’s being that it is difficult to teach these skills to another (Sternberg & Horvath, 1999). Tacit knowledge is difficult to define. Tschannen-Moran and Nestor-Baker (2004) identified tacit knowledge as falling in the “we-know-it-when-we-see-it” category of skill. Tacit knowledge is the common sense that guides one
to solve problems quickly and effectively. Polanyi (1966) acknowledged that we often “know more than we can tell” because the knowledge has become intrinsic.

Experience can lead to tacit knowledge; however, some professionals have years of experience yet demonstrate little to no tacit knowledge, while some with less experience have managed to gain great insight in their short tenure (Tschannen-Moran & Nestor-Baker, 2004). Tacit knowledge is acquired and applied in the context of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Engaging in reflection as a social practice within a community of practice encourages one to refine the expertise necessary to accomplish set goals and everyday challenges. Developing a mentor relationship is one way to engage in a community of practice that can increase the tacit knowledge of both the mentor and protégé; however, tacit knowledge remains difficult to teach.

**Adult Learning: Constructivist Learning Theory**

To work effectively with adult learners, it is important for mentors to consider theory and research on adult learning. Implications for the mentoring of prospective school leaders should emphasize reflection and questioning of the status quo while clarifying, challenging, and/or strengthening one’s individual values, beliefs, and patterns of thinking (Lambert et al., 2002).

In 1904, Dewey argued that teacher preparation needed to combine theoretical and practical learning (Shulman, 1998). Dewey called for teacher preparation programs to move forward from the traditional methods found in normal schools that focused on the skills of teaching in an internship model, toward a laboratory model providing practical experience to build on theoretical learning. He also emphasized the importance of teaching to instill “intellectual methods” of the profession rather than expecting
graduates to be immediate “masters of the craft” (Shulman, 1998, p. 513). Teachers need to develop an inquisitive and reflective nature. Shulman brings Dewey’s rationale to our current state of teacher preparation stating that as professional training, principal preparation programs need to emphasize theory, technical practice, and moral reflection (1998).

To support educational professionals in developing theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice, many universities employ mentoring in their teacher preparation programs. Teachers who do not have mentoring in their pre-service and early-service teaching leave the profession 70% more frequently than those who received mentoring (Jones & Pauley, 2004). Mentoring has an impact on the sustainability of teachers. An effective mentoring program takes place within a trusting relationship with a clear purpose to develop understandings and offers opportunities for coached application of learning and reflection focusing on praxis, or the practice of reflection, followed by application of new ideas and reflective dialogue with a peer (Jones & Pauley, 2004).

The residency, or student teaching experience, has the potential to have a significant impact on shaping a new teacher’s beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, cooperating teachers are rarely provided with mentor training to support them in this important role (Russell & Russell, 2011). After receiving targeted training on mentor strategies, nine teacher mentors expressed the importance of developing a relationship with their protégés built on common purpose, the need to provide opportunities for safe application of theoretical learning, and reflective practice (Russell & Russell, 2011).
Peer coaching has been an informal mode of teacher professional development for years, and in the late 20th century formal instructional coaching had been adopted by many school districts across the nation (Sweeney, 2003). Lyons and Pinnell (2001) found that the most effective literacy instructional coaches had the content knowledge to observe and identify elements of quality teaching; the ability to select key points to use to develop new learning; the ability to engage the teacher in reflection; and the ability to develop a trusting relation where feedback was welcome and valued (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). The University of Aberdeen developed a coaching continuum that recognized the balance coaches need to establish in knowing when to push a protégé by giving information and when to pull by helping them reflectively problem-solve (Figure 2).
Figure 2. Coaching Continuum

Although the goal is to coach for independence, there are times when consultation and collaboration are also appropriate (Costa & Garmston, 2007). Cognitive coaching was developed by Costa and Garmston as a tool to help people mediate their thinking about content. In a quest to achieve “holonomy”, or the capacity for both autonomous and interdependent high performance, individuals may need coaching in any of five identified states of mind: efficacy, flexibility, craftsmanship, consciousness, or interdependence (Costa & Garmston, 2007). Yet before any coaching can be successful, a coach needs to establish trust and rapport. It is also paramount to take into account adult learning theory in designing programs to develop aspiring educators. These
theories underlie the work of mentors in working with aspiring school leaders in the program under examination.

Constructivist learning theory supports the rationale for peer mentoring in order to provide modeling and social context. Constructivists believe that all knowledge is constructed through experience. Piaget believed that students must be actively engaged in their learning, deemphasizing the teacher providing information and emphasizing the student pursuing their own learning (Noddings, 2012). Social constructivists, such as Vygotsky in 1962, go a step further believing that students develop their knowledge and seek meaning through social interactions. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development refers to the gap between skills the student has independently and the skills the student has with the support of modeling or in collaboration with more experienced peers (Noddings, 2012). This zone is tapped to achieve higher levels of understanding by revealing new information for the learner to ascertain. In practice, constructivist teaching has the goal of introducing fundamental knowledge and skills as well as the development of critical thinking, collaboration, and individual reflection (Rolloff, 2010). This level of reflection is well suited for use by mentors.

Social constructivism emphasizes relationships and the context of the learning as being of vital importance, assuming the individual is actively building understanding while also becoming part of the culture in which they are learning. Socially constructed learning leads to both individual and social transformations (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). In order to be successful, the mentor must strive for the learner developing his or her own understandings through reflection and the addition of critical thinking. Reflection and metacognition are important for the learners to gain knowledge through
their experiences and beliefs, and learners must be involved in assessing their own learning.

All people bring their individual schemas or mental models to their work and learning; these have been shaped by individual values, beliefs, experiences, and perceptions (Senge, 1990). As a constructivist leader, it is essential to create learning cultures and communities where teachers can create meaning together. In developing leaders, it is equally important that we create the conditions for reflection, inquiry, and social interaction with an experienced peer. In order to lead the schools of the 21st century, we need leaders who can think, act, and lead in new ways. To be such a leader, one must have:

- A sense of purpose and ethics
- Facilitation skills
- Understanding of constructivist learning
- Understanding of change
- Understanding of context of school community
- An intention to redistribute power and authority
- Personal courage, risk taking, low ego needs and a sense of possibilities (Lambert et al. p, 206, 2002)

Lambert et al. (2002) proposed six design principles for developing new school leaders. The following principles and the corresponding questions they answer also apply to the framing of mentoring relationships.
Table 1.
*Reciprocal Processes as Design Principles for Leadership Development Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Principles</th>
<th>Questions and Needs of Adult Learners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusting</td>
<td>Who are we and am I safe here? – safe context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposing</td>
<td>Where are we going? – desired growth and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>How will we get there? – action and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing</td>
<td>What are we working on and learning about? – authentic context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reframing</td>
<td>How else might we/I view this? – habits of mind/metacognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming</td>
<td>How far have we come? What difference are we making? – moral purpose and new commitment to values</td>
</tr>
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</table>

These design principles reflect the needs of adult learners beyond the acquisition of technical skills. The learning of protégés can be enhanced when mentors set a context and desired purpose for their work, provide opportunities for their protégés to engage in authentic work, and encourage reflection on other possibilities and the moral purpose of the work. These principles support a protégé’s development of theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice.

People construct meaning through conversation. Therefore, the linguistic choices we make can accelerate or delay learning. Three linguistic moves that can be utilized to increase meaning making are questioning, paraphrasing, and the reflective pause (Lambert et al., 2002). Mentors must learn how to pose questions that are open-ended and help others construct meaning. Rhetorical questions often shut down thinking. Categorical questions that ask what, where, or why can help mentors and their protégés collect data on the situation, yet they do not lead to higher levels of reflection. Cross-categorical questions are open-ended and encourage the development of meaning (Lambert et al., 2002). Paraphrasing clarifies meaning and can also connect that meaning
to emotions or the goal. Reflection takes time and as a mentor one must become comfortable with silence. Pausing provides the time and space for reflection (Lambert et al., 2002).

**Summary**

Principal leadership is pivotal in creating positive school cultures and supporting teacher effectiveness in order to ensure success for all students. Applying the research behind transformational, primal, and sustainable leadership, school leaders can make the transition from being managers to being the instructional leaders our schools need.

Mentoring can provide a vehicle through which aspiring principals can develop the skills and responsibilities of the job while also refining their individual values and beliefs through reflection.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines the method utilized in this study. The following topics are discussed in this chapter: the introduction to the selected methodology and research design; the design of this study; context and participant selection; instrumentation; data analysis procedures; limitations and ethical concerns; and the researcher’s bias.

Introduction and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to identify the perspectives and practices employed in mentoring relationships. This multiple case study design used narratives to provide in-depth details of leadership mentoring with the mentor as the unit of analysis. Using a multiple case design allowed for documentation of the unique actions and relationships of mentors and principal preparation program protégés as well as analysis across cases to identify common actions and aspects of the mentoring relationship in common.

This study addressed the following research question: What are the perspectives and practices of principals who mentor aspiring leaders and what do the aspiring leaders identify as effective mentor practice?

Research Design

Qualitative research seeks to describe, understand, and explain (Creswell, 2007). In order to better understand the characteristics and practices of mentors who prepare future leaders, it was important to understand the actions of mentors as perceived by the mentors and their protégés. First person accounts, complemented by observation and
artifacts to document practices, painted a picture of mentoring which intended to build
capacity for principal leadership in others. The flexibility afforded by a qualitative
approach allowed the participants to define their experience in their own words.

Case study has a long history beginning in Europe and reaching popularity early
in the 20th century in 1935 at the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago.
Through the middle of the 20th century, case study methodology was criticized for not
being scientific enough to be considered research; additionally, the inherently small
sample size would not allow for generalizability (Tellis, 1997). Yin challenged this
criticism by developing specific steps to follow in case study research, clarifying that
while the results of case study research may not be generalizable to the population, they
can be generalized to theory (Yin, 2009).

Case studies examine the experience of the case within a specific context. In
addition to the perspective offered by single case studies, multiple case studies enable
analysis of the experiences across a selection of cases that illustrate a common focus of
interest to the research. It is through examining these individual cases that one is able to
make sense of the common thread, or the quintain, that they share (Stake, 2006). The
quintain is the “characteristic or phenomenon” that the individual cases within a multiple
case study share (Casey & Houghton, 2010). Stake (2006) stated, that multiple case
studies start with the quintain; then the researcher examines individual cases to determine
similarities and differences among them. The ultimate goal of multiple case study is to
better understand the quintain. In this study, the quintain consisted of the aspects of
professional practice: theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice (Shulman, 1998).

In order to identify assertions regarding the quintain, the researcher coded transcripts for themes, then matched the synthesized practices against the theoretical framework. The researcher focused first on the individual cases, or the particular, and then transitioned into cross-case analysis which moved toward understanding both unique and potentially generalizable aspects of the cases. It was the responsibility of the researcher to establish the appropriate balance between the individual cases and the quintain, or common characteristics, in her specific research topic. Stake (2006) referred to this conflict between examining the individual cases and emphasizing the overarching theme as “The Case-Quintain Dilemma.” Value can be found in both the specific examples within individual cases and the more general learning across cases. In investigating each individual case, the researcher needed to be aware of what made each case unique as well as how it provided information to better understand the quintain.

Purposive sampling is applied in multiple-case studies to ensure that the included cases provide an opportunity to learn about the quintain, while also offering the perspective of a variety of contexts (Stake, 2006). In determining the number of cases to include, the researcher must select enough cases to have adequate data on the quintain, yet a small enough number of cases to still know each of them well. Stake (2006) recommended that researchers select between four and 10 cases, stating that in some circumstances the researcher may be able to describe the quintain in three more extensive cases. Including a minimum of three cases with a minimum of three data sources in each
of the cases allows for triangulation of data both within cases and across cases in relation to the quintain. The researcher looks to confirm key assertions that arise from one data source via triangulation with resonant findings from other data sources. When determining if triangulation is warranted, Stake (2006) recommended that any critical or controversial claims must have triangulated evidence while trivial information or an individual’s interpretation do not call for triangulation.

Observation, either by the researcher or through participant accounts collected through interviews, is the most frequently employed research tool in case study research (Stake, 2006). Each individual case within a multiple case study needs to be thoroughly explored through interviews, observations, and collected documents. These observations also need to be nested within contextual elements and prior research in the area of the quintain.

Multiple case studies begin with a thorough study of the individual cases. Each case needs to be summarized to share both what was learned and what still needs to be studied. The difference between single case studies and multiple case studies is the cross-case analysis. Findings from individual cases are used to develop assertions that illustrate or lead to better understanding of the themes of the overarching quintain. This is when the researcher needs to establish a balance between the generality of the themes and the specific differences that illustrate how the quintain manifests itself in different contexts. Stake (2006) recommended that the researcher establish a “case-quintain dialectic” to determine how to communicate the uniqueness of each case while also building evidence toward the themes of the quintain. The assertions from each case
should not simply be listed according to the themes they illustrate because the researcher must acknowledge the influence of each individual context. Stake (2006) developed three processes for cross-case analysis: a deep analysis of individual case findings; a merged case findings process that focuses on individual cases yet also merges the findings in a cross-case analysis; and a factor analysis focusing primarily on the quintain. The researcher is charged with selecting the track that makes the most sense for his or her particular study. This study took Stake’s (2006) second recommended track which emphasized both individual case findings and the cross-case assertions.

**Study Design**

This study utilized a collection of multiple sources of data within a multiple case study, to provide in-depth details of leadership mentoring. Using a multiple case study design allowed documentation of the unique actions and relationships in the mentor relationships being studied, while examining these sites within the context of a larger school district and principal preparation program allowed the researcher to seek themes and consistencies among the cases. Following the definition of case study developed by Merriam (2009), this study was particularistic as it focused only on three experienced principal mentors and the individuals they have mentored. The researcher created case study narratives from the data that represent participant perceptions of the mentoring process through their experience.

In order to examine the practices of mentor principals as experienced by the mentors and their protégés, this study followed the multiple case study organization developed by Stake (2006). Employing a collective approach to case study and repeating
the same data collection methods with each of three mentor cases increased the internal and external validity of the data (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2009) defined three types of case study research: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Exploratory studies begin open ended without a specific focus and are often precursors to the development of research questions. Explanatory cases studies are used to determine cause or to explain connections between variables. Descriptive studies look for patterns to develop a theory.

This study took an exploratory approach to investigate common characteristics and practices of principal mentors and the experiences of their protégés, while also sharing the specific description of each individual case. It is the ability to compare and contrast data that lends power to the case study approach.

Three individual cases were identified as relevant to the study’s quintain (common characteristic among the cases) of the practices of mentor principals within a district and university sponsored principal preparation program. Data were obtained via interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts identified through the interview or observation process. Once individual cases were identified, triangulation was ensured within each case by identifying three individuals to interview (the mentor, current protégé, and a previous protégé); other data included observations and collected artifacts. While conducting interviews, the researcher asked each participant to share examples of tools that helped facilitate the mentoring process such as spreadsheets, meeting notes, or articles. Data were collected from one case at a time in order to understand the unique context and contributions of each case. Stake (2006) recommended organizing the data
from each case by listing the topics that surfaced in the case, identifying which issues arose in each topic area and collecting quotes that illustrate each topic.

The quintain of the multiple case study was to identify common mentor practices aligned with the aspects of professional practice (theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice) among the included cases. Identified practices were aligned with themes regarding mentoring identified in the existing literature: how mentoring practices supported the development of the protégés’ theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice as a leader (Shulman, 1998). These themes were then illustrated with issues that arose in the individual cases and assertions developed through the cross-case analysis.

**Context and Participant Selection**

**Context selection.** The principal preparation program at the center of this study was recognized by the US Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement of School Leadership and the Wallace Foundation. This recognition marked the program as being innovative and offering the potential to demonstrate principal preparation that meets the needs of 21st century schools. The urban school district and a local university partnered to design the program to develop effective school leaders equipped to build community, work collaboratively, empower others, and create organizational change.

The principal preparation program emphasized hands-on learning within a school setting and held the values of developing leaders who communicate openly and honestly, hold themselves and others to high standards, are action-oriented, value diversity, and
create equitable learning environments. The principal preparation program was an appropriate setting for this study because the curriculum of the coursework aligned with the theoretical framework of the study by addressing theoretical understanding, technical skills, and moral reflective practice, yet mentors in the program received no explicit training about specific strategies.

In order to operationalize the level of change emphasized in the university and school district principal preparation program, the participants needed to think systematically, lead second-order change, question the existing bureaucracy, and manage strategically (Korach, 2011). The program was predicated upon the shift to adaptive leadership from the traditional technical model. Participants were encouraged to take leadership actions that challenged the status quo and shifted the mental models of school staffs in order to achieve second-order change. Rather than focusing on changing structures within a school, prospective leaders learned systems theory, the power of school culture, and how to institute change by closing the gap between the espoused theories and theories in action of themselves and the teachers at their schools (Korach, 2008).

Each participant in this highly selective cohort-model principal preparation program engaged in research-based learning in an internship with a veteran mentor principal. Working with their mentor, each protégé completed five projects over a 10-month period including an Organizational Diagnosis, a personalized Instructional Leadership project, and projects focusing on Family/Guardian and Community Engagement; Student Services and Supervision; and Evaluation and Management. The
themes of vision/ethics/leadership, culture/climate/equity, internal/external collaborations, student/staff/family learning, and management/supervision/evaluation were woven through these projects and were central to coaching conversations between protégés and their mentor principals (Korach, 2011). At the time of the study, the principal preparation program had no specific criteria for selecting mentor principals nor for determining if they had effective mentoring skills.

**Participant selection.** Historical data of mentors participating in the principal preparation program were analyzed to identify mentors who met the following criteria:

- mentored a minimum of three protégés through the principal preparation program
- at least one former protégé currently working as a principal
- currently working as a principal
- currently mentoring a protégé through the principal preparation program

Six mentors met the first two criteria, however two of these mentors had retired and one mentor left the district. The three remaining mentors became the cases for this study.

One principal, identified as Jane Smith in this study, had mentored seven protégés in the principal preparation program over a period of seven years and had three former protégés serving as current principals. Her current protégé Sarah Victor, current resident Cara Lange, and former protégé Tom Jones were also included in this study.

Carla Mendez, another mentor principal had mentored four protégés over a period of four years with one former protégé now in a principalship. Her current protégé Barb Barnum and former protégé Lisa Ford participated in this study.
Joe Stone, was the final principal mentor. Joe had mentored three protégés in three years with one former protégé now working as a principal. His current protégé Valerie Whitt and former protégé Ben London were participants in this study.

Using the specified criteria to identify mentors increased the likelihood that the selected cases provided valuable information. Interviewing former protégés who were in positions as school leaders offered a more reflective perspective on how the coaching of the mentor impacted the protégé’s later professional practice. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study.

**Instrumentation**

Data sources from each of the three sites included an initial interview with the principal mentor, an interview with each of the protégés (past and present), observation notes from observing principal and protégé interactions, artifacts of interactions between the mentor and protégé, and a follow-up interview with the principal mentor and each of the interviewed protégés in order to validate and extend the earlier data source. Each of these data sources is defined below:

**Interviews.** The questions (Appendix A, B, and C) posed to principal mentors and their protégés were structured in order to have consistency among the three cases while allowing for the participants to share additional information they believed was pertinent to the success of the mentor relationship. The aspects of professional practice (theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice) informed the development of the interview protocol. The researcher piloted interview questions with both mentors and protégés who participated in the examined program and mentors and
protégés from other principal preparation programs to ensure that the questions were universally comprehensible.

The researcher took a neo-positivist stance to minimize bias while allowing the participants to share what they believed was pertinent information (Merriam, 2009). Questions were tested through pilot interviews with principal mentors and former protégés not participating in the study, both from the examined principal preparation program and from other programs, prior to beginning the research. “Why” questions were avoided as they often imply causation, which is not the intent of this study (Merriam, 2009). Interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed to capture quotes and prevalent practices. The interview guide was created to uncover practices in alignment with the professional practice framework (Appendices A, B and C.)

**Observations.** Two observations of each principal mentor and protégé pair focused on their activities and interactions as well as the content and structure of their conversation. Observations were always conducted with both the mentor and protégé simultaneously in order document their interactions. Observations were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed to capture quotes and prevalent practices. The researcher took anecdotal notes during observations to describe the visual aspects of the interactions between the mentor and protégé. Transcripts from observations were open-coded like the interviews with specific quotes attributed to either the mentor or the protégé.

**Artifacts.** Any documents or tools referenced in the interviews or observations were collected by the researcher. Tools mentioned by participants are noted or provided in Chapter Four.
Data Analysis Procedures

In order to organize the data collected from each site, the researcher collected and analyzed the data one case at a time. A member check allowed each participant from the first site to review and validate the transcripts before the researcher began analysis. Interviews and observations were coded and analyzed for the first site before moving onto the subsequent cases. Data were open coded in an inductive manner, beginning with the transcripts from mentor interviews and observations to develop initial themes; the coding then shifted to a more deductive approach with the additional transcripts using the language of the initial themes identified in the mentor transcripts, while allowing for unique or disconfirming ideas to be included as well.

**Interview analysis.** Transcripts from interviews and observations with the mentors were open-coded in an inductive manner in order to identify initial themes for the case. Coding of the remaining interviews with the current and former protégés shifted to more of a deductive approach, looking for evidence of the themes identified in the analysis of the mentor transcripts, while also noting in analysis any additional themes or ideas not aligned with the themes identified by the mentor. After all the transcripts were coded, prominent themes were identified for each case.

After themes were identified for each case, these themes were analyzed to identify alignment and differences with the study’s theoretical framework of mentoring processes that support the protégé in developing theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice. (see Table 2)
Table 2. 
*Alignment of mentor principal practices with the “doing” and “being” of leadership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Instructional (doing)</th>
<th>Facilitative (being)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Skills (performing like a professional)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective Practice (making decisions and acting in a ethical manner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Understanding (thinking like a professional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Observation analysis.** Observation data were attributed to individual mentors and protégés and open coded in a process parallel to that employed with the interview data. Observation data and interview data were used together to illustrate the themes that were identified for each participant and across participants within a case. Observation data were not isolated within the study; rather they supported and further defined the themes identified through interviews. These data were included in the analysis to determine if and how the individual cases aligned with the theoretical framework of this study.

**Artifact analysis.** Artifacts were not identified in all cases; however any artifacts that were identified in interviews or observations were collected and analyzed to determine how they support the mentoring process.

**Cross case data analysis.** After prominent themes were identified for each case, practices that were prevalent all three cases were identified through the cross-case analysis. These cross-case practices were analyzed and coded according to the content of the mentoring process (theoretical understanding, technical skills, or reflective practice.)
After the individual case reports were completed, the researcher reread each report and completed Appendixes G, H, and I (adapted from Stake, 2006) to identify the prominence of each theme in each case and the expected utility. In order to offer a depth of understanding of each individual case while also identifying findings to support or contradict the themes, this study followed Stake’s Track II for merging case findings with the assertions from the cross-case analysis. After the researcher summarized each case and identified case-specific key findings, she rated key findings as high (H), middle (M), or low (L) according to their prominence in the case. Once all findings were rated within each theme, the researcher selected the findings that provided the most information regarding the quintain. Reading these findings, the researcher developed potential assertions from the most prominent findings found in all three cases and recorded them in a chart (see Appendix J). Atypical findings that did not align with the other cases were also included. The final assertions were a combination of cross-case assertions as well as case specific assertions.

The analysis of the data took the form of pattern matching between the data at the first site and the theoretical orientation established by the literature. As the researcher collected and analyzed data from subsequent sites, the pattern matching grew into explanation building (Yin, 2009). This iterative process resulted in a refined theory of the characteristics of mentoring for new school leaders. Taking an explanation building approach to the data analysis had the potential to take the theory away from the original research questions. To avoid this error, the researcher continued to come back to the original research question while laying the framework over each site’s data.
The researcher used a theoretical proposition developed from existing literature on leadership mentoring as the lens through which to conduct a cross-case analysis of the data. The three components of professional practice: theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice were the themes applied to individual cases as well as the mentoring foci identified in the cross-case analysis. The patterns that developed at each individual site, as well as across cases, either confirmed the initial themes identified in existing literature or offered alternative explanations of the strategies identified by mentor principals as being effective.

**Limitations and Ethical Concerns**

An inherent limitation of case study research is that the data were collected from a limited sample. The findings from the observations and interviews from three sites were not generalizable; however, the rich description of the cases could provide insights to support other mentors in their work. Readers of the study may be able to connect to the stories and create meaning to apply to their own contexts. (Merriam, 2009). The identification of mentors in this study was limited to the definition of mentoring used by those who have developed the principal preparation program and was guided by the feedback from previous protégés. The researcher acknowledged that these selection criteria were limited to the perceptions of previous principal protégés and so are not empirical proof of effective mentoring.

The selection criteria of the principal preparation program included demonstrations of leadership and self-awareness; therefore the protégés were likely to be
self-motivated learners. It cannot be assumed that the mentor was the only factor in the learning of these selected protégés over the course of the study.

Because of the experience level of the mentors and the fact that they have had former protégés become school principals, the mentor relationships included in this study may tend to be more successful than other mentoring relationships. Since the interviews and observations took place in the spring, mentors and their protégés had at least seven months to develop relationships prior to their participation. The timing of the interviews excluded the possibility of collecting data while relationships were just beginning to develop.

**Researcher Bias**

Since the researcher was also a principal in the district in which the study took place and a graduate of the principal preparation program examined in the study, her own interpretations, values, and beliefs were likely to influence the findings. In an effort to reduce this impact, the researcher precisely replicated the process of data collection across the three sites and included the participants in validating the data, understanding that the participants were likely to have similar biases to those of the researcher.

**Summary**

Applying a multiple case study design, this study explored the perspectives and practices of mentor principals and how their mentoring influenced the work of their protégés. To preserve the unique findings for individual cases while synthesizing the results of the three cases, each case was first interpreted individually to share the unique themes of the case, then a cross case analysis allowed for the identification of common
practices across the three cases. The theoretical framework of professional practice, emphasizing the importance of professionals developing theoretical understandings, technical skills, and reflective practice, was used to organize the resulting themes of the cross-case analysis.
Chapter Four: Findings

This study explored the perspectives and practices of principal mentors and their protégés. The conversations and observations of mentors and those they mentored revealed the values and beliefs of the mentor, mentor practices and actions, and perspectives of the protégés regarding the impact of mentor practice on their leadership. The following chapter presents each case by providing a description of the responses from mentor principal and the protégés, the beliefs and mentor practices that emerged and the perspectives of his/her protégés. At the end of each case, a synthesis of prominent themes is presented.

Case I: Mentor Jane Smith

Jane Smith reopened Central School, located near downtown, as an “Innovation School” as part of a district-wide reform effort five years ago. As an “Innovation School”, the staff at Central had more local control than other schools in the district which gave them flexibility outside of the teacher contract in areas such as developing their school year calendar, determining curriculum, and hiring practices. The context of an “Innovation School” allowed the mentor, and in-turn her protégés, flexibility that may have influenced how the mentor defined the role of the protégé within the school.

Jane Smith had been a principal for nine years and mentored seven prospective school leaders over the course of seven years through the Grow Our Own principal preparation program in collaboration with the local university. Jane was also a graduate
of this principal preparation program. Three of her former protégés were school principals at the time of this study. One of her former protégés, Tom Jones, was in his second year as principal at an elementary school in the district and was interviewed for this study. During this study, she was mentoring two individuals: Sarah Victor, a participant in the Grow Our Own principal preparation program and an experienced assistant principal who was engaged in a residency program, Cara Lange. Cara was expected to be a school principal next year. Both of these prospective school leaders were interviewed for this study.

**Perspective of Mentor Jane Smith.** The interview and observations of Jane Smith’s mentoring work with her protégés contained continual reference to her own values and beliefs. The themes of developing trust; encouraging risk taking for learning; and connecting theory, practice, and values surfaced through her interview and observations.

**Developing trust.** A value that Jane Smith stated as foundational to the success of mentoring was the presence of trusting relationships. She said, “I think that you need to start as soon as possible to develop that relationship. Trust is key. You’ve got to have open communication with these people and you have to be able to trust them. They are going to see you at your best and they’re going to see you at your worst. And you’re going to see them at their best and at their worst.” The language that Jane used indicated that she was willing to be vulnerable with her protégés.

She began the mentoring relationship once she knew who she would be mentoring: even before her protégé was placed in her school. She saw it as her
responsibility to welcome her protégés and develop familiarity. Her language and actions throughout the study indicated that she believed that a trusting relationship needed to be reciprocal between the mentor and protégé. She also talked about the mentoring relationship as a model for the relationships the protégé was expected to develop with staff, students, and families.

Jane explained that she had to be able to trust her protégés to have integrity and to do their work in an ethical way. She wanted them to learn, and also required that they be an asset to the overall work of the school. She explained, “If I am going to give up something I know how to do and do well and pass the torch to you to take it to run with, I want you to understand that I am entrusting you with a lot and that means the world. It doesn’t mean I don’t know how to do it, and it doesn’t mean I couldn’t do it quicker and better. I need to trust that you are going to go about it is a very ethical way.” There has to be a good relationship.

In order for protégés to do their best learning, according to Jane, they had to be encouraged to challenge her thinking as much as she challenged theirs. They needed to know that they were heard and that their perspectives were valued. There needed to be the kind of relationship where the mentor could have difficult conversations with those she mentored.

Jane talked about the need for this relationship to be safe as well as open. She emphasized the importance of letting her protégés know they were accepted and appreciated. She said, “They can tell me anything, good, bad, or indifferent, and I will still support them in the end. I will support them just as much for their failures as for their
successes.” She recognized that they were learners and that they were human. “I believe you need to support them on a very basic level. Being honest with them. Provide them on going feedback and positive reinforcement.” They needed to feel that their work mattered and they were given an opportunity to grow.

Developing relationships with staff, students, and their families was taken very seriously by Jane; it seemed to be an ethical skill that was mentioned throughout the interviews and observations. “I think they need to be good communicators, and I do think they have to be able to empower others,” said Jane Smith in regard to the relational skills she set as a priority with her protégés. Jane Smith described these relationships and interactions with others as the means by which she assessed the true growth and effectiveness of her protégés. “You can see in their projects their understanding of the theory, and even how they begin to reflect on some of their leadership skills as well, but it’s in watching their interactions and the questions they ask and what they’re thinking about that really shows their work. Do people identify them as a leader? Do they identify them as a leader who is strong, who is focused and has high expectations for their teams?” Jane assessed her protégés’ progress as leaders by observing how they developed trusting relationships with staff, students, and the community.

Jane spoke about how she modeled the importance of relationships in her work every day. In turn, she watched how her protégés developed relationships with the school community as one way to assess their progress. “I think they have to be able to invest in the community and the students and the teachers and compel them to work toward
something.” The development of trust seemed to create the opportunity for both the mentor and protégé to take risks to increase their aptitude for learning.

**Encouraging risk taking for learning.** Trusting relationships open the door for genuine learning, but the safety to take risks allows the learning to actually occur. Jane spoke to the need for relationships that allowed her protégés to share when they were struggling. “If they are afraid that if they come in and say this didn’t go well that you will say there’s something wrong with you or they’re going to be judged by it, that closes off their learning. They’ve got to know that you will accept that they are learning.”

Jane shared that as a mentor she needed to listen to the perspectives of her protégé, even if it varied from her own perspective. “The relationship is key. If you can’t laugh with them and share with them, it limits how much they’ll really get out of their internship.” Jane emphasized the importance of always accepting her protégés, letting them know they were accepted and appreciated. Her words and actions reflected the belief that they needed to feel safe and accepted. Jane believed that protégés needed to know that their mentor was invested in them and cared about them. “It is my responsibility to model my own learning as I encourage and support the learning of my protégés.”

Jane’s goal was for her protégés to engage in genuine learning. “You know if they have genuine learning there will be mistakes and there’s going to be some failure. If they don’t feel supported to make those mistakes then I don’t think they’re going to be as vulnerable to really get out there and do that critical learning that they have to do.”
She also identified that learning from failure would help them develop resiliency.

“I think they have to be able to be resilient, know how to persevere.”

Jane extended this learning focus to the greater community. She spoke to the importance of a school wide learning community to support the learning of the protégé.

“This way, people understand that the protégé is learning just as everyone else is learning.” She talked about how the protégé’s learning became very public, so it was important for her as the mentor to provide feedback and recognition to help them continue to grow. The philosophy of the school needed to center around growth and learning for all. “So that the teachers understand the protégés are not just someone but somebody who’s learning.”

This community value of learning was articulated as being pervasive through the school culture. Describing the learning community at her school, Jane shared, “My teachers know they can push back and that if something isn’t working it’s okay to say it isn’t working and there’s no judgment passed upon that. It’s the kind of culture that’s been built around the school that you just put your ideas out there.” Problem solving in the school’s culture was collaborative. If something was not working it was okay to bring the problem to the table and the staff was expected to solve it together.

When teachers realized the protégés were learning just as they were learning, the opportunity to learn from one another became a possibility. Everyone needed to be learning and moving toward a common goal. This school culture gave protégés the opportunity to grow, while supporting the goals of the school. Jane said, “There needs to be an understanding that the protégé is going to come in and do some learning but while
they are doing their learning the student achievement and culture and overall wellness of
the school needs to continue. Everyone needs to be a contributing member to that. Not a
deficit.” Jane talked about the mentoring relationship mirroring the learning culture of
the school.

Connecting theory, practice, and values. Jane said that her protégés learned a lot
of theory in class and they experienced a lot of practical work at the school. She
articulated that being able to connect the theory, practice, and moral values behind why
they do the work is essential to become a great leader. Jane said, “They need to bridge
the moral dimension of connecting theory to what they are doing, and what they are
doing with why they do it. Without making these connections, I think they can be good
and potentially effective but they won’t be great.” Jane said that she discussed values
with her protégés frequently, as these values represented individual motives and a drive
to do the work. “You do have to connect it back a lot to the moral imperative of why we
do what we do. We talk about that a lot. I don’t think we ever have a conversation that
we go into and talk just about practice in itself,” said Jane Smith. “I’ll ask, did you show
your hand and your heart piece, because I am positive you were very capable of clearly
communicating the theories and the technical skills, showing the head part of what
happens, but were you able to really show your passion of why we do what we do and
what draws you to this work and how you engage in it and are in service to it?”

Jane wanted to make sure that her protégés understood the importance of having
passion, or heart, for their work. “They also have to value or see that there is a human
element to the work we do. So how you interact with students, how you interact with
families, those relationships are really key. It is actually around the human leadership skills. I watch to see if my protégés are asking only technical questions around is this a scheduling issue, or are they really starting to get at the heart of it. They need to feel their work is mattering.”

At Central School, they discussed their values frequently. As Jane explained it, “If something’s not going well, maybe it’s a clash of values. Understanding how our values drive our practice and connect with theory can be the key to being a great leader.” Jane credited the university course work for supporting her protégés in understanding the importance of their values. Most programs include theory and practice, but she believed the Grow Our Own program supported individuals in actually learning as they were unpacking their values and really who they were and what they valued. As a graduate of the program herself, Jane was familiar with the emphasis on the interconnectedness of theory, practice, and values, “So if I use the language of head, hand and heart, they know what I mean. They speak the same leadership language that I do.” She said that she frequently used language from the principal preparation program and demonstrated this in the observations.

**Practices of Mentor Jane Smith.** Jane Smith’s practices were the specific choices and actions she made in mentoring and creating a learning experience for her protégés. Valuing the collective learning of both the protégé and mentor; allowing her protégés to engage in real work; supporting her protégés’ learning through reflection as a thought partner; offering differentiated support; and holding protégés accountable; and
providing frequent feedback to her protégés in an informal setting were elements of her practice that were repeated through her interview and observations.

**Collective learning.** Jane Smith identified distributed leadership as an important skill for her protégés to develop. She modeled this value for her protégés. She established distributed leadership among her staff and was intentional about how she collaborated with her protégés. “They’ve left and gone on to other places and they do value that sense of distributed leadership or team or empowering others to do the work,” she said. Her practice of being vulnerable with her protégés allowed this collective learning to take place. There did not seem to be a rigid hierarchy between the mentor and her protégés. Her commitment to developing new leaders as a part of her work as a principal demonstrated that she saw the process as a professional growth opportunity for herself.

**Engage in real work.** In mentoring protégés, principal Jane Smith aligned their responsibilities with their strengths so they had the opportunity polish those skills to feel some sense of success. “You have to get a sense of who they are and put them into the system and set them up in that role so that they can bring some strengths to find some comfort and success.” She has used this practice with all of her protégés and also articulated the limitations of this practice. She shared, “Sometimes it locks them in and they may not get experience in the middle school, for example. You’ve got to think about other ways for them to interact with the larger system and the whole school. Assigning them a role and onboarding them, but also providing them with other opportunities to get outside of the role you locked them into.”
Due to this possible limitation, Jane learned to assign her protégés a variety of roles, both to polish their strengths but also to develop skills in areas where they would feel challenged or that might not have been their strengths. She took the time early in the year to get a sense of who her protégés were in order to put them into the system and set them up in that role so that they could use their strengths to find some comfort and success.

In addition to being thoughtful about how she coordinated the work for her protégés, Jane was also thoughtful about how she introduced her protégés to the community. She believed that the community’s view of role of the protégé was really critical to them being able to do the work. Jane Smith never referred to her protégés as protégés. “When we introduce them to the families, we are careful to say they are admin leaders,” she said. She was intentional to make sure they received the same respect as any other member of the administrative team. Everyone began to identify them as a go to person and a part of the community. She said, “This way they are viewed as a critical part of our school and a leader, not a gonna be leader, not an aspiring leader, but a leader.”

Jane believed that it was her responsibility to set up opportunities for her protégés to engage in real genuine work. This was initially accomplished through her assignment of roles that encompassed most of the responsibilities that she believed her protégés needed to develop as principals. Jane worked to ensure they were assigned well-defined roles that encompassed enough of the responsibilities that they would need to develop as principals. “In order for it to be most effective, they have to have almost their own mini
schools.” She found opportunities for her protégés to take responsibility for student discipline, parent concerns, and the evaluations and supervision of a team of so that they could have the big picture of all of the working elements for their group.

Jane said, “I don’t shelter them. They have to do the real work. I don’t cushion. They have to do whatever I am expected to do. They have to see what’s there and I share with them the challenges I work through each day.”

**Support reflection as a thought partner.** Jane understood that merely providing opportunities for learning was not enough; in order for the learning to take hold she needed to support her protégés in their reflection. She spoke to her responsibility to be a listener, a sounding board, and someone who had the skills to host a reflective conversation with her protégés. She worked to be a thought partner. She defined a thought partner as someone who challenges another’s thinking; causes one to modify or consider his or her assumptions or actions; or provides information that is provocative.

In regard to her protégés, Jane Smith said, “You have to provide time for them to reflect about their work just like with a teacher. Be able to sit down and kind of start a conversation to ask how did that go? What’s going well? What’s not going well? Not really providing them with answers but questions to think about how their work is going. Help them think through the challenges that they face and set plans to move forward.”

In both observations, Jane Smith asked questions of her protégé that encouraged her to think about and process the impact of her actions and how she might apply her learning in future contexts. “What were the shifts you saw in the teacher you were
working with? What did you learn from that about some systems or processes you may want to focus on?”

Jane also articulated that she needed to let her protégés struggle a bit; not always rescuing them. She viewed her role as a thought partner as helping her protégés through the struggle by helping them unpack the challenge. She helped them reflect on why they thought the situation arose, what they thought may have caused this to happen, and ultimately what they were going to do about it.

*Provide differentiated support.* This is the first year that Jane has had a resident in addition to a Grow Our Own protégé. Initially she approached the work of her resident the same way she did for her protégés, however she quickly realized that she needed to differentiate her approach. Her resident already had already had experience as an assistant principal prior to her year as a resident. She reflected, “I kind of used the same mind set and thinking or mental model of how to set her up in the school, I used the same strategies. Looking back, I had to think about that a little bit differently. Because she already had kind of the big picture, she had done work around a community, family unit, already done some work as well. She had been in a role. Now she’s coming and had already done a lot of the work that you would maybe need to do to become a principal. So she was just at a different stage in the residency.” Jane needed to focus on the resident’s gaps in a very short time frame because she had to be ready for a principalship the following year.

Jane used the needs of the school and the capabilities of the protégés as the basis for differentiated supports. She stated that she thought about what every individual
brought to the internship and then worked to set up opportunities and learning for them based upon who they were as individuals. She acknowledged that they were all working on different things because they had different areas of strength and need.

**Accountability.** Jane Smith also took accountability seriously and insisted that student achievement and the culture of the school continued to improve while the protégé was doing his or her learning. Speaking to this accountability, she said, “People seem to be supportive of protégés as long as they see the growth, I don’t think they are expecting them to be ready to be principal tomorrow as much as they are hoping they will improve over time.”

She said that her protégés preferred the more transformational approach to coaching. Her protégés said they didn’t want her to come in and rescue them because they wanted to identify what was working and what was not. They wanted her support so that they could figure out what supports they needed to continue to learn. In an observation, Jane Smith modeled this by saying, “How are you going to go listen, genuinely listen to their concerns? How are you going to validate and listen to the concerns? What are you going to do?” When something happened she did not only ask what happened and who was involved. Rather she asked why do you think that happened? What was at the heart of that?

Jane was continually gathering data beyond the tasks that the protégé accomplished. “How many people are going to them? If they keep coming to me for concerns instead of going to their admin leader, that tells me a lot. So if teachers are coming to me and saying they are not trusting this leader is going to take care of
whatever the issue is. If the secretaries avoid that person it tells me a lot. If parents want to meet with me and don’t see that problems are being resolved with them, that tells me a lot.”

Jane also paid attention to the types of questions they asked her. She listened to see if they were asking technical questions around an issue, or if they were starting to get at the heart of leadership. “I am evaluating them by the questions they ask me, by the things they say to me and I am watching them.”

Jane sometimes had to have protégés go back and do something again. She told them, “I need this to be done and I need it done better. What are you going to do about that?”

Meet frequently and informally. Jane met with her protégé and resident frequently in an informal setting. They met formally once a week as an administration team, and she saw them individually every day. “They have a lot of questions they’ll be asking in passing, or sometimes it’s not until 7 at night I get a phone call from a protégé saying I’m thinking about this. I think you just have to have a very open door to let those informal moments happens.”

She met formally with her resident and her resident’s executive coach once a month. These meetings gave the resident time to share goals and her progress toward meeting them. “She has more of a formalized learning plan, which is pretty good I think. It forces me to actually sit down and think about the feedback I will give her in that meeting and what it will look like.”
Jane provided ongoing feedback to her protégés to help them see their strengths and to mark some of the specific leadership moves they made. In one observation, Jane Smith commended Sarah’s communication skills. “Your approachability and your way with children and your way with their parents and the families and the teachers; those are the pieces that are really hard to coach in someone. They are there with you and in a short amount of time.” On another occasion she shared with Sarah, “You were able to provide a teacher with some hard feedback, but you have also been able to carry forward with him to get him the support he needs. Which is exciting. The shift happened, even though the hammer had to come down a little bit.”

In a coaching conversation, Jane Smith commended Sarah Victor’s heart for the work by sharing how others had noticed and acknowledged her approachability and her way with children, their parents, and the teachers. “Those are the pieces that are really hard to coach in someone,” said Jane Smith.

Jane Smith complimented the way Sarah developed relationships with people. “But entry is really huge. How do you enter in a way that is not all technical? How do you enter in a way that give you time to build up relationships while communicating that with people? How do you share that with people? How do you share this is who I am, this is how I see myself but at the same time backing that up with your actions?” She also acknowledged ways Sarah was transforming teachers, saying “You brought it to consciousness and he has been able to act on that. You’ve been pushed hard on some things. You begin to realize that when someone’s actions are counter to our values it’s like sandpaper to skin.”
Paraphrasing was a tool employed by Jane Smith throughout the observations. “You said a couple of things, you said create a place for people to be vulnerable and you stepped in and became engaged with the work. You can get so caught up when you have your own school that you can lose sight of the power of things you learned in this small case.” She also pointed out strengths to her protégé. “I think that you are very good at listening. You are able to make strides because they trust you; they trust you enough to provide vulnerability. People feel, wow, I can tell her what I’m struggling with and be really honest and she will guide me through thinking about what to do. She won’t do it for me but she won’t judge me either.”

She helped to label Sarah’s thinking by using the symbol of the Johari window. The Johari window was developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (1955.) to divide personal awareness into four different types, as represented by the quadrants: open, hidden, blind, and unknown. This tool was used by Jane to help Sarah develop the ability to reflect on her espoused theory versus her theory in action, or her core values versus her true actions. “This is who you’d say you are, this is how others view you. Are your actions aligning with that?” All of these actions and practices of feedback provided the protégé with information about how she was being perceived by others.

The mentoring practices demonstrated by Jane in her interview and observations were echoed in the interactions with her current and former protégés.

**Protégé Sarah Victor.** Sarah Victor was a kindergarten classroom teacher for three years before moving into a coaching role in an elementary school. She coached
teachers in grades K-2 in reading and writing strategies prior to being accepted into the Grow Our Own program and beginning her internship at Central School.

**Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Sarah Victor.** The interview with Sarah Victor and observations of her mentoring interactions with Jane Smith revealed the coaching behaviors that most influenced her own practices. The following narrative presents these behaviors and identifies alignment with the interviews and observations of Jane Smith.

Sarah identified that a trusting relationship was developed with Jane for her learning and success during her internship year. She acknowledged that the relationship with her mentor took time to develop and wasn’t present in September. Sarah shared, “For me, I think I am supported by her by her trusting me and giving me real responsibilities to do. I feel like that’s what I needed. I feel like that’s how I’m going to grow: by doing the real work.”

Sarah explained that Jane was an emotional support to her. Because their relationship was built on trust, Jane was able to be a good listener without Sarah feeling judged. Jane was able to give her protégés straight-forward constructive feedback and could challenge them to take risks.

Sarah found that the importance of trusting relationships also extended to her work with staff, students, parents, community members, and other people in the district. “It is my responsibility to make sure the teachers, students, and their parents know what I stand for so that they can trust me knowing we are in this work together.”
Sarah also echoed Jane’s description of the connection of theory, practice, and values. She described herself as a theory and practice person who relied on the theory she learned in class and conversations she had with Jane to guide her practice each day. Jane supported this connection between theory and practice by using the language of the theory Sarah learned in class and through recommending readings. Sarah gave the example of Jane helping her work through an issue, “She said ‘Let’s think about this from this angle’, and cited some theory to use as a lens. I feel like that opens the conversation for me to do the same, which is helpful and nice.”

Values were a part of almost every conversation Sarah said she had with her mentor and administrative team. “Our questions and decision making always go back to our values,” Sarah said. “They come up all the time because they are the heart of our work.”

At Central School, Sarah found that their work centered on the idea of everyone in the community being a learner. Because of this climate, she was able to learn not only from Jane and from her experiences, but also from her interactions with the leadership team and teachers.

While responsibilities may have been distributed, members of the team were also aware of everything that was happening and were welcome to be a part of the learning. “I feel like I’ve gotten to be a part of all of the pieces. I feel like the way that our team is structured it is not isolated,” Sarah said. The administration team met every Thursday morning to review the calendar and members of the team were welcomed to participate in
any upcoming projects. These actions and processes were a supportive structure of collective learning.

Jane gave Sarah the real work of being the administrative leader for ECE-1st grade and the team of specialists who taught co-curricular subjects such as art and physical education. She explained that she oversaw and was responsible for all of those teachers, students, families, and every aspect of those teams. She experienced every aspect of running a school on a small scale with the support of Jane in the next room. “I’m not called a protégé, so I wouldn’t describe my job as that of a protégé.”

Sarah felt supported by Jane’s trust in her and the real responsibilities she was trusted to accomplish. “She will throw me into situations that aren’t over my head. She helps to push me, but not if it’s something I’m not ready for.”

Sarah was in her element working with young children. As the administrative lead for kindergarten and 1st grade, Sarah was able to use her strengths to support the team while she grew as a leader. Sarah thought back on a reflective feedback conversation she had with a teacher that generated excitement and learning for both the teacher and herself. “I was just asking probing and critical questions of this teacher. Every time I asked her a question, she was like ‘Oh my gosh, I could do this!’ It was just such a fun conversation. She was getting excited and I was getting excited. I was like this work is so exciting. This is why I want to do this work. That was motivating to keep going in the midst of those feelings of self-doubt.”
Sarah believed that she was supported by the constant level of discussions and deliberations she shared with Jane. She appreciated the level of transparency Jane demonstrated by sharing her thinking and considering her a thought partner.

Sarah frequently approached Jane to tell her that she had a leadership challenge and needed to talk about it. Jane listened and they talked about the situation. Jane also used Sarah as a sounding board and thought partner. She would call Sarah into her office to talk through an email or a problem. “I think the fact that it’s mutual, I know that she values me and my input into her actions and decisions and it makes it a lot easier and a different experience for me to show the same vulnerability with her,” Sarah explained. “Thinking with her helps me feel a little bit better about everything.”

Sarah met with her mentor informally all of the time. “I feel like a day doesn’t go by that we don’t sit down and have some kind of reflective conversation about something.” Because of these frequent in-the-moment conversations, Sarah did not see the need for more formal conversations beyond those scheduled to discuss her class projects. She found these ongoing conversations to be more situational and timely, rather than a separate formal meeting.

Since their offices were connected, and Sarah saw Jane throughout the day, she was able to receive ongoing feedback on her work. Jane would sometimes mention feedback she received from a teacher or a comment of her impressions of a parent conversation or professional development session.

Sarah described a situation early in the year with an irate parent in her office. She was able to work through the situation herself in order to arrive at a positive solution.
Since Jane overheard the whole conversation, she was able to later give Sarah specific feedback. Because of their relationship, Sarah felt the feedback was more frequent and authentic. “Since the feedback is ongoing, I don’t have the need for formal feedback sessions.”

Sarah stated that she was held to high expectations by her mentor, but also by the school community. She felt supported to be successful, and understood that she was accountable to the community.

In addition to supporting the themes that emerged from the interviews and observations with Jane (developing trust; encouraging risk taking for learning; connecting theory, practice and values; collective learning; engaging in real work; reflection; accountability; and frequent and informal feedback), Sarah noted the power of Jane’s transparency. No one ever felt that there were secrets among the administrative team. All work was public. “Rarely if ever do I walk by and not know what’s happening in Jane’s office. There’s never a time that I don’t know what’s happening in her office and what the outcomes are that we are hoping for. I feel like she has helped me understand what her responsibilities are and what’s happening behind the scenes to help everything else happen. This supports me in my growth.”

**Resident Cara Lange.** Cara Lange brought experience as a high school teacher, instructional coach and assistant principal with her to Central School. She received her principal license through the Grow Our Own program three years prior to her enrollment in the Ready to Lead program. The intent of the Ready to Lead program was to prepare leaders to lead their own school the following year. As a part of the Ready to Lead
program, Cara was assigned an external executive coach in addition to her mentor. This aligned with Bloom’s recommendation that novice principals have the support of both a mentor to help them navigate the system and a coach to help foster personal and professional growth (2005). Cara was selected to be the principal of an elementary school the year following her residency.

**Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Cara Lange.** The interview with Cara disclosed the coaching behaviors that had the greatest impact on her this year. The interview with Cara did not align as closely to that of Jane as Sarah’s did. The following narrative presents influential mentoring behaviors from Cara’s perspective.

Cara found that connections to values were always a part of her conversations with Jane. She reflected on a situation with a teacher where Jane helped her realize that she was frustrated with the technical behaviors of the teacher, but she was even more upset because the actions of the teacher conflicted with her own values. “I realized that when I say that it rubs me the wrong way, it really is that it rubs my values the wrong way.”

Cara’s work in her residency focused on helping her fill any gaps so that she would be ready to lead her own school the following year. She used the district’s framework for school leadership to guide which the practices she emphasized. While working to fill these gaps, she understood that no matter how hard she worked during her residency there would be things she would encounter as a principal that she had not thought about. Therefore, she tried to connect all of her practices to her values. She
worked on knowing people not only according to what their jobs entailed, but also understanding who they were as human beings.

Cara spoke to her conscious need to “keep my head and heart connected,” through reflection and the moral imperative of the work of education. “I aim to do small things with love. I mean do every little thing, no matter how insignificant it seems, with your whole heart.”

Cara spoke to the distributed leadership she learned she needed to establish among her teacher teams. When she realized that the direction she was taking with the staff was not effective, she realized through conversations with Jane that she needed to build the systems with the teachers in order for them to feel ownership. While the original direction was clear to Cara, it was not understood or embraced by the staff. She learned that she needed to listen to their concerns and let them be a part of building a system to achieve a clear vision with specific benchmarks.

Beginning to let go of needing to have the answers, Cara began to ask questions of the teachers like, “How are we going to tackle that? What suggestions do you have? What kinds of levers do we have?” She found they began to function independently and were getting results for their students. Cara did not tell them what to do, rather she gave them the tools to build something. “You don’t build it; you let them build it so that it’s theirs.” She saw that the teachers were now invested in the work. They own it in a way they never could have if it was just presented to them. “I think that a principal really has to develop a vision but not in isolation. Develop a vision with stakeholders and then work with stakeholders to create concrete benchmarks toward that.”
Cara shared that distributed leadership was difficult because she was drawn to leadership to lead and make decisions. She said that this year was a good learning experience for her in terms of really working together as a team. She learned how to take feedback and really hear what everyone had to say.

While at Central School, Cara’s responsibility and work involved several dimensions. She worked on developing learning teams, establishing a Response to Intervention model, chairing the Student Intervention Team, and overseeing the special education department. Each of these assignments tied to her previous experience as an assistant principal.

She was in frequent and constant contact with Jane. “I don’t think a day goes by when we aren’t debriefing something,” Cara shared. She said that it was the conversations in the moment about the big picture and the small details that she found most meaningful. In these daily conversations, she was able to process with the team. She shared what happened, and Jane or one of her peers would ask, “How do you want to deal with this? Where do we go from here? What lesson can we learn from this?” These meetings were usually with whoever happened to be around. “Jane’s office is kind of a hub of activity,” she said. “I think there’s just a lot of processing that happens with whoever happens to be around.” She felt safe sharing a frustrating experience with her team and asking what ideas they had. She also asked for feedback on how she could have handled the situation differently.
Cara met monthly with Jane and her Ready to Lead advisor to review her leadership goals. “These meetings help me keep on track and give time for reflection, but I think the informal meetings are more helpful.”

Coming from a position where she had a lot more autonomy, Cara initially found frustration in working with an administrative team. She said that it had been good for her to accept and learn from feedback from others on her team. “Being open, I think you need to be able to take feedback well, which is something that I am really pushing myself on,” she shared. Cara said that she always listened, but this year she learned to also pay attention to body language and facial expressions as a form of feedback. When listening to feedback from teachers, she now accepted that their perception was their reality and she needed to listen to them.

While listening to feedback from teachers, Cara learned to ask questions to find out what the real concerns were and to find out how they saw her supporting them. She said that no one likes to hear that something is not working or that people are not happy, but she learned to, “Not only appear open, but having an open heart and open mind to hear what people need.” The focus that Jane had on building relationships and trust and providing feedback seemed to have a positive impact on Cara. “I feel particularly since I have been open to feedback I am really excited to hear what people have to say. Even the things that aren’t as positive because it makes me feel like that is how we are going to grow and move forward.”

Coming into the Ready to Lead program with experience as an Assistant Principal, Cara saw a need for differentiation of support. “We’re kind of at different
spots. I think we all need different things,” she says. While acknowledging that she had learned a great deal from each of her teammates, Cara said she found it frustrating that despite the fact they were all in really different places in their learning, their roles were all the same. She clarified that she did not believe she deserved more, however she said that an individual is learning different things in year three of a job than in year one or year two.

“Speaking about my own development, the things I would have needed pre-service to my first year as an assistant principal to where I am now are really different,” Cara explained. It is because of this need for differentiation that she was especially grateful for also having an executive coach through the Ready to Lead program.

“There’s really no map for that, which I really appreciate. It’s really about what you need,” she explained. She used her executive coach as an external sounding board. She appreciated that he was not an evaluator; in fact he was not even an educator. She had a different relationship with her outside executive coach than she could have had with a coworker because he did not have to be accountable for her performance.

**Former Protégé Tom Jones.** Tom Jones came to education with a background in mental health. He worked in special education before getting his principal licensure through the Grow Our Own program. After his internship at Central School, Tom stayed on staff as an assistant principal for two years before accepting a principalship at a school in the district. He had been a principal for two years at the time of this study.

**Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Tom Jones.** In his interview, Tom shared the coaching behaviors that had the greatest and most sustainable
impact on his practice now that he is a school principal. The following narrative presents the mentor practices that had the greatest impact on Tom, and identifies their alignment with the practices observed in Jane’s own words and actions.

Tom said that of all of the values he brought to the principalship, developing a positive school culture and building relationships and trust in the building were most important. He believed in a culture of accountability, high expectations, and a belief in kids, and also realized that nothing could be accomplished unless he had the trust of his teachers. He shared, “I was very proud and happy that on my principal perception survey, my highest score was in the areas of trust.”

Reflecting on his internship at Central School, Tom said that the leadership team talked about their values and how they affected their practice all of the time. A central value for the leadership team was their belief in all of their students. Values would also come up in preparing for a difficult conversation with a teacher who wasn’t matching the values of the school.

A key practice that Tom learned in his internship that he still practiced to this day was, “When in doubt, always go to your core values.” He said that he thought about his values in determining the best course of action every day. “When I’m planning my day, I’m thinking about what I am doing and how this is impacting my students.”

When becoming a principal, Tom was explicit about creating collective values with his staff. He shared that the values they developed as a school were very close to his personal values. He posted these values on his door to ensure that he saw them and thought about them every day. Tom acknowledged that at times he would behave in a
way that was counter to his values, but as long as he continued to go back to his values he was able to shift his practice back on track.

Tom’s primary growth area during his internship was instructional leadership because he had never had classroom experience. Jane challenged him to understand and to be able to identify effective teaching. “There were times she would say ‘Why don’t you go take a look at him, I’m going to take a look at him, let’s calibrate and see what you saw,’” he shared. This collaboration led to his greatest learning in his internship. The way Jane phrased this activity also demonstrated that she valued Tom’s perspective even though he had not been a teacher. She helped him develop his skills and wanted to include his perspective.

Tom also appreciated that Jane included him in other aspects of leading the school such as developing a budget. He learned how to maneuver through the budget and how to strategize to have the greatest impact on students. Jane included him in the process of using a white board to look at all of the funding sources and then they used their school vision as a guide as they decided how to allocate those funds for appropriate staffing.

Jane acknowledged and appreciated Tom’s background as a psychologist. Because of this, she included him in many difficult conversations with parents. Tom was able to be a support to Jane as she was a support to him.

Tom revealed that the internship experience that had the greatest impact on his own leadership as a principal was when he sat with the entire team at Central and they mapped out the vision for the school’s innovation plan. Over the course of about three separate meetings, the team of leaders and teachers mapped out the vision for school.
“That was the first time I had looked at a school specifically and mapped out that kind of vision,” said Tom. They looked at all of the components it took to run a quality school to positively affect students.

At Central School, Tom was involved in the big picture of the school in terms of the systems aspect of the organization of professional development, the organization of data team processes, observations and feedback cycles. He felt fortunate to not only have been exposed to the multi-faceted roles of a school leader but to also have learned some specific ways to engage others in the process. He brought several of these processes with him to his school including his organization of professional development and the specific observation and feedback cycle he employed with his teachers.

Tom felt that in his internship, he was basically treated as an assistant principal. There were specific aspects of the school for which he was responsible, yet he also collaborated with the administrative team in order to experience the full spectrum of responsibilities. “I would forget I was in my protégé year until I went to class,” he reflected. The school community thought that the protégés were assistant principals.

In his internship, Tom found that specific focus areas were identified for each of them based on their skill set. He felt that Jane believed in him and his competency as a psychologist and specialist in special education. Tom was able to take responsibility showing leadership quickly because of his expertise, and was able to gain the trust of the staff.

While Tom focused on restorative justice, student conduct and the student intervention team, another protégé in the school had his own areas of focus. Despite
these specific roles, Tom was able to learn from and with his fellow protégé and assistant principal. They were all involved in professional development planning, observations, and data analysis.

In his internship, Tom met with Jane one-on-one all the time. In addition to these in the moment conversations with his mentor, they had an administrative team meeting once a week where they talked through projects and upcoming responsibilities.

While appreciating the accessibility of his mentor and the frequency of their conversations, in retrospect Tom wished he would have had a more structured plan for mentoring with identified areas for growth and specific action steps he would take before the next meeting. As a principal, he saw the benefit of having meetings specifically dedicated to reviewing his personal areas of growth. Tom was responsible for reaching specific goals with the coach with whom he works as a principal. He had a targeted conversation with his coach, and they set a specific agenda for their next meeting. “I need that kind of structure,” said Tom.

A practice that Tom observed consistently at Central School was Jane’s ability to hold her teachers, leadership team, and herself accountable. She had high expectations for the work each individual contributed to the school and held each one accountable for working for what was best for the students. Tom brought this practice with him when he became a principal. “Of all of the practices that I brought to the principalship, what I learned in my internship was probably the need to hold teachers accountable to the values in a school. Not being fearful about the hard conversations.”
Thinking outside of the box. The most influential learning from Tom’s internship was his learning how to think outside of the standard parameters. While being a part of developing the innovation plan at Central, Tom realized the potential for pushing the standard boundaries of how schools were organized. At his own school, Tom pushed the thinking of his administrative team and staff by asking them why they were making the decisions they were. He encouraged creative problem solving in order to create the best systems to facilitate student success.

“I think now it’s come full circle and my staff is pushing me to think outside the box. If I’m not thinking deeper, then they’re pushing me to do it,” Tom laughed. It was liberating for Tom to learn that he did not have to necessarily stay within this “traditional school” box. It was possible and important to push back and say, “This is what we believe is best.” Tom set the tone for brainstorming by asking his team if there was a creative way they could think about accomplishing their goals. By setting a tone for innovation, he found that his staff began to take risks and shared new ideas. He would ask, “How can we do this differently than all of these traditional ways you hear schools are doing professional development? Let’s do it differently.”

After his experience at Central School, Tom felt comfortable challenging district parameters. He told the story of a time he told his supervising superintendent, “This is what I believe is best for my students and this is why.”

“They may come back and say no,” said Tom, “but at least I know we are striving to do what’s in the best interest of our students.”
Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case I. Table Three synthesizes the themes that surfaced through interviews and observations with the mentor, protégé, resident, and former protégé in Case II.
Table 3

*Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case I*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Alignment with Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Mentor Perspectives (values and beliefs that inform mentoring)</th>
<th>Mentor Jane Smith</th>
<th>Protégé Sarah Victor</th>
<th>Resident Cara Lange</th>
<th>Former Protégé Tom Jones</th>
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<td>Thinking outside of the box</td>
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* Prominent theme within the case.
In addition to summarizing the findings within Case I, Table three reveals that the following aspects of mentoring perspectives and practices were most prominent in the case:

- Trust
- Connecting theory, practice and values
- Collective learning
- Real work
- Frequent and informal feedback
- Accountability

The mentor practices revealed through the interviews and observations reflect all categories of professional practices that comprise the theoretical framework of this study; how mentors foster their protégés understanding of theory, development of technical skills, and the practice of reflection grounded in personal values. While all three aspects of the theoretical framework are represented in the mentor perspectives and practices, the connections to the aspects of professional practice are not always discrete. Several of the practices observed, such as connecting theory, practice, and values, as well as offering frequent and informal feedback to the protégés, supported the development of theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice.

**Case II: Mentor Carla Mendez**

Carla Mendez was the principal at a district middle school for five years before being recruited to open a new 6th-12th grade school called Plains Arts Academy. She had been the principal at Plains Arts Academy for three years at the time of this study.
Carla Mendez had mentored four prospective school leaders over the course of four years through the Grow Our Own principal preparation program in collaboration with the local university. One of her former protégés, Lisa Ford, was in her second year as principal at an elementary school in the district and was interviewed as a part of this study. At the time of this study, Carla was mentoring a protégé, Barb Barnum, through the Grow Our Own principal preparation. Barb was also interviewed for this study.

**Perspectives of Mentor Carla Mendez.** Throughout her interview and observations, Carla’s own values and beliefs in relation to mentoring and leadership were referenced. Her perspective informed the decisions she made with her protégés and influenced the learning environment she created for them. In her interview and observations, Carla mentioned the need for developing trust in working with her protégés as well as the need for a clear definition of the mentor’s role and a good fit between mentor and protégé. These themes reflect her personal values and beliefs.

**Developing trust.** Carla and her protégé Barb developed a close relationship quickly in the year, partly because Barb lost her father suddenly in the beginning of the school year. “We emotionally grew together during that time and our strong relationship has allowed us to accomplish a lot in our learning and growth professionally as well.” Carla said she missed Barb over breaks and even when she went to class. “We are more than just colleagues, we are friends.”

Carla attributed her value of trusting relationships in part to her relationship with her own mentor when she was an assistant principal. “She and I had a really great relationship because she was super honest with me. She showed how to bring people in.”
She credited another mentor in teaching her the value of being reflective, thoughtful, and humble in order to listen to other people’s ideas. Thinking of the relationships her former supervisor built among the middle school principals of the district, she said, “Those relationships made me believe and buy into the idea that relationships are the most important part of our work.”

Carla prioritized developing relationships with her administrative team by hosting a retreat every summer. “The point of the leadership retreat is to really enjoy one another and spend time and space getting to know one another.” She asked everyone to bring a picture of themselves when they were at their happiest; the team then shared stories of what brings them their greatest joy.

As a symbol of the importance of their relationships and the important work they were going to accomplish together, Carla’s team went on a quiet hike during which they reflected on their goals for the year and what they wanted the year to look like. At the end of the hike, they each chose a rock the represented how they were feeling as well as their commitment to the team. Each member of the team brought his or her rock back to school and set it on his or her desk. Carla showed the line of rocks on her windowsill from previous retreats. “So here are my rocks from past years. They remind me of our time together and that commitment that we made to each other and to this journey that we’ve started.”

Speaking of a situation with another protégé, Carla shared that there was a lack of trust. “I can’t live in that world of mistrust. I knew that and she couldn’t either, so we
had to really spend time building a sense of trust so that she could take risks to do some real learning.”

**Mentor’s role.** Carla shared that she viewed the act of creating positive leaders in the district as an extension of her responsibilities as a principal. She believed that district leaders had an ethical call to invest in nurturing future leaders and she took her role as a mentor seriously. “The internship experience gets defined so much by how the mentor is coming into this relationship,” she reflected. She was clear that mentors needed to understand the importance of their work with protégés and also needed to be thoughtful about why they wanted a protégé. “It is not just an extra person in my building to have as an inexpensive or free assistant principal. It is my responsibility as a mentor to help them learn.”

Carla believed that the role of the mentor was vital in developing new leaders, yet she did not see the district stressing or defining this important role. “To what end are we leveraging the internship for real learning leadership? It is important to be a reflective practitioner and a learner as the mentor. I think having clear training and guidelines for mentors would increase the quality of the protégés’ experiences.”

**Importance of fit.** Carla expressed that a good fit between the mentor and protégé could make or break a learning experience. She said, “I think that the two of us started realizing how much easier work is when you really enjoy it and enjoy who you work with. Barb drives over an hour to get to work every day, yet she is choosing to come back next year because we make a great team.”
Carla recommended having some sort of strengths-based survey to identify the strengths of both the protégés and mentors or a values inventory to pair mentors and protégés with similar values. “If we would have had a values inventory, I would have seen her work ethic and organization and communication and follow through. All of those would have come through and I would say that’s what I value, we would make a good pair.”

This is not to say that Carla believed she needed a protégé with her strengths. “I can see situations where it would be helpful to have a protégé with a different skill set or style from mine.” Reflecting on her protégé from the previous year, Carla shared the difference between their styles. “I am really concrete and organized and he was really thoughtful and abstract and an artist. We have totally different styles, yet we value the same things so it worked.”

Carla believed that protégés should have a voice in selecting the mentor they work with rather than just the mentor selecting a protégé. “I think if the experience is going to be rich for both people, there needs to be much more of a mutual process.” “At the end of the day, you have to decide to what degree happiness in your job has for sustaining your job. There are days when you get kicked down all day. So being able to do that and find laughter and joy in it with someone else has really helped.”

**Practices of Mentor Carla Mendez.** Carla made intentional choices regarding how she approached the work and learning of her protégés. These choices reflected her experiences and values and ultimately informed the practices she employed with her protégés on a daily basis. Practices referenced in her interview and observations were
proximity with her protégés; collective learning; providing opportunities to engage in real work; providing frequent and informal feedback; modeling and encouraging reflection; and modeling transparency in sharing her own practice. The following are examples of Carla’s primary coaching practices.

*Frequent informal feedback.* Due to their proximity, Carla and Barb had an immediate feedback loop. When Barb was working on a project, she could look up and ask Carla for her feedback and suggestions. “We have a lot of conversations that include this is what happened, this is what you did, this is what we should have done, what you should have done, what I should have done.”

“I think I support her by giving her opportunities to be seen as a leader. I give her a tremendous amount of access to information, and I am explicit with the feedback on her work.”

*Collective learning.* The primary reason why Carla chose to have a protégé was to have another professional with whom she could think about her work and who could help her become a better professional. She wanted to continue her own learning while supporting the learning of her protégé. “I know that Barb would say that she has gotten a lot out of the mentorship, but I have gotten just as much out of it. I am a professional reflective practitioner that has the opportunity to have someone with intimate knowledge of my body of work. We are able to bounce ideas off of each other. Having a protégé makes the principalship not so lonely.” Carla spoke to the reciprocal nature of their relationship: “There are times she helps me as much as I help her. It’s been a really good learning experience for both of us.”

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Carla said that she and her protégé Barb collaborated on a lot of their work. Speaking about the organization and preparation for annual state assessments that they accomplished together, Carla said, “Having us be able to work side-by-side and it was very seamless and before you knew it everything was perfectly in place. Other staff members walked in and were in awe that we had accomplished this amazing thing. We are a great team and make each other stronger. ”

They collaborated to plan for difficult conversations with teachers, discussed teacher observations together and planned for school systems together. When the school budget numbers came, they projected the spreadsheet on the wall in their office and developed the budget together. Carla and Barb were partners in their continued learning and leadership.

A symbol of their collective learning at the retreat was a hike up a steep hill that represented the journey they were going to take together as a team. “Like the hike, our work together is going to be hard but it’s going to be rewarding. We need to support each other so that we can each learn and become great leaders. At the top of the hill is a very beautiful spot where you can look out over everything we have accomplished.”

**Real work.** Carla believed that in order to be ready for the principalship, her protégés needed to engage in the real work of being a principal. She included Barb in budget development, human resources, scheduling, observing teachers, and giving feedback among other responsibilities. “You can spend a lot of time reflecting and talking but there are some things you just need to know how to do and do correctly.”
Carla set up the work for her protégé differently this year than in previous years. She was more intentional about the work she gave her protégé to take on independently while selecting other work for them to engage in together. “We have worked alongside each other a lot, yet some things I just give her and just let her do.”

It is this gradual release of responsibility that Carla credited with giving Barb a deeper understanding of the larger rationale and goals of their work. “I think this gradual release of responsibility has given Barb a sense of empowerment and confidence around making decisions. I feel confident that I can ask her to take on project and the quality will be high and the communication effective.” After having Barb take on the responsibility of assessment and instructional planning, she was going to begin to create new assessments with teachers to move toward a more data driven culture. While empowering her protégé to take on increasing amounts of responsibility, Carla was careful to make the environment safe to succeed and also to make mistakes.

Through mentoring, Carla learned that she needed to, “get out of the way and let these people do their stuff. Then we can look at it in the end and say this and this and this are great, we need to think about this.” She was already thinking about how she could give next year’s two protégés more experience and work. “I can say you are in charge, and then closely monitor enough to give feedback as they go so they don’t have to fall on their face, but they have the ability to learn from their mistakes the same way.”

**Reflection.** Carla prioritized reflection in her own work and encouraged her protégés to reflect as well. She did this by asking questions. “I’m trying to push her thinking around how we develop people, how we listen to people, how we are really try
to get people bought in. I think that I listen to her frustrations and then I’ll swing it back to her to have her think about it in another way.” Carla pushed her protégé’s thinking and encouraged her protégé to push back. “There are times we disagree totally. Letting her push back on my thinking is good learning for her and helps her develop a system to challenge herself.”

“I am really intentional about how it would look and feel if she was the principal. I want her to reflect on the source of people’s actions and have her think about root causes in order to decrease her own anxiety and stress.” Being a principal is challenging work and Carla believed it takes a level of reflectiveness and the ability to think about doing the work differently in order to be successful. “I think that’s part of the quality of the mentorship. We are constantly questioning the manner in which we do our work. You can’t do that by yourself. You have to have this group of people who are intimately involved in the work to begin having the questions bubble to the surface.” She intended to provide that experience for her protégés.

**Proximity.** When asked of any specific resources or tools she used to guide her mentoring or to facilitate her protégé’s learning, Carla said one word - proximity. They shared an office space, so Barb was present for all of Carla’s conversations with parents, teachers and students. Carla was always available to Barb since their desks were just feet away from each other. “We share a space, so we discuss things all the time in real time. I don’t have to remember to share things with her and we don’t have to schedule time to talk. We are always together.”
**Transparency.** Carla and Barb’s proximity required that Carla be transparent about all of her work. “She can see me muddle through things that I don’t know about. She can see me reach out to other principals and say ‘I don’t know what to do’, and she’s seen principals call me and say they don’t know what to do.” Carla believed that getting to the place where she was more humble and open to her own practice allowed for the best learning environment for her protégés. “I think too often principals think they need to be perfect and that everybody needs to respect me or whatever the case, and that doesn’t create an environment of learning. That is the anti-learning. I try really hard to walk the walk and model what I expect so we can do it smarter and better as we go.”

Carla was conscious to model how to decide which problems were worth worrying about and which were not. She was able to model time management and shared her thinking with Barb. “I intentionally model a level of vulnerability. I put stuff out there about myself. Then you start to see other people doing that. The team started to do that and conversations became very personal and incredibly intimate in this place so that we can focus on our work.”

**Protégé Barb Barnum.** Before her internship at Plains Arts Academy, Barb taught high school and oversaw student services; in this role, she was responsible for developing the schedule, evaluating interventions, and conducting some teacher evaluations. She then became an instructional observer, conducting teacher observations throughout district high school classrooms.

**Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Barb Barnum.** The interviews with Barb Barnum and observations of her mentoring interactions with Carla
Mendez revealed the coaching behaviors that most influenced her own practices. The following section presents these behaviors and identifies alignment with the interview and observations of Carla Mendez.

Barb believed that the mentoring relationship that she had with Carla was the most important factor in making her internship a positive experience. Barb remembered first feeling this trust when her father passed away early in the school year. “I never felt like I was new, I just felt super welcome and taken care of here. Which I think is pretty crazy given at that point I had known her for a couple of months and she is my boss.”

From the beginning, Barb saw Carla making an effort to get to know her as a person. “Whether it was the leadership retreat, or even when we had some time off before school started, she would call or send a text just to check in, ask how are things going. When we started with students, we already had a trusting bond.”

Barb attributed this bond to their having a high degree of mutual respect. “I think we’ve both earned it in a way, because of the values that we hold. The two of us put such a strong value on work ethic. This year we have talked at length about a work, life balance and how we achieve that.”

The relationship between Carla and Barb moved beyond the roles of protégé and principal. “To be honest, it motivates me because I want to work harder for her. I don’t want to disappoint her. In a way it’s like a parenting role because Carla also sets goals for me, like when you are principal this and when you’re principal that. I know that she has expectations and goals and I want to meet them.”
Barb reflected on feeling trusted when Carla had to leave town for a few days leaving her and the assistant principal in charge. “It was a great experience. I called her, but she didn’t call really. She felt comfortable leaving the building in our hands. We took care of it and knew what she was particular about. I felt good. She trusted us to be in charge.”

Helping with interviews for the next cohort of Grow Our Own protégés, Barb was touched by how a couple of her fellow protégés commented on the positive relationship between Barb and her mentor. “I felt like, gosh, last year I was sitting on the other side of this and now I see how far we have come in this year. It was nice that other people noticed it and thought that’s something they wish they had. And I thought, yea, it is something really special.”

Barb also commented that the shared office space required a trusting relationship. “The other day I was meeting with a parent. It’s her office so it would be really easy for her to pull up a chair and take over and exert her control as the principal, but she did not engage in my meeting. Literally there are times I feel like I am operating in my own little office and she is sort of invisible. I think that says a lot. She doesn’t second-guess things I do and the way she treats me in meetings says a lot about her support. From the beginning, I felt I have the same amount of input as everyone else. I have never felt like the protégé. I think she really does let me try things and I may fall on my face but she supports me and helps you clean up the mess if necessary. I appreciate her openness and when I really need her attention, we have figured out signals when I need her. She is always 100% there.”
Carla was always available to Barb. “Never once has she said ‘I don’t have time’.” Carla’s door was always open and people were constantly peeking in to ask questions or share information. Yet, when Barb truly needed her attention, she knew she could close the door and ask for three minutes of her undivided attention. “Then she will turn from her computer and listen giving me undivided attention. I think you just have to figure out what works between and mentor and a protégé.” Barb felt fortunate that if she got stuck or perseverated on certain things, she could talk to Carla.

“I’m super fortunate because some of the people share they don’t know how to talk to their principals about things. I don’t feel like there is anything I can’t talk to her about.”

Barb shared how Carla’s relationship with her staff increased her ability to have difficult or learning conversations with teachers. Barb had always entered conversations with teachers with a strengths-based attitude, sharing things that were going well and then addressing needed changes. “Carla doesn’t really do that. She doesn’t have people in her office crying, but she is very direct and doesn’t dance around. She is pretty direct about her feedback. She has developed the relationship beforehand, so she can get right to the difficult conversations.” Observing this style pushed Barb’s thinking and encouraged her to be direct with people without feeling she had to skirt difficult issues.

Barb believed it was important to recognize that she needed a second set of eyes or someone else to help her think about issues, and she appreciated being able to be a sounding board for Carla as much as she appreciated having Carla as a sounding board
herself. One example of her being able to offer insight was with the handbook, which was unclear and inconsistent. Barb was able to offer ideas for revisions.

Similarly, Barb checked in with Carla in regard to instructional conversations she had with teachers and asked for her input regarding next steps. “The advantage of me staying next year is it had taken awhile to develop trust with faculty, trust with Carla so that she knows she can just give me things and I’ll run with it, and relationships with students. Obviously you don’t want to come in and say ‘This is what I know and this is the way it should look’, without building relationships. That wouldn’t go over very well.”

Carla also supported Barb with her class projects. “If I need help with an assignment for class, she will help me kind of bounce some ideas off her and give me some guidance. She is also a great support when I am processing how to approach coaching with a particular teacher.”

Carla was very open to feedback and asked for input regularly from her protégés. Barb shared, “I have really been pushing Carla, saying we really need someone to coordinate our literacy efforts, to go into classrooms, to provide feedback, to review lesson plans, I think that part has been really missing this year. So I suggested one of our teachers fill the role. It is a really great example of how she is super open to the idea and now It’s just like, it is really more of a collaborative approach to leadership.”

When Barb began her internship, she asked Carla why she wanted to have a protégé, and her answer was that she wanted to have a “thought partner.” Barb found this response to be collaborative and supportive. “I appreciate that she thinks of me as a
thought partner rather than just someone she is teaching all day long. It’s definitely like a partnership and she likes someone to reflect with. My biggest apprehension as a principal is being the ultimate decision maker in the building. Just thinking through your ideas would be helpful.”

Barb shared her belief that the mentor-protégé matching process could have been more transparent. She remembered being in the room with several protégés and mentors, but did not understand the full rationale for how mentors ultimately selected their protégés. Barb had worked with the assistant principal at Plains Arts Academy while she was a high school teacher, so he reached out to her and convinced her that Plains would be a good fit. She remembered Carla from the interview process and decided to commit to Plains for her internship.

Barb reflected on an early experience with Carla at a district meeting, the purpose of which was to determine a common set of values for the district. “It was in the beginning in August, and it was funny to me because Carla was chanting fun and I was chanting accountability. It just shows our different personalities are, yet it works because we have the same core values.” Even though they were similar in terms of work ethic and values, in terms of style and delivery Carla and Barb were very different.

Barb believed the internship was the most important part of her learning in Grow Our Own. “You need to get a really good fit or it is going to be a really long year otherwise. Your learning depends on it. I have been pretty fortunate from the get go. I constantly reflect going to class about literally how lucky I feel in my internship.”
In fact, Barb felt it was such a good fit that she commuted over one hour each way to get to school and committed to return again the following year. “I am not a morning person, but I like being here. When I’m at work, I am happy to be at work. I think that has a huge impact. Obviously a lot of that is due to Carla and the kids. I knew that I wanted to stay here. It’s definitely worth the drive.”

Since Barb shared an office space with her mentor, they were able to collaborate on work at a moment’s notice. “I said ‘Hey let’s go observe this teacher together, because realistically I think we are going to non-renew her. We need to get the LEAP done.’ Carla was like, ‘great, let’s go do it together.’” Barb believed that Carla was open to learning from her. They are together so much that many of the students call Barb “Mini-Mendez.”

Barb shared that sometimes she and Carla worked on projects together and sometimes she worked on projects independently. Either way, Barb noted that Carla frequently asked for her input and opinion. They worked as a team, learning and leading together. “I sort of have the best of both worlds.”

Since Carla moved to Plains Art Academy from a middle school where she could be more hands-on with all aspects of running the school, collaboration has been a necessity. Barb said, “I truly feel we are in it together. She is right in it with us. I feel she learns from me almost as much as I learn from her. I think that says a lot about her as a mentor too. I don’t feel pressured because I feel we’re definitely in it together. I feel safe to take risk to learn and believe Carla is present as a learner as well.” This collective learning was possible due to the trust established between the mentor and protégé.
Barb appreciated that she was engaged in the real work of the principalship. “Some people in class tell me they are literally sitting there and observing. Ideally this is a principal licensure program and if people are sitting there and observing you’re not really prepping them to be principals. Because you can’t observe for a year and then all of a sudden just do it.” Barb usually called Carla on her way home from class to discuss issues that arose. They discussed the curriculum, and also topics such as Title IX or budget. “It’s great to get that practical grounding. We talk about how it really looks in a school.”

At the beginning of the school year, Barb self-identified that she needed more confidence or what Carla referred to as “swagger.” Carla worked with her to provide opportunities for her to take leadership and encouraged her to develop and show her confidence.

Barb appreciated being able to have some responsibilities of her own, while collaborating with Carla on others. “I have my own responsibilities, but Carla invites me to be a part of everything. She gives me what I can handle and gradually increases my responsibilities as I am ready.”

After assuming increasing responsibilities this year, Barb told Carla that she really wanted to take the lead on assessments and instruction planning next year. “I just asked Carla, ‘Do you mind if I run with this’, and she said, ‘Yes.’ She trusted me to take on additional responsibilities to grow as a leader.” Early in the year, Carla asked Barb to share her skill set. “She kind of did this gradual release of seeing what I knew and then slowly assigned more responsibilities.”
Barb shared that she sometimes became frustrated with adult learners in the building after offering support and not seeing a change in practice. “I have no problem giving support a few times, but then I’m done. I think I have given you support, now do it,” said Barb. Carla made a habit of challenging Barb’s thinking about this. She will tell her, “Of course you want all of the teachers working at 100% efficiency and teaching as well as possible, but realistically there’s not this pool of amazing teachers midyear. So there is this level of maybe we need to increase our level of support to make sure things are going well.”

Carla listened to Barb and asked her questions to encourage reflection. “When I get really wrapped up in something, she will ask me ‘Is this the hill you need to die on?’ So if it means I have given this kid the 6th t-shirt of the year, the bigger picture is more about consistency and why we do the things we do. It’s good that she pushes my thinking.”

Barb also mentioned that Carla was reflective and modeled reflectiveness for her. “She is constantly looking at her own actions. I think that has also been helpful to see and to learn from. Like what did I do to create the situation I am now in, for better or for worse?”

Due to their proximity, Barb felt she received feedback from Carla constantly. “When I am meeting with a teacher, student or parent, she is in the room even though she lets me take the lead without her interrupting. After these conversations, she is able to give me specific feedback on both what I did well as well as asking me questions to help me learn strategies for the future.”
“I hang out with Carla and see and hear everything. I think sometimes parents walk in and they just look at me and I wonder why I am sitting here at this table, but she’s never like get up and leave. I am here for everything,” Barb shared. Carla and Barb joked that they were supposed to meet formally once a week for the Grow Our Own program, but they met all the time.

Barb mentioned that Carla’s former protégé who was now an assistant principal at Plains Arts Academy would sometimes bring his computer down to her office to work. “I think sometimes he wishes that he was in here. His office is all the way at the other end of the building, and he misses the connection.” Barb shared that there were pros and cons to not having her own space, but the pros far out-weighed the cons.

Barb appreciated how open Carla was in sharing her practice. “The biggest piece for me is that she is super open. Sometimes people walk by and they’ll hear us and they’ll think we are bickering or something, when really we are having a good dialogue about what we should do.”

Carla was transparent about her own mistakes and would often reflect on next steps aloud. “She is hard on herself about things. She often will internalize the dropped balls as her fault even though they weren’t her fault necessarily. It’s been great to watch that as a leader, at the end of the day you take responsibility for everything that goes on in your building.”

**Former Protégé Lisa Ford.** Lisa Ford was a protégé with Carla and another principal four years ago. Whereas Lisa had responsibilities at both schools in her internship, she increasingly spent more time at the middle school with Carla because she
felt a stronger connection with her. She conducted all of her projects for her course work at the middle school. After finishing the program, Lisa became an assistant principal at Barnaby Elementary and was appointed as the principal two years later.

_Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Lisa Ford._ In her interview, Lisa shared the coaching behaviors that have had the greatest and most sustainable influence on her current practice as a school principal.

Lisa felt that Carla believed in her and valued who she was and who she is today. “Her actions let me know that she believed in me. It was how she interacted with me and how she asked for my opinion or what I would do. She genuinely wanted to know my thoughts on whatever it was - instruction or staff development.”

Lisa said that Carla was never annoyed by her many questions. “She challenged me in pushing myself. She helped me believe in myself maybe a little bit more than I would have at the time. She would let me hang out while she led or she’d let me lead meetings while she observed.” Lisa’s relationship with Carla continued to be strong. “I still call her often. In fact I called her twice today.”

Lisa felt Carla valued having her as a sounding board. Another way Carla built capacity for a sounding board was with her Building Leadership Team. This was a team of teachers who she respected and with whom she had developed a trusting relationship. “She needed an inner sanctum or a sounding board to be able to bounce ideas. She had her mandated School Leadership Team and Collaborative School Committee but then she created the Building Leadership Team, and it was just her people she wanted to float things through. They met regularly and I sat in on those meetings.”
Lisa always felt that Carla was learning with her. “She was always curious about what happened at class. As long as it wasn’t breaking confidence, I was able to share with her.” Carla always presented Lisa as an equal on the path of learning. When working with the staff, parents, students or district leadership, Carla set a priority of asking for Lisa’s perspective and input. She learned with Lisa and wanted this collective learning to be transparent.

Lisa continued the collaboration she experienced in her internship with her current assistant principals. “I don’t believe my assistant principals have to do all of the work I don’t want do. Rather we share the load of budget, discipline, observations, all of it. They have their own jobs to do.” Lisa said she tried to model the openness Carla had with her.

Lisa felt that her primary responsibilities were related to the topics of the projects she had for her coursework. In addition to these projects, Carla made sure that Lisa was exposed to all aspects of the job of a principal and gave her specific responsibilities. “She told me hiring people is the hardest thing so you need experience with that. She had me hire a long-term sub and the Spanish teacher. She trusted me and she gave me experience.”

Lisa felt she was able to experience the challenges of the principalship vicariously through her work with Carla. “She really provided me with the realities of, ‘Oh my gosh this work is big that we do.’ Yet it was a safe environment because it wasn’t yet me doing it.” Lisa felt she was able to be with Carla through some of the harder times as a
principal, including a situation in which she was required to put a teacher on administrative leave while an investigation was underway.

Lisa and Carla had formal weekly meetings the morning after Lisa’s courses. “Usually after class I had a lot of things to think about and wanted to bounce them off of her. There were no agendas for our meetings. They were pretty free to talk and share. She allowed me to ask her questions and help understand why, which I think helped push her thinking too.” In addition to these formal meetings, Lisa felt that she received feedback from Carla on an ongoing basis due to their proximity. “Since we were in the same room, Carla was able to give me real-time feedback.”

In her internship, Lisa did not necessarily have a defined job; she said her responsibility was more to experience the job of a principal. She shared an office with Carla. “I actually had a windowsill and one comfortable chair. It was really just more about experiencing all aspects of the principalship.” Lisa felt that Carla opened every aspect of her practice to her in her internship. “She didn’t keep anything from me. She is a budget whiz. She would let me have access to the process in order to understand her thought process.”

One of the most memorable times for Lisa was when a teacher had a fight in the classroom and a student had scissors. Carla was afraid for herself as well as the teacher. “During that tense time she said, if I’m not here you need to do this, and this and this. She made it real for me and let me have that experience and live that difficult time with her. That was something I’ll never forget.” Lisa learned that you make your values known through your actions rather than your words.
Sometimes Lisa felt her job was to be Carla’s “sidekick.” They were always together. “My job was to really learn and one of the things I was most thankful for was the opportunity for the internship. Carla didn’t need another layer of administration, she didn’t need for me to do any of those sorts of jobs, she just let me learn.” While Lisa was able to focus on learning, she also felt she was able to support Carla in her learning. “I learned a lot from Carla, and she shared that she learned from me as well.” At the elementary school, Lisa’s job was to use her expertise and knowledge of professional development and literacy to connect with the staff and teacher leaders. In this setting, she did not find much opportunity for learning.

“What Carla provided for me was for the opportunity to sit on her shoulders for the year; to live and experience the principalship through what she experienced. I was literally her shadow.” One of the students called her Mrs. Mendez No. 2.

**Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case II.** Table Four synthesizes the themes that surfaced through interviews and observations with the mentor, protégé, and former protégé in Case II.
Table 4

*Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case II*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Alignment with Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Mentor Carla Mendez</th>
<th>Protégé Barb Barnum</th>
<th>Former Protégé Lisa Ford</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Perspectives (values and beliefs that inform mentoring)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust*</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear role of the mentor</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding &amp; Technical Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of fit</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentor Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective learning*</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding &amp; Technical Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real work*</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model &amp; encourage reflection*</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent &amp; informal feedback*</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity*</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transparency*</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<td>Outliers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life / work balance</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Prominent theme within the case.
In addition to summarizing the findings within Case II, Table Four reveals that the following aspects of mentoring perspectives and practices were most prominent in the case:

- Trust
- Collective learning
- Real work
- Frequent and informal feedback
- Model and encourage reflection
- Proximity
- Transparency

As in Case I, Table Four reflects the alignment of the data collected in Case II with the professional practices of the theoretical framework of this study. While all three aspects of the theoretical framework are represented in the mentor perspectives and practices, head, hand, and heart are not always distinct categories. Unlike the data collected in Case I, the findings in Case II aligned with more of a shadowing role having the emphasis on the technical work rather than on theory or reflection. Several of the practices observed, such as proximity, transparency, and the offering of frequent and informal feedback to the protégés, supported the development of theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice.

**Case III: Mentor Joe Stone**

Joe Stone was appointed as the principal at Lincoln Middle and High School after completing his Grow Our Own internship and serving as assistant principal for two years.
at the school. Lincoln Middle and High School was considered to be one of the worst schools in United States, yet through reform efforts had gone on to boast 100% college acceptance for the previous three years.

Joe mentored three prospective school leaders during his three years as a principal through the Grow Our Own principal preparation program in collaboration with the local university. One of his former protégés, Ben London, was in his first year as principal at a middle school in the district and was interviewed as a part of this study. At the time of this study, Joe was mentoring a protégé, Valerie Whitt, through the Grow Our Own principal preparation program. Valerie was also interviewed for this study.

**Perspectives of Mentor Joe Stone.** Throughout the interview and observations of Joe Stone’s mentoring work with his protégé, his own values and beliefs surfaced. The themes of building trust and encouraging risk taking for learning were threaded throughout his interview and observations.

**Developing trust.** Joe said that while he expected his protégés and administrative team to disagree at times, it was important that they trusted one another so that when the walked out of his office they did so as a united front with no division. He understood that in order for this to occur, he needed to model and set the tone for the creation of a safe space for individuals to take risks and share their thinking. “I try to give them inherent trust. I trust until you show me that I cannot trust you anymore.” He expressed that honesty was the key to making sure he could trust his protégés and that they could trust him.
Joe shared that his expectations for his protégé were high, yet he gave her the trust and flexibility to get the job done in a way that worked for her. If she had questions, Joe’s door was always open to her. “I would like to think that yes she is my protégé, but I want to be someone she can trust and go to and I support her unconditionally.”

**Encouraging risk taking for learning.** Joe said, “You become a great principal by working hard at it. You have to work constantly at filling your gaps and helping others to fill their own.” He took pride in having established an environment that was conducive to the learning of his protégé, but he also acknowledged that the strong work ethic and learning perspective that his protégé brought to her work were equally important.

Joe also referenced how he continued to learn from mentors of his own. “I do not want to be someone else, but I may like the way he does certain things and respect his great knowledge base, so I pick his brain on those pieces.” He referenced a series of mentors he looked to for different aspects of leadership. “It’s really their willingness to give that makes me want to mentor even more. I learn and try to pick up new mentors every time I can because I believe there are many people I can learn from.” Joe stated that having opportunities to mentor protégés through the Grow Our Own program, had helped him better understand his own leadership. “I feel like I am a better leader because I have had those opportunities to be a mentor.”

With his protégé, Joe emphasized that her internship year was the time to make and learn from her mistakes. “You are in the ‘I can’t get in trouble’ phase. Take risks. If you get in trouble, this is the time I can take the fall for you. At the end of the day, let me
be the bad guy.” Joe was clear that in order for his protégés to have the opportunity to make mistakes, they had to have clear and consistent communication. “It is going to come with a lot of asking questions and understanding that I am never going to give you the answer, but I will support you until the end.”

In order to allow his protégé to do her best learning, Joe mentioned that he needed to have patience. Patience was a skill that he had developed through having protégés and that he continued to develop. “It is not easy to have a protégé, because some things can be done a lot faster by myself. I think about my first protégé and realize I was a bad mentor because I was not as patient as I needed to be. I think with my second protégé I was a lot more patient, but I had unrealistic expectations of what she could do in that role. Now, I am patient and I ask a lot more questions. I allow them the autonomy to decide what they can do in that role and push them to meet a level of expectation.”

**Practices of Mentor Joe Stone.** Joe Stone developed a series of practices through his experience as a protégé, assistant principal, and mentor that were evident in his interview and observations of his mentor practice. The themes that were demonstrated through his words and actions were collaborative learning with his protégé; empowering his protégé to perform the real work of school leadership; modeling and providing opportunities for reflection; offering feedback frequently and informally with his protégé; holding his protégés accountable; and being transparent about his own leadership practice. The following are the core mentoring practices employed by Joe.

**Collective learning.** Joe intentionally built teams that supplemented his personal weaknesses in order to create a strong system. Joe knew that the team members needed
to support one another to be successful. “I really try to model how we help each other.”

Joe encouraged Valerie, his current protégé, to seek feedback from the rest of the administrative team and staff, and modeled doing so himself. Each quarter, he sent out a 360 degree survey on each of his assistant principals, his protégé, and himself in order to gain perspective and feedback from the staff. He sat down with his protégé to discuss the results of her survey and to support her in reflecting on how it could inform her practice.

**Real work.** Joe empowered his protégé to engage in the real work of school leadership. He referred to this work as “on the job training” to develop the skills she would need in order to be a principal. “The best thing that was done for me when I was a protégé, and what I try to do for my protégés, is to present them with opportunities that allow them to develop the skills they will need.” The specific skills Joe believed his protégés needed to develop were instructional leadership, having an understanding of systematic organization and management, the ability to listen and learn, the ability to think on one’s feet and a strong work ethic.

He treated his protégés as assistant principals. He told them that the best way to be ready to be an assistant principal at the end of the year was to do the work of being an assistant principal while in their internship. “If you approach this job as a protégé, you will be a protégé. If you approach it as an opportunity to say ‘I was a protégé with AP responsibilities’, then you can say ‘Here is what I bring to the table as an AP at your school or someone else’s school’. I just do not believe you learn at the same depth if you only watch.” Joe let his protégés know that they were not going to be shadowing; they were going to be doing the work of school leadership beside him with his support.
Joe made sure that his protégé received accolades for her work from the school and district community. “I give her all the credit for the work that she does. She shines. If I shine, the only reason I shine is just because she is that good.”

Through working with his last two protégés, Joe learned the importance of offering his protégés a holistic view of management, creating systems, working with individuals, and operating the school. “It is important to know your protégé. It is knowing the person and knowing how they will interact with teachers or systems and giving them the opportunity to learn.”

Joe learned that it was best to have his protégé take on a variety of responsibilities that represented multiple facets of the role of principal so that it was almost the experience of leading her own mini school. Joe’s protégé Valerie was responsible for 6th grade, special education, social studies, and language arts. He provided her with feedback and oversight in these areas, but essentially viewed her as the principal of these departments. The roles and responsibilities that his protégé Valerie had were very similar to those of the assistant principals in the school; however, she received more extensive support and mentoring from Joe. “I understand that the job of assistant principal is vastly different from the job of principal. But I think you have those systemic building blocks to grow into the principalship if you have had success as an assistant principal.”

**Reflection.** Joe encouraged Valerie’s reflection by asking her to think of things differently. This would help her to understand a different paradigm or different perspectives. He asked questions such as, “What can you do?” or “How can we solve
this problem?” He used questions to hold her accountable to her feeling, frequently asking “why?”

“Your job as an administrator is to be a chameleon. You have to bend to needs of other people and make it less about you, but in the same vain you have to stay true to your philosophies, to your values and to what you have come here to do.” To develop this skills set, one needs to reflect on actions and decisions.

Joe said that he tried to challenge his protégé in her thoughts by giving her another perspective. “I got that strategy from one of my mentors. He never tells me what to do, instead he always says ‘If I were you’. So, if I were you, then she knows she will probably want to change her decision, but I don’t tell her which course to take. I might say think about these three things, but ultimately it’s your decision. I say I want you to think about this and let me know what you are going to do.”

Joe said that one of the skills that principals needed to acquire was the ability to think strategically one, three, or five years down the road while also thinking about the immediate consequences. He modeled this in an observation. “That’s a great decision. Now I want you to think about how that will impact you next year.”

Joe made an effort to model reflection with his protégés. Each year that he had a protégé, he also hired a personal coach for himself. Referring to his current coach, Joe said, “She really gives me some hard, honest feedback. She really makes me go through the process of who I want to be, what is my leadership style, and how I can get the most out of the people I work with. She helps me think about what it looks like to not always have the answer. I process quickly, and my coach helps me pull back and give others...
voice.” Joe said he tried to model the level of reflection he expected to see from his protégé and administrative team.

Joe was working on asking more questions and was also encouraging the same of his protégé. His personal coach gave him a list of questions that he kept with him at all times (Appendix F). He tried to model how he used these questions to get to the root of the issue at hand.

In both observations, Joe used questions to encourage Valerie’s reflection. “It’s great to have this person doing a lot of work, is that person going to be back? Are they committed to it for two years? If they leave what happens? Is that the route you want to go? What can happen if it goes bad? How do you know?”

**Frequent and informal meetings.** Joe said that if he had not seen his protégé for a couple of hours, he would step into her office to see how things were going. “We meet daily and it is not formal. She will probably come into my office 3-4 times a day to talk to me about the issues on her plate. She is amazing about that.” He said that it was his responsibility to be accessible and that they talked about everything that she did. He expected her to be a professional and she lived up to his expectations.

Joe provided Valerie with ongoing feedback on her performance. “She is very polished and good at having difficult conversations with teachers, but I remind her that she always needs to think down the line as to how these decisions will impact the future.”

In an observation, Joe said to Valerie, “They gravitate to you because you celebrate them. Definitely do not lose that, but never put yourself in a position where it is going to come back to prohibit you from getting below the line. If people are below
expectations, you have to take action.” On another occasion, he provided the following feedback, “And again, what you said right there is helping her to grow. So you have to identify and lay out those pieces for all paraprofessionals. How are you going to invest in and grow them so that ultimately they contribute more to the school and they see themselves as a part of the fold?”

**Accountability.** Since Joe’s protégé is responsible for her own departments and grade level, he believed that she felt accountable to the teachers and students she served. “She is accountable to her student data. We talk about her departments each week and I say tell me about these teachers, what is going on in special education? If I continue to question you will see if she did or did not do something.”

Joe shared that he tried to model this expectation by holding himself accountable to his values and beliefs. “You drive accountability with action.”

**Transparency.** Joe said that he strived to be transparent in sharing who he was as a leader. He shared his beliefs with his team and tried to make his values evident in his work. “Kids come first, so I always ask the question of how does that impact kids? My team sees me get frustrated at times when my values and beliefs are challenged.” He said that he encouraged his protégé and administrative team to be transparent about their values as well.

“I do not really sit and say, ‘My value is collaboration’, I just try to put my values into motion by saying ‘I really value your opinion’. I know I need to model my values versus just telling her about them.” Joe shared that he was also transparent regarding his own struggles and areas of growth. “I am very transparent with them that I struggle with
relationships because I have been deemed as a mean guy at times because I am very business oriented. It is important for me to let them know why I do certain things.”

**Tools.** Joe said that while he did not have a single tool to inform his coaching, he used his “book of questions” (Appendix F), cognitive coaching, Ted Talks on organizational change, and the book *Cage Busting Leadership* by Frederick M. Hess.

**Protégé Valerie Whitt.** Valerie Whitt was a special educator in an elementary school before being accepted into the Grow Our Own principal preparation program. Following her internship year at Lincoln Middle and High School, she planned to stay on staff as an assistant principal.

**Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Valerie Whitt.** The interview with Valerie Whitt and observations of her mentoring interactions with Joe Stone revealed the coaching behaviors that most influenced her own practices.

Valerie stated in her interview that she believed that developing trusting relationships was the most important part of being a principal. Her biggest challenge in her internship was reconciling the challenge of building trusting relationships with the staff, while still being able to push people hard enough to make them succeed.

Valerie appreciated being able to set learning as her focus as a protégé. She joked that her line during her internship had been, “I am just a protégé guys, just a protégé just wading it through.” Valerie said that being a protégé gave her a safe environment to learn without substantial consequences if she makes a mistake. “That was Joe’s big thing. He said that he can cover anything I do in my internship, so I should make all the
mistakes I can. Because when it is your fist year, everyone will help you, but you only get to have one first year.”

Valerie also shared that she believed the learning had been reciprocal between her mentor and herself. She shared that because her style and strengths were different from her mentor’s, he would sometimes ask her advice on matters. “We learn from each other, which has been really great. That’s the role of a good leader, I learn from my teachers all the time and from students all the time. Truly good leaders are the ones who do not think they have all the answers or always know the right way.”

Valerie was proud of the fact that she contributed to the real work of leading a school. Her background was in special education, so being in charge of this department was a comfortable transition for her. However, Joe also put her in charge of the language arts department, which was the school’s most challenging department.

Through being in charge of the teacher, students, and families at a specific grade level in addition to several departments, Valerie had the opportunity to facilitate teams and develop systems for increased student achievement. In working with the teams, she learned that she could not come with a set plan. Rather, she needed to find ways to help the team build a plan. “I think that is a technical part of being a principal: understanding that people need to have a voice and you have to give them avenues - thoughtful avenues. Then again, you cannot go up into a room with 90 some people and say, ‘Hey guys, what do you think?’ So really understanding the difference between command decisions and consensus decisions. What are the decisions I need to make because I know they need to happen, and what are the decisions I need everyone’s voice in?”
Valerie appreciated that she was treated as an assistant principal. “Joe was like here is the job and now you go do it. There was not a lot of hand-holding or guidance, but I think that’s how you really learn it. It is like teaching, you can student teach forever but you do not really know what kind of teacher you are until they shut the door and walk away.” Valerie felt she gained experience in supervision, hiring, developing systems, culture, discipline, and assessment through her internship.

She recalled one conversation with a teacher that was particularly difficult, yet rewarding because she knew it was the right thing to do. “Moving that teacher and having that really hard conversation where he was pushing back and I had to have my notes where I was able to say ‘You said that our kids lack creativity, and I cannot keep you in a position if you do not believe in our kids.’ Being put in those situations, has been big and being able to make some of those calls.”

Valerie said that it was initially uncomfortable to only have six days to observe before being put in charge of departments and a grade level, yet in the end she was grateful for the experience. “Other people who have been in these internships have watched for months. I have other people in my cohort who have yet to actually observe a teacher. I am grateful that I have been learning from doing the work of an assistant principal this year.”

Valerie was grateful for the frequent conversations with her mentor, Joe. She said that he asked lots of questions of her to help her arrive at her own answers rather than telling her what to do. “Joe asked me, ‘did you make the right decision for kids?’ I said yes. Then, he said that I made the right decision. That’s been really transformational, for
me to trust that the decision that I am making is good for kids. I trust that any decision I make that way is the right decision.”

While Valerie and Joe were supposed to have weekly formal meetings, she said that she preferred the informal and constant access she had. “I bounce ideas off of him all day every day. I feel really comfortable with it. If I did not have really good access to him, I would need that really formal time to sit down and talk about my week but I do not and I do not feel like he does either because we talk as stuff comes up. I never feel like I cannot talk to him. I just go in and say, I do not know what I am doing.”

Valerie felt very supported in her internship and believed that was because Joe believed that her success was his success. She gave the example of making a professional choice for the next school year. “He said, ‘You tell me where you want to go and I will get you there.’ And he genuinely meant it. Anything I have asked to do or tried to do, he has been really supportive. It’s also nice knowing the support does not end. Ben Joe’s former AP, now principal, still calls Joe. Joe really sees Ben as his.”

Because of these frequent and informal meetings, Valerie believed that her feedback from Joe was constant. Whether following a professional development session she led or a difficult conversation with a teacher, Joe always provided feedback. In one difficult conversation with a teacher, Valerie remembered Joe giving her feedback even during the conversation by prompting her.

“Joe is super transparent and he’s really forthcoming. So there’s never a time in working with Joe that you wonder where you stand with him. Which is really reassuring.
If he says you are doing a great job, you’re sincerely doing a great job. And if you screw something up, you’re not going to find out six months later. He will tell you right then.”

Valerie was comfortable asking for feedback as well. She said that she would go into his office to debrief after many of her interactions with staff. Joe also encouraged her to reflect on his work that she observed. “I have been in meetings with him, or we’re co-meeting with people, and then we will leave and he will ask ‘what do you think? How would you have done it?’ And I will say ‘This was good, but I did not get this’, and he will say ‘I did this because of this’. He will walk me through stuff.”

The administrative team was also a source of feedback for Valerie. “It is nice to know that if Joe happens to be busy, I can go to one of my teammate’s office and process with them as well. We provide each other with support and feedback.”

Valerie shared that she was held accountable not only to Joe, but to the faculty and students. In turn, she believed it was her responsibility to help hold teachers accountable while supporting their learning and improvement. “I feel sometimes teachers settle into mediocrity. They can be a delightful person, and be doing okay but not good enough for our kids. Joe helped me develop the belief that you need to have really high expectations of your teachers, but you are also need to help them get there. We are all in this together and it is my job to support my teachers.”

Valerie shared that she was impressed that Joe shared his 360 degree reviews not only with the administrative team but with the whole staff. “He’s super transparent in that because he knows what we’re working and he believes that we should know what
he’s working on.” She said that Joe’s transparency about his own learning encouraged a learning environment for everyone: staff and students.

Valerie appreciated the fact that her work with Joe and the administrative team at Lincoln Middle and High School was driven by their values. “If you do not base what you do on a set of values, it is hard to be more than a task-master and it’s hard for people to follow. I did not do well under leaders who did not believe in something, because I really believed in stuff. Teaching is hard and long and can be really lonely, but when you have a shared sense of belief it is inspiring. Those are the teachers who do the best and those are the kids who perform the best. That’s what makes you get excited to come to work.”

Valerie knew the values of those on her administrative team because they were all open about them and discussed them frequently. “We talk a lot about why we have made the decisions we have and we’re really, really honest. If I ask my team what they think about special education, they are going to tell me. I believe that African American boys are over diagnosed in Junior High and it is disproportionate and it worries me at this school and at every school, but I believe we can change it at this school. We have a lot of those conversations, which I love. We do not always agree, but we are open and honest.”

**Former Resident Ben London.** Ben London was a high school English teacher before being accepted to the Grow Our Own principal preparation program. Following his internship year, he became an assistant principal at Lincoln Middle and High School where he stayed for two and a half years before accepting the principalship at a district middle school.
Coaching behaviors that influenced the practices of Ben London. In his interview, Ben shared the coaching behaviors that have had the greatest and most sustainable impact on his practice now that he is a school principal.

Developing trusting relationships with staff and students was a personal value of Ben’s and one that he felt was emphasized during his time at Lincoln Middle and High School. “People will say I have really strong people skills and that can be my Achilles heel, too. I put my heart and soul into the work and it becomes my life like it does for many of us. I think, how do I leverage my relationships to move the school forward?”

Ben said that he first started developing relationships in his internship through informal conversations with students and teachers. Ben felt that Joe understood the value of relationships as well. “Joe valued relationships. He always told me they are kids. It is simple, we have some teachers who treat them like adults and are ready to throw them away forever and we need to develop relationships to help them remember they are kids.”

While at Lincoln Middle and High School, Ben did a lot of work around cultural competence, which involved asking difficult questions and making people uncomfortable. In the end, he trusted the process and found that he developed some really strong bonds with staff members. “By engaging in difficult work, you become a part of people’s lives in intimate ways as they learn about themselves. I learned a lot too.”

Ben found that developing trust with teachers happened around their practice, identifying with their stresses and remembering what it feels like to be a teacher. As he transitioned into his third year as assistant principal, he had teachers tell him that he helped them open their eyes. “I was beginning to see teachers going and grabbing
culturally responsive texts on their own. Some said, ‘Guess what we did today and our kids really gravitated to it.’ I know that came from the two years of working through cultural responsiveness. So it just became part of what they did. Not because I said so but because it is best for kids.”

Now that Ben was a principal, he believed that his most important relationships were those with his students. “It is really important to me that the kids have deep relationships with me. I put a question board up, kids write on it, I go and call them in and they come in and they know the principal’s office is not a place where they just get in trouble but a place where they can tell me a lot.”

In his internship and time as assistant principal, Ben appreciated how much he was able to learn. “They let me make mistakes and let me learn from them. I would take on really big stuff that might have been too big to nail down, then they would circle back and say they knew I was frustrated because I could not get this huge academic probation system I created going.” Ben said that Joe would offer support whenever he saw Ben taking on more than he could handle. He believed the learning he had at Lincoln helped him tremendously as he transitioned to the role of principal. “Joe reminded me that I can change a school one kid at a time, even if we have 1,300 kids.”

Ben also believed that the learning with his mentor was reciprocal. “I think we both learned a lot from each other. I probably learned the most, but Joe always told me he was learning about relationships from me.”

Ben was grateful that he gained experience in leading real and difficult change while at Lincoln. He said that when he arrived, the school was number one in
disproportionality of graduation rates for students of color and he was given the task of implementing culturally responsive teaching. He was empowered and supported as he had to terminate teachers and put others on leave. Now as a principal, he believed the work he engaged in as a protégé and assistant principal was valuable now that he was having difficult conversations with members of his own staff. While in his internship, Ben found that his least favorite part of school leadership was working with parents, so Joe helped him find positive ways to increase his ability to engage parents. “So I created the assistant principal BBQ and started the Advanced Placement Night. I started to host many more parent forums and engagement activities.”

Ben felt empowered by the way his mentor structured the work of his assistant principals and protégés. “For Joe, we were directors. That’s the kind of leadership I will establish with my assistant principals. The assistant principals here will be in charge of whole systems as they begin to train to be a principal. What I have come into is very isolated. Assistant principals only had their own lane, so there was no ownership around the whole school.” Ben felt that Joe created the big picture and trusted his protégé and assistant principals to add the details to make the work their own.

“Joe gave me the chance to lead. I was able to do a lot with that in terms of instruction, organization, scheduling, evaluations, student support services, you know all of those pieces allowed me to feel like a principal. And for a while I thought I was, until I really became a principal.”

Ben received frequent feedback from his mentor. “We would do one-on-ones and I think those were most powerful. That’s where I began to figure out my Achilles heel.
For them, it was like you are really popular, but I am worried about you being able to pivot from that and hold people accountable at a really high level.”

In his time as a protégé and assistant principal, Ben felt accountable to the principal but most of all he held himself accountable to the students. The school had experienced a series of race riots, so when there were rumors of another riot Ben brought the students together and took pictures of them working together. He invited them to speak at a professional development session with teachers where he facilitated the sharing of feelings by both sides. “There was not a dry eye in the house. The teachers were saying ‘those kids’ riot every year, but that year we did not have one. That was one of the highest achievements for me: to begin to put an end to cultural destructiveness that was taking place.”

In his interview, Ben shared that every day of his work was about the values. “If I did not have my values to hold onto I would leave right now. Grow Our Own and my internship were really clear on giving me the tools to talk about my values, and to be grounded in them. When there’s all this dissonance and chaos you need anchors. And values for me are the anchors.” There were times when Joe just needed to make an executive call in saying what to happen at Lincoln, Ben shared, but every time the administrative team sat down to make a decision, the first question was “what are our values.”

To Ben, having leadership grounded in values gave him hope. Thinking toward the next school year, he was going to center his administrative team in values. “Next year my assistant principals will start every departmental conversation with values. So
when get into conversations around ‘Why are we doing this?’ we can turn to our values. So, what are our values? I will have them develop them. So from there we can begin to talk about instruction and what are we really going to use as our key strategies. Then you hold people accountable against their own values, because that’s what said they said they were about.”

**Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case II.** Table Five synthesizes the themes that surfaced through interviews and observations with the mentor, protégé, and former protégé in Case II.
Table 5

Synthesis of Themes Identified in Case III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Mentor Perspectives (values and beliefs that inform mentoring)</th>
<th>Mentor Joe Stone</th>
<th>Protégé Valerie Whitt</th>
<th>Former Protégé Ben London</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Perspectives (values and beliefs that inform mentoring)</td>
<td>Trust *</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk taking for learning*</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Practices</td>
<td>Collective learning Technical Skills &amp; Theoretical Understanding</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Real work*</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Model &amp; encourage reflection*</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequent &amp; informal feedback*</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability*</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transparency*</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outliers</td>
<td>Values driven work Reflective Practice</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Prominent theme within the case.

As in Cases I and II, Table Five reveals that the following aspects of mentoring perspectives and practices were most prominent in the Case:

- Trust
- Encouraging risk taking for learning
- Real work
- Model and encourage reflection
- Frequent and informal feedback
- Accountability
- Transparency

Table Five reflects the alignment of the data collected in Case III with the professional practices that comprise the theoretical framework of this study. While all three aspects of the theoretical framework were represented in the mentor perspectives and practices, the lines blurred between them. Transparency, as well as offering frequent and informal feedback to the protégés, supported the development of all three aspects of professional practice.
Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Research on the professional practice of physicians, attorneys, and clergy found that successful professionals need to understand the technical skills of their role, have a theoretical foundation, and use reflective practice to be able to apply their learning in the ever changing contexts of their work (Shulman, 1998). School principals need to be prepared with these same skills, and mentoring within a principal preparation program is the ideal context in which to embed practice, theory, and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). This multiple case study explored the perspectives and practices of three principal mentors and their protégés, and examined the alignment with the professional leadership practices of understanding theory, having the technical skills to do the tasks of the role, and practicing reflection grounded in personal values (Shulman, 1998).

This study asked the following research question: What are the perspectives and practices of principals who mentor aspiring leaders and what do the aspiring leaders identify as effective mentor practice?

This chapter provides both individual and cross-case analyses, a discussion of findings, implications for practice, and further research. While Chapter Four provided data and emergent themes for each case, Chapter Five will further refine these themes to the common and unique practices that ultimately provide the assertions for the study. As a result of the analysis of the individual case data, the researcher discovered that each
mentor principal displayed some common values and practices with a unique style of mentoring. This signature style of each mentor, as well as the unique findings for each case, will be presented in order to reconcile what Stake (2006) refers to as the “Case-Quintain” dilemma, or the challenge of balancing the unique information uncovered in the individual cases with the common assertions found among the cases. The assertions from each individual case are then combined in a cross-case analysis in order to build evidence toward better understanding the quintain of mentor practices to develop the elements of professional practice (theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflective practice) observed in these cases of mentors for aspiring school leaders in a preparation program. Following a discussion of the findings, the researcher has identified implications for practice, areas for future research on this topic, and concluding ideas.

**Presentation of Individual Cases**

**Case I.** Jane Smith, the mentor in Case I, had the most mentoring experience of the three mentors included in this study having mentored seven protégés over a seven year time period. Six practices emerged as central to the mentor relationship. These practices were developing trust; connecting theory, practice, and values; collective learning; engaging in the real work of school leadership; ensuring accountability; and having frequent and informal feedback (see Appendix G).

The consistent and repeated description of the practice of connecting theory, practice, and values separated this case from the others as a defining element of Jane Smith’s approach to mentoring.
**Signature practice for case I: connecting theory, practice, and values.** Of all three cases, the participants from Case I were the only ones to explicitly discuss the importance of connecting theory, practice, and their values in their everyday work. Shulman (1998, pg. 516) described the need for this explicit interconnectedness by explaining that leaders need to have “technical skills and theoretical knowledge in a matrix of moral understanding.” The participants in the other cases spoke of their values, practice, and the importance of theory, yet they were not as explicitly linked as in Case I.

Jane explained the need to make these connections clear and precise. “They (protégés) need to bridge the moral dimension of connecting theory to what they are doing, and connecting what they are doing with why they do it. Without making these connections, I think they can be can be good and potentially effective but they won’t be great,” she said. Her perspective aligns with that of Hargreaves & Fink (2006) who said that in order to leadership to be sustainable, time needed to be devoted to developing theory and practice, as well as providing time for moral reflection.

At Central School, values were used as a touchstone to assist in the comprehension of theory and the implementation of practice. The practice of consistently linking theory, practice, and values, helped protégés develop the tacit knowledge of leadership in order to successfully bridge the necessary technical and adaptive skill (Horvath et al., 1999). Professionals need not only the theoretical understanding and technical skills to do their jobs, but also the reflective practice to be able to apply their learning in ever changing contexts (Grady, 1991; Shulman, 1998). As Jane explained it, “If something’s not going well, maybe it’s a clash of values.
Understanding how our values drive our practice and connect with theory can be the key to being a great leader.”

Values were a part of almost every conversation protégé Sarah had with her mentor and administrative team. Sarah described herself as a theory and practice person who appreciated Jane supporting her in taking time for reflection as well. “Having Jane encourage and remind me to take time to reflect on my values and beliefs helps connect the dots between the theory I learn in class and the practice I engage in each day.”

Cara also expressed that connecting her practice and the theory from class to her values was always a part of her conversations with her mentor Jane. She spoke to her conscious need to “keep my head and heart connected,” through reflection and the moral imperative of the work of education. “I aim to do small things with love. I mean do every little thing, no matter how insignificant it seems, with your whole heart.”

The explicit connections between theory, practice, and values were foundational to former protégé Tom Jones’ practice as a principal. Taking the time to reflect on his practice and his own values and beliefs are a routine that Tom continues as a principal. He said his mantra is, “When in doubt, always go to your core values. When I’m planning my day, I’m thinking about what I am doing and how this is impacting my students. My practice needs to be informed by both my values and research.”

*Unique finding for case I: thinking outside of the box.* Though only mentioned by Tom, the practice of thinking “outside of the box” or traditional methods of school leadership was unique to Case I. Tom attributed this perspective to being a part of developing the innovation plan at Central. Through this experience, Tom realized the
potential of pushing the standard boundaries of how schools are organized. At his own school, Tom pushed the thinking of his administrative team and staff by asking them why they were making the decisions they were. Because of his experience as a protégé with Jane, he took the risk to encourage creative problem solving among his staff. He shared that this practice allowed him flexibility to create the best systems for student success.

Schleter and Walker (2008) state that preparing school leaders who are equipped to challenge the status quo in order to keep students at the center of all decisions is a critical component for school improvement and reform.

**Case II.** Carla Mendez, the mentor in Case II, was the only mentor of the three included in this study who did not receive her principal credentials from the Grow Our Own principal preparation program. Seven mentor practices were mentioned by all three of the participants. These practices were developing trust; collective learning; working in close proximity; being transparent about practice; engaging in the real work of school leadership; having frequent and informal communication; and modeling and encouraging reflection (see Appendix H). As with the other two mentors, her practices supported the learning and development of theory, practice, and reflection, however her perspective as well as that of her protégés emphasized the importance of practice more than the other two cases. A specific example of this mentor’s emphasis on teaching the technical aspects of the principalship is her practice of having her protégés share her space in order to experience all aspects of “doing” the work of a school leader.

All three participants in Case II spoke to proximity as being a central component of Carla Mendez’ mentoring practice. Proximity was described as being in a shared
space that required trust and vulnerability, and allowed for shared learning and frequent, immediate feedback. The guiding principle to this practice was that space and exposure facilitated learning about the professional practice of principals. The shared space allowed the mentor and protégé to connect all of their work.

Two essential components of a successful mentoring experience mentioned by both mentor Carla Mendez and her protégé Barb Barnum as being important to a successful mentoring experience were establishing a clear role for the mentor and ensuring a good fit between mentor and protégé.

*Signature practice for case II: close proximity between the protégé and mentor.* Carla has had each of her protégés share her office. This shared space and consequential close proximity has allowed her protégés to be present for all of Carla’s conversations with parents, teachers, and students. The proximity of Carla and Barb sharing a space required that Carla be transparent about all of her work. Carla believed that getting to the place where she was more humble and more open to her own practice allowed for the best learning environment. “I think too often principals think they need to be perfect and that everybody needs to respect me or whatever the case, and that doesn’t create an environment of learning. That is the anti-learning. I tried really hard to walk the walk and model what I expect so we can do it smarter and better as we go.”

Barb shared that she felt privileged to be in the same space with Carla as this allowed her to be a part of every aspect of the principalship. “I hang out with Carla and see and hear everything.” Barb appreciated how open Carla was in sharing her practice. “The biggest piece for me is that she is super open. Sometimes people walk by and
they’ll hear us and they’ll think we are bickering or something, when really we are
having a good dialogue about what we should do.”

Lisa also appreciated being able to be present for all of Carla’s work during her
time as a protégé. “I appreciated how open she was to including me in absolutely
everything. That degree of openness requires a high level of trust.” Lisa felt that Carla
opened every aspect of her practice to her in her internship. “She didn’t keep anything
from me. She is a budget whiz. She would let me have access to the process in order to
understand her thought process.” Lisa learned by observing Carla that she needed to
make her values known through her actions rather than her words.

Due to their proximity, Carla and Barb had an immediate feedback loop. When
Barb was working on a project, she was able to look up and ask Carla for her feedback
and suggestions. “We share a space, so we discuss things all the time in real time. I don’t
have to remember to share things with her and we don’t have to schedule time to talk.
We are always together.”

Lisa also felt that she received feedback from Carla on an ongoing basis due to
their proximity. “Since we were in the same room, Carla was able to give me real-time
feedback.”

Since Barb shared an office space with her mentor, they were able to collaborate
on work at a moment’s notice. “I said ‘Hey let’s go observe this teacher together,
because realistically I think we are going to non-renew her. We need to get the LEAP
done.’ Carla was like, ‘Great, let’s go do it together.’” They were together so much that
many of the students call Barb “Mini-Mendez.”
Carla communicated that proximity was her most powerful tool to ensure her protégés experienced every aspect of the principalship, while allowing her to model the importance of continued learning.

**Unique findings for case II: clear role of the mentor and importance of fit.** In addition to proximity, having a clear understanding of the role of the mentor and a good fit between mentor and protégé were unique to Case II.

**Clear role of mentor.** Carla shared that she viewed the act of creating positive leaders in the district as an extension of her responsibilities as a principal. She believed that district leaders had an ethical call to invest in nurturing future leaders and she took her role as a mentor seriously. This calling to serve others is evidence that this mentor considered the work of mentoring to be a profession (Shulman, 1998). Carla emphasized that in order for mentoring to be meaningful and supportive to protégés, principal preparation programs need to have a clearly defined role for the mentors.

This belief was consistent with the Wallace Foundation (2007) recommendation that school districts develop criteria for effective school-based mentoring (The Wallace Foundation, 2007). The SREB (2007) echoed the need for clearly defined responsibilities for mentors, in order to ensure protégés are exposed to a variety of leadership challenges to internalize not only skills and knowledge, but also the ethics and tenacity to lead on their own.

Carla believed that mentors needed to understand the importance of their role and needed to it seriously. “Principals should never request a protégé just to have a free
assistant. Protégés deserve true mentoring, not just being treated like an assistant principal with no support.”

Her protégé Barb felt that Carla’s intentions for having a protégé were clear and admirable. “I appreciate that she thinks of me as a thought partner rather than just someone she is teaching all day long,” said Barb. “It’s definitely like a partnership.” Barb emphasized that she knew she was a priority for Carla and that she took her role as a mentor seriously, without emphasizing a hierarchy. Barb learned a tremendous amount from Carla, while understanding that their learning and respect were reciprocal.

*Importance of fit.* Carla explained that in order to effectively match mentors to protégés, an effort needed to be made to ensure that the protégé was a good fit for the mentor and vice versa. By being a good fit, Carla did not propose that the protégé and mentor should have the same strengths; however, they should have some common values and beliefs. Carla believed that protégés should have a voice in selecting the mentor they worked with rather than just the mentor selecting a protégé. “I think if the experience is going to be rich for both people, there needs to be much more of a mutual process.”

Carla’s belief is in line with some mentoring programs that prioritize matching mentor pairs according to similar philosophy, level of school and the type of challenges facing the school (Silver et al., 2009). This intentional pairing can increase the effectiveness of the mentoring due to the stronger relationship and immediate relevance and commonalities of the work faced by mentor and protégé.

Barb believed the internship was the most important part of her learning in Grow Our Own. “You need to get a really good fit or it is going to be a really long year
otherwise. Your learning depends on it. I have been pretty fortunate from the get go. I constantly reflect going to class about literally how lucky I feel in my internship.”

**Case III.** Joe Stone, the mentor in case III, had the least experience as mentor and as a principal of the three mentors included in this study, having mentored three protégés in his three years as principal. Seven practices were mentioned by at least two of the three participants. These practices were establishing trust; allowing risk taking for learning; engaging in the real work of school leadership; modeling and encouraging reflection; transparency about practice; upholding accountability; and providing frequent and informal feedback sessions. (see Appendix I).

The guiding practice of Joe Stone was to create an environment where the protégé could take risks and engage in a deep level of learning. Both current protégé Valerie Whitt and former protégé Ben London spoke of the importance of having permission to take risks and learn from their mistakes during their year as a protégé. Protégés spoke of the importance of values driving their work. The presence of consistent values allowed a safe space for risk taking for the protégé. The culture of the school and administrative team wove a discussion of values into most of their conversations.

**Signature practice for case III: risk taking for learning.** Joe believed that one had to work hard and remain focused on learning in order to be a great principal. He took pride in having established an environment that was conducive to the learning of his protégé. He needed to make it safe for her to take risks in order to learn. Most often, he found that the greatest learning came from learning from one’s mistakes. With his protégés, Joe emphasizes that their internship year was the time to make and learn from
mistakes. “You are in the ‘I can’t get in trouble’ phase. Take risks. If you get in trouble, this is the time I can take the fall for you. At the end of the day, let me be the bad guy.”

Valerie appreciated being able to set learning as her focus during her year as a protégé. She joked that her line with staff has been, “I am just a protégé guys, just a protégé just wading it through.” Valerie said that being in her protégé year had given her a safe environment where she could learn without substantial consequences when she made a mistake. “That was Joe’s big thing. He said that he can cover anything I do in my internship, so I should make all the mistakes I can. Because when it is your first year, everyone will help you, but you only get to have one first year.”

In his internship and time as assistant principal, Ben appreciated how much he was given permission to take risks and learn from his mistakes. “They let me make mistakes and let me learn from them. I would take on really big stuff that might have been too big to nail down, then they would circle back and say they knew I was frustrated because I could not get this huge academic probation system I created going.” Ben also found that the learning with his mentor was reciprocal. “I think we both learned a lot from each other. I probably learned the most, but Joe always told me he was learning about relationships from me.” Malone (2001) discussed the importance of establishing the mentor as someone who is not in an evaluative position, allowing the protégé to risk sharing insecurities. Each of the protégés in this study were supervised and evaluated by their mentors, however the mentors value of risk taking allowed them to see failures and positive signs of growth rather than deficits. They were evaluated as learners and aspiring leaders.
Unique finding for case III: values driven. Both the current and former protégés at Lincoln Middle and High School explicitly mentioned the power of their work being driven by values both while in their internship and beyond. Valerie appreciated that her team was very open about their values. Most of their conversations returned to each of their foundational values. “If you do not base what you do on a set of values, it is hard to be more than a task-master and it’s hard for people to follow,” Valerie reflected.

In his interview, Ben shared that every day of his work was about his values. “If I did not have my values to hold onto I would leave right now. Grow Our Own and my internship were really clear on giving me the tools to talk about my values, and to be grounded in them. When there’s all this dissonance and chaos you need anchors. And values for me are the anchors.”

Mentoring must move beyond the practical and cognitive aspects of what the job requires to include the art of how one develops the internal moral compass needed to take action in often uncharted territory (Silver et al., 2009).

Cross Case Analysis

As a result of the cross-case analysis, five practices emerged as being significant to the mentors and protégés in all three cases: trust; the collective learning of the mentor and protégé; engaging in the real work of school leadership; mentors modeling and encouraging reflection; and mentors providing frequent and informal feedback.

Trust. All three cases emphasized the importance of establishing trust, not only between the mentor and protégé but also throughout the school community. Building a strong and positive school culture grounded in trust encourages teachers to collaborate
and take leadership. This practice has been found to have an indirect influence on student achievement (McGuigan et al., 2006; Supovitz et al., 2009).

Each mentor expressed the need to trust his or her protégé in order to share responsibilities. This trust needed to be reciprocal, with the protégé also trusting his or her mentor enough to feel comfortable taking the risks necessary for true learning.

By opening his or her practice, each mentor acknowledged the inherent vulnerability of sharing his or her own challenges. Jane Smith expressed the importance of sharing one’s vulnerability as follows, “Trust is key. You’ve got to have open communication with these people and you have to be able to trust them. They are going to see you at your best and they’re going to see you at your worst, and you’re going to see them at their best and at their worst.”

The trust and vulnerability demonstrated by all three mentors aligned with Goleman and Boyatzis’ (2002) model of Primal Leadership encouraging leaders to show self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Mentors making themselves vulnerable and trusting their protégés did not go unnoticed. Each protégé mentioned how feeling trusted and trusting their mentor allowed them to show their own vulnerability and take risks as learners. Barb Barnum from Case II said, “To be honest, it motivates me because I want to work harder for her. She trusts me and opens her practice to me.”

Research indicates that supportive relationships are the most important aspect of mentoring programs and suggest, that before any work together can be successful, a mentor must establish trust and rapport (Carey, Philippon & Cummings, 2011; Costa &
Garmston, 2007; Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004). The data from Lisa Ford, the former protégé from Case II, supported this claim. Speaking about her mentor, she said, “Her actions let me know that she believed in me. It was how she interacted with me and how she asked for my opinion or what I would do. She genuinely wanted to know my thoughts.” The practice of building trust and showing vulnerability supports the professional practice of reflection and the understanding of one’s own values and beliefs.

**Collective learning of the mentor and protégé.** The protégés in each of the three cases were conscious of their mentor being a learner alongside them. Barb Barnum, protégé from Case II shared, “I truly feel we are in it together. She is right in it with us. I think that says a lot about her as a mentor too. I don’t feel pressured because I feel we’re definitely in it together. I feel safe to take risk to learn. She told me, I don’t ever have to worry. She will worry for us.”

Sarah Victor, the protégé from Case I shared that this sense of collective learning extended beyond her mentor to the culture she established with her leadership team, “I feel like I’ve gotten to be a part of all of the pieces. I feel like the way that our team is structured it is not isolated.” Social constructivists, such as Vygotsky, believe that students develop their knowledge and seek meaning through social interactions like the collective learning demonstrated in these three cases (Noddings, 2012).

Former protégé Tom Jones concurred. In reflecting on his experience as a protégé with Jane Smith, he shared, “There were times she would say ‘why don’t you go take a look at him, I’m going to take a look at him, let’s calibrate and see what you saw.’” Tom emphasized not only the “we” of learning with his mentor but, it also how his mentor
prioritized his perspective by wanting to know what he saw in the observation. This perspective is counter to a more traditional hierarchical model of the protégé learning from the mentor. In all three cases, the mentor was present as a learner as well.

Mentor Joe Stone from Case III said, “I really try to model how we help each other.” To these mentors, it was not about the protégé learning everything from them; rather, the emphasis was on how to develop the practices of a learner. Several participants mentioned this collaborative approach to learning as a reminder that they were not alone in this important and often challenging work. Hargrove (2003) suggested that masterful coaches do just this: act as partners with their protégés.

Reciprocal learning between protégés and their mentors supported them in learning the technical skills of the job while developing and applying theoretical understandings and reflecting on their practice. Learning for both the protégé and mentor is enhanced because the learning takes place within a community of practice established by the mentoring relationship (Lave & Wagner, 1991). Engaging in reflection as a social practice within a community of practice encouraged protégés to refine the expertise necessary to accomplish set goals and everyday challenges. This assisted in the development of tacit knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The mentors in this study were partners with their protégés and mentioned that they viewed their protégés and thought partners who helped them improve their own practice. Both of these values align with Hargrove’s compass points of Masterful Coaching (2008).

**Engaging in the real work of school leadership.** Bloom (2005) stated that effective mentors should not focus solely on reflection any more than they should focus
only on teaching technical skills. In all three cases, protégés were grateful for being allowed to experience the ups and downs of school leadership. Their mentors were intentional to give them a breadth of experiences that mirrored the real workload of being a principal, but on a smaller scale. Former protégé Ben London from Case III shared, “Joe gave me the chance to lead. I was able to do a lot with that and all of those pieces allowed me to feel like a principal. And for a while I thought I was, until I really became a principal.”

Mentors also employed a thoughtful release of responsibility (gradual, immersion and/or experience-based) with protégés. Sometimes this was giving them responsibilities in their areas of strength first and then extending responsibilities into areas with which they were less comfortable or had less experience or an immersion approach with support. In the words of Case I mentor Jane Smith, “I don’t shelter them. They have to do the real work. I don’t cushion. They have to do whatever I am expected to do. I share with them the challenges I work through each day.”

The importance of providing experience in the technical parts of the role was emphasized by Case II mentor, Carla Mendez, “You need to spend a lot of time reflecting and talking but there are some things you just need to know how to do and do correctly.”

Her protégé Barb Barnum shared, “I have my own responsibilities, but Carla invites me to be a part of everything. She gives me what I can handle and gradually increases my responsibilities as I am ready.”

Providing opportunities to engage in real work supports the development of the technical skills of the job.
**Mentors modeling and encouraging reflection.** To successfully lead today’s schools, principals need solid preparation in not only the knowledge and skills to keep the school moving forward, but also the flexibility and morality to make real time decisions and adjustments in their work. (Bolam, 1999). The importance of reflection echoed throughout the interviews and observations in this study. Mentors spoke of their own reflection as well as ways they encouraged their protégés to reflect on their work. “I am really intentional about how it would look and feel if she was the principal. I want her to reflect on the source of people’s actions and have her think about root causes in order to decrease her own anxiety and stress,” said Carla, mentor in Case II.

Carla’s protégé Barb appreciated how her mentor shared her reflections with her. “She is constantly looking at her own actions. I think that has also been helpful to see and to learn from. Like what did I do to create the situation I am now in, for better or for worse?”

Reflection was the primary objective in feedback conversations in order to bridge the technical skills needed for their day-to-day work with the theoretical foundation the protégés were learning in class. The participants in each case referenced returning to their values in their reflections. Jane Smith, mentor in Case I explained, “You have to provide time for them to reflect about their work just like with a teacher. Be able to sit down and kind of start a conversation to ask how did that go? What’s going well? What’s not going well? Not really providing them with answers but questions to think about how their work is going. Help them think through the challenges that they face and set plans to move forward.”
In a review of research on school leadership, Davis et al. (2005) found mentors guiding their protégés in the development of leadership skills and problem solving through modeling, coaching, questioning, probing, and encouraging self-reflection to be effective. In this study, each mentor employed questioning as a tool to encourage reflection. Explaining her mentor’s use of questioning, protégé Valerie Whitt shared, “Joe asked me, ‘did you make the right decision for kids?’ I said yes. Then, he said, ‘you made the right decision.’”

Modeling and encouraging reflection utilizes reflective practice and theoretical understandings in order to inform the technical skills of being a principal. Adults learn through reflection, inquiry, and social interaction (Lambert et al., 2002).

*Providing frequent and informal feedback.* Each of the mentors in this study met with their protégés informally several times a day. In Case II, proximity played a large role in ensuring mentors were able to touch base with their protégés frequently. Protégé Barb Barnum gave the following illustration. “When I am meeting with a teacher, student or parent, she is in the room even though she lets me take the lead without her interrupting. After these conversations, she is able to give me specific feedback on both what I did well as well as asking me questions to help me learn strategies for the future. She always has time for me.”

In Cases I and III the mentor and protégé’s office were relatively close and both had an open door policy welcoming the other in to talk. “We meet daily and it is not formal. She will probably come into my office 3-4 times a day to talk to me about the issues on her plate. She is amazing about that,” said mentor Joe Stone.
Receiving timely feedback was valued by the protégés and all three of them made mention of always knowing where they stood with their mentors. The mentors said they provided feedback on information they observed, overheard, or received from staff, and they also made a conscious effort to ask reflective questions of their protégés. “Since the feedback is ongoing I don’t have the need for formal feedback sessions,” said protégé Sarah Victor.

**Alignment with the theoretical framework.** Between the five mentoring assertions identified in the cross-case analysis, all three of the themes from the theoretical framework: understanding of theory; technical skills to do the tasks of the role; and the practice of reflection grounded in personal values were represented.

- Developing trust aligned with reflective practice
- Collective learning aligned with theoretical understanding and technical skills, while providing opportunities for reflection
- Modeling and encouraging reflection aligned with reflective practice and theoretical understanding, which in turn support the learning of technical skills
- Engaging in real work aligned with technical skills
- Providing frequent and informal feedback supported all three themes of reflective practice, theoretical understanding, and technical skills.

Figure Three offers a visual representation of the five primary assertions of this multiple case study aligned with the three aspects of professional practice: reflective
practice, theoretical understanding, and technical skills. This figure synthesizes the cross-case findings of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Practice</th>
<th>Theoretical Understanding</th>
<th>Technical Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Trust and Vulnerability</em>  (Reflective Practice)</td>
<td><em>Real Work</em>  (Technical Skills &amp; Applied Theoretical Understanding)</td>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Modeling and Encouraging Reflection</em>  (Reflective Practice and Theoretical Understandings to inform Practice)</td>
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<td><em>Collective Learning</em>  (Theoretical Understanding and Technical Skills)</td>
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<td><em>Frequent and Informal Feedback</em>  (Reflective Practice, Theoretical Understanding and Technical Skills)</td>
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</table>

*Figure 3.* Five primary assertions of the study aligned with themes of quintain

**Discussion**

The interviews and observations of all three cases within this study revealed that the mentoring seen in these cases was a personal and moral act that demonstrated the six characteristics of a profession as defined by Shulman (1998):

- a calling to serve others
- an understanding of theory
- skilled practice
- judgment in times of uncertainty
- learning from experience
- collective knowledge through a professional community  
  (Shulman, 1998, p. 516)
Each of the mentors seemed to be invested in the learning of his or her protégés and demonstrated his or her commitment to fostering a deep level of learning beyond the technical skills of being a principal. Case by case, the language and behaviors of the mentors and their protégés indicated that the mentors understood that leadership was much more than accomplishing a set of tasks. Both Dewey (1904) and Shulman (1998, 2005) acknowledged that in order for technical skills to be flexibly applied in a variety of settings with an emphasis on inquiry, these skills need to be informed by an understanding of theory. Shulman (1998, 2005) also recognized the need for the practice of professionals, including educators, to be framed in a moral and ethical context. The technical skills need to be learned, however it was repeated throughout the cases in this study that it is through the adaptive skills of becoming a reflective practitioner (grounded in values with a firm understanding of theory) that makes a great leader. By incorporating mentor practices that encourage the three aspects of professional practice, these mentors emphasized a comprehensive and sustainable form of leadership.

All three mentors ensured their protégés had opportunities to develop the “ways of doing” school leadership while also learning the “ways of being” a leader (Bloom et al., 2005). Carla Mendez, the mentor in case II, put more emphasis on supporting her protégés in learning the “ways of doing” the work of school leadership through her gradual release of responsibility and the use of proximity to provide exposure to all aspects of the job. On the contrary, Jane Smith and Joe Stone, the mentors in cases I and II, placed more emphasis on their protégés learning “the ways of being” a school leader through the discussion of values and reflection of theory. In all three cases, however,
protégés were supported in developing the theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflection needed to both “be” and “do the work” of school leaders.

**Implications for Practice**

There is a current interest in developing pure apprenticeship models of leadership development (learning by doing) where aspiring leaders are not engaged in coursework or theoretical grounding. One such recommendation is made in the “Making Licensure Matter” (2012) report by the New Teacher Project, which suggests the state of Colorado allow an alternate path to principal licensure through the development of a Transitional Principal License. This new license would allow school districts to offer any individual a short-term principal license if accompanied by direct mentoring from an established principal. Limiting principal training to on-the-job experiences and work with a mentor without partnering with an entity to provide theoretical grounding and reflective practice, risks the possibility of the new principal’s training being limited to the technical skills of the job with little to no theoretical understanding. As stated by both Dewey (1904) and Shulman (1998, 2005), practical work needs to be accompanied by theoretical understanding in order to challenge the status quo and respond to differing contexts.

Professionals, including those in education, need to develop practices of inquiry and reflection to ensure their work is aligned with their ethical imperative. This inquiry and reflective practice is often supported in a community of practice similar to that provided in a cohort of fellow learners. Following the recommendations of The Stanford Study (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), a partnership with a university can support school districts in providing theoretical understanding and a cohort of reflective practitioners for
prospective school leaders. The participants in this study worked within the context of a principal preparation program established by a school district and university partnership. The theoretical understandings and reflective practice were introduced and supported by the program.

Through examining the signature pedagogies of how the fields of medicine, law, and the clergy prepare professionals, Shulman (2005) identified the need for individuals to be prepared with not only the technical skills needed for the job, but also the theoretical understanding and reflective practice to ethically engage in their work in times of uncertainty. The assertions identified in this study align with the aspects of professional practice and can offer a foundation for principal mentors to structure their work with their protégés. Implementing the theoretical and relational aspects identified in this study within a mentoring program offers potential to bridge the need for thinking, reflection, and skills that Levine (2005) found absent in most principal preparation programs.

The five identified core practices in this study not only support Shulman’s (2005) aspects of professional practice, they also align with his features of a profession (1998). According to Shulman, all professions are characterized by the following attributes:

- a calling to serve others
- an understanding of theory
- skilled practice
- judgment in times of uncertainty
- learning from experience
- collective knowledge through a professional community

(Shulman, 1998, p. 516)
Protégés were supported to develop these characteristics as professionals, while the mentors also demonstrated these characteristics indicating that they approached their mentoring as a professional practice.

In addition to the five identified practices, each mentor demonstrated a personalized way of being through their conceptualization of their role and work. Mentoring was more than a collection of practices. These practices were tied together by the mentors’ intentionality and focus on this identified essential component of mentoring. The practices identified in this study can inform the mentoring practices of others, however it is essential that each mentor develop his or her own style or essence. The experiences of these mentors indicate that mentoring should be personalized beyond a set of best practices.

While this study was developed as a multiple case study, the cross-case assertions and signature practices indicate the development of a grounded theory. The theory grounded in the findings of this study suggests six key elements in developing a mentoring practice to support prospective school leaders. According to the participants in this study, mentoring efforts that made the greatest difference in the learning of the protégés were:

- Establishing a relationship built on reciprocal trust
- Engaging in the collective learning of the protégé and mentor
- Providing opportunities for protégés to have experience with all aspects of the real work of school leader
• Encouraging and modeling reflection on the intersection of practice and theory, as well as the moral imperative of the work
• Providing frequent and informal feedback in an ongoing feedback loop
• Allowing the flexibility for the mentor to personalize the mentoring according to his or her own values and beliefs

Areas for Future Research

This study provides multiple avenues for future studies. While this study emphasized the values and beliefs of mentors and how their mentoring practices developed the theoretical understanding, technical skills, and reflection of their protégés, it would also be valuable to look more specifically at the coaching moves of mentors. A future study could examine mentoring through the lens of Bloom’s (2005) identified coaching strategies: consultative, collaborative, and transformational.

Although a few participants of this study received support from an executive coach in addition to their mentor, the premise of this study was to examine the content of mentoring practices. Given that Bloom (2005) recommended that novice principals employ the support of both a mentor and a coach, future research could explore and compare the learning contexts of some individuals who have the support of both a mentor and a coach to the learning of those who receive their only coaching from their mentor.

This study could also be replicated in the context of a different principal preparation program or across multiple programs.
Concluding Ideas

There is increasing recognition that mentoring is a powerful tool to develop professional practice (Bloom et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Shulman, 2005). The school leaders of today need to be “visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 1). Quality mentoring can be employed as a tool to bridge the “ways of doing” with the “ways of being” required in order for school leaders to be effective (Bloom, 2005, p. 54). Mentoring supports leaders in developing personal values and beliefs related to learning and school leadership, which in turn enables leaders to act more effectively. To develop new leadership, mentoring programs need to focus on both the content of leadership within a given system and the practice of effective mentoring. Protégés need support in applying theoretical understanding, developing technical skills, and reflecting on the moral imperative of their work.

Understanding that providing quality mentor experiences for new leaders eases the transition to taking a leadership role while increasing job satisfaction and ultimately the retention of principals (Norton, 2003), this study explored principal mentoring in the context of three cases in order to assert a description of the complexities of the mentor/protégé relationship in these contexts. While not an exhaustive list, the cross-cases analysis of this study identified five mentoring practices that were consistently implemented and recognized by protégés as being meaningful in leadership development across the three cases:
• Trust (aligns with reflective practice)

• Collective learning (aligns with both theoretical understanding and technical skills)

• Modeling and encouraging reflection (aligns with reflective practice and theoretical understanding)

• Engaging in real work (aligns with technical skills)

• Providing frequent and informal feedback (supports all three themes of reflective practice, theoretical understanding, and technical skills)

These five identified practices supported protégés in developing an understanding of what they do (external behavior) as well as a richer understanding of who they are as leaders (internal selves.) Mentors applying these practices can support the development of instructional leaders capable of creating the cultures and systems needed in today’s schools.

In addition to the five common practices, each individual case in this study demonstrated the need for mentors to develop their own essence or style of mentoring. For mentoring to truly speak to the heart of leadership, mentors must make a strong commitment to the work and create their own unique state of being. Cultivating and honoring this essence of a mentor’s unique practice is the component that can elevate mentoring to a more effective level.

When mentoring support is personalized, it can better support the protégé in developing tacit knowledge to navigate real issues as they arise (Silver et al., 2009). It was this uniqueness in each case that ultimately allowed protégés to develop an
understanding of theory, technical skills, and reflective practice to bridge their “ways of doing” with their “ways of being” as school leaders.

The results of this study indicate that there are best practices for mentoring leaders. The mentor practices that emerge from this study indicate that mentoring aspiring leaders is a professional practice that consisted of theoretical, practical, and moral dimensions.
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doi: 10.1177/0192636507312964


doi: 10.1177/0013161X03253411


Appendix A

MENTORING ASPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS: REFLECTIONS AND PRACTICES OF MENTORS AND THEIR PROTÉGÉS

Information Sheet

Project Description:
You are invited to participate in a study that will examine the characteristics and practices of mentor principals. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of the doctorate of philosophy. The study is conducted by Dana Williams. Results will be published in the form of a dissertation. Dana Williams can be reached at 303-919-9028 or dana.williams@du.edu. This project is supervised by, Dr. Susan Korach, Department of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, susan.korach@du.edu.

Procedures:
As a member of the study, you will be asked to participate in a 45 minute interview, a 30–45 minute observation of a mentor/protégé conference and a second 30 minute interview to check or validate your collected data. These data sources will allow me to collect your narrative stories of professional ‘lived-experiences.’ The anonymous, collected research findings will be a resource for principal mentors as they work to support future school leaders.

Risks and Discomforts:
There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. Your identity and information will be protected, as pseudonyms will be used to replace your name. Collected data will be stored and secured on a non-district computer and destroyed after the research is complete. Findings will be shared with the dissertation committee members but identities will be protected by using pseudonyms.

Benefits:
While there is not direct benefit from participating in this study, results may help principal mentors in developing future school leaders and they may help inform district recruitment and training of principal mentors.

Cost to Participate:
There is no direct cost to you for participation in this study other than the time required for your participation.

Ending Your Participation:
You have the right to end your participation in the study at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any question for any reason. Refusal to participate will not result in any loss of entitled benefit.

Confidentiality:
Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only pseudonyms for people and schools.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121. You may keep this page for your records.
Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
MENTORING ASPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS: REFLECTIONS AND PRACTICES OF MENTORS AND THEIR PROTÉGÉS

You are invited to participate in a study that will examine the characteristics and practices of mentor principals. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of the doctorate of philosophy. The study is conducted by Dana Williams. Results will be published in the form of a dissertation. Dana Williams can be reached at 303-919-9028 or dana.williams@du.edu. This project is supervised by, Dr. Susan Korach, Department of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, susan.korach@du.edu.

Participation in this study should take about 120 minutes of your time over two visits. Participation will involve responding to interview questions about principal mentoring. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only pseudonyms for people and schools. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign this page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called MENTORING ASPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS: REFLECTIONS AND PRACTICES OF MENTORS AND THEIR PROTÉGÉS. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

___ I agree to be digitally recorded. ______ I do not agree to be digitally recorded.

Signature _______________________________________________________ Date __________________

___ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be e-mailed to me at:
Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

What are the technical skills that principals need? How do you provide opportunities for their development? (content)

What are the relational skills that principals need? How do you provide opportunities for their development? (process)

How did you frame the work of the protégés at your school? How would you describe their “job?” (Role definition)

How did you introduce them to the school community? (level of engagement)

How often do you meet? Share with me some examples of your meetings? What do they look like? (structures)

What are the roles that protégés serve in your school? What are they accountable for and how do you supervise them? What data do you collect about their performance? (coaching)

Do you discuss values and beliefs about the development of leadership? How does this connect with the work with your protégé? (beliefs)

Has mentoring impacted your own values and beliefs? If so, how? (investment/learner stance)

How do you support your protégé? (coaching and mentoring)

How do you challenge your protégé? (coaching and mentoring)

Describe one-two memorable examples of your work with your protégé.

Are there any specific resources or tools you use to guide your mentoring or to facilitate your protégé’s learning?
Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT PROTÉGÉS

What are the technical skills that principals need? What opportunities have you had in your internship to develop technical skills? (content)

What are the relational skills that principals need? What opportunities have you had in your internship to develop relational skills? (process)

How would you describe your “job” as a protégé? (Role definition)

How did the principal introduce you to the school community? (level of engagement)

How often do you meet? Share with me some examples of your meetings? What do they look like? (structures)

What are you accountable for as a protégé? How does your principal coach you and give you feedback? (coaching)

Do you discuss values and beliefs about the development of leadership? How does this connect with your work? (beliefs)

How are you supported? (coaching and mentoring)

How are you challenged? (coaching and mentoring)

Describe one-two memorable examples of your work as a protégé.

Are there any specific resources or tools your mentor used to guide his/her mentoring or to facilitate your learning?

What do you believe will stay with you as a leader?
Appendix E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FORMER PROTÉGÉ

What do you believe are the technical/operational skills that principals need? What opportunities did you have in your internship to develop technical skills? (content)

What do you believe are the relational skills that principals need? What opportunities did you have in your internship to develop relational skills? (process)

How would you describe your “job” as a protégé? (Role definition)

How did the principal introduce you to the school community? (level of engagement)

How often did you meet? Share with me some examples of your meetings? What did they look like? (structures)

What were you accountable for as a protégé? How did your principal coach you and give you feedback? (coaching)

In your internship, did you discuss values and beliefs about the development of leadership? How does this connect with your work now? (beliefs)

How were you supported? (coaching and mentoring)

How were you challenged? (coaching and mentoring)

Describe one-two memorable examples of your work as a protégé.

What from your internship do you believe has stayed with you as a leader?
Appendix F

Book of Questions (used by Joe Stone – mentor in Case III)

Coaching Capabilities
1. Start with questions
2. Explore options
3. Provide reality check
4. Gain commitment to act

Example Coaching Questions

Start with Questions
- What’s most important to you right now?
- What result or outcome are you wanting that you are not getting?
- How can I best help you?
- What can you tell me about the current situation?
- What are your thoughts on X?
- How are you feeling about Y right now?

Explore Options
- What’s the impact of the situation if left unchanged?
- What would be different if you could make this change?
- Why do you think this exists?
- What would be the best possible outcome?
- What if you could start from scratch? Then what would you do?
- There’s not going to be one right answer. Can you come up with pros and cons of different alternatives?
- What if they were sitting here with me? What would they tell me about the situation?
- What is another plausible explanation for that perception?
- If you were to continue down this path, what are some of the risks?
- What if you weren’t stuck? Then what would happen?
- What if you could get past that risk? Then what would you do?

Truth – Tell When Needed
- This may be hard to hear, but you need to understand how your actions are impacting the team.
- I’m sure this is not your intention, but your style is coming across as xyz.
• From my point of view, you have not tried everything you could try.
• You need to decide if you are willing to put in the effort to change.
• This is how it is impacting you today.
• This could impact your ability to be promoted.

**Drive Accountability and Action**

• What is most important to focus on now?
• What one big change can you make that makes sense?
• What specific actions will you take?
• If you could only do one thing to make a difference, what would it be?
• What will you do to ensure you maintain this change?
• How will you know you’ve made a difference?
• What other adjustments do you need to make?
• What might set back your progress?
• What are your actions and timelines? When will you get back to me with your plan?
• How can I support you to own and drive these actions?
Appendix G

Synthesis and Utility of Themes Identified in Case I as Related the Aspects of Professional Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Mentor Jane Smith</th>
<th>Protégé Sarah Victor</th>
<th>Resident Cara Lange</th>
<th>Former Protégé Tom Jones</th>
<th>Theme Utility *</th>
<th>Aspects of Professional Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Perspective (values and beliefs that inform mentoring decisions)</td>
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</table>

* Identified themes within the case were ranked as high (H), middle (M) or low (L) according to how prominent the theme was throughout the case.

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Appendix H

Synthesis and Utility of Themes Identified in Case II as Related the Aspects of Professional Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Mentor Carla Mendez</th>
<th>Protégé Barb Barnum</th>
<th>Former Protégé Lisa Ford</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLIER Life/work balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Identified themes within the case were ranked as high (H), middle (M) or low (L) according to how prominent the theme was throughout the case.
## Appendix I

### Synthesis and Utility of Themes Identified in Case III as Related the Aspects of Professional Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Mentor Perspective</th>
<th>Protégé Valerie Whitt</th>
<th>Former Protégé Ben London</th>
<th>Theme Utility*</th>
<th>Aspects of Professional Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Perspective (values and beliefs that inform mentoring decisions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Reflective Practice Theoretical Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking for learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Technical Skills Technical Skills &amp; Theoretical Understanding Theoretical Understanding &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Technical Skills Technical Skills &amp; Theoretical Understanding Theoretical Understanding &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Technical Skills Technical Skills &amp; Theoretical Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model &amp; encourage reflection</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ALL Technical Skills &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency Accountability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ALL Technical Skills &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent &amp; Informal feedback meetings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ALL Technical Skills &amp; Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values driven</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Identified themes within the case were ranked as high (H), middle (M) or low (L) according to how prominent the theme was throughout the case.
## Appendix J

### Synthesis and Utility of Themes Across Three Cases as Related the Quintain of Professional Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Case I</th>
<th>Case II</th>
<th>Case III</th>
<th>Aspects of Professional Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust *</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal vulnerability</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting theory, practice &amp; values</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective learning*</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Technical Skills &amp; Theoretical Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real work*</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection*</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent &amp; Informal feedback*</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLIER Transparency</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>Values Driven</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLIER Thinking outside of the box</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear role of mentor &amp; Importance of Fit</td>
<td>Theoretical Understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prominent theme across three cases