

Public Abstract

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Title: The Role of Mentoring in Developing Beginning Principals' Instructional Leadership Skills

The purpose of this study was to investigate the type of support provided by mentors in helping new principals develop instructional leadership skills. The researcher examined the perceptions of beginning principals regarding the effectiveness of district-created mentoring programs and the statewide Administrator Mentoring Program. Perceptions were investigated to determine if principals believed participation in mentoring programs was effective in providing the necessary support during their initial years as administrators to help develop skills needed to address the accountability measures in place for today's schools and to help principals become successful instructional leaders.

The study population consisted of forty-five beginning principals throughout a Midwestern state who were serving within the first five years of their principalship. Quantitative data were obtained through the researcher-created Support of Mentors in Developing Instructional Leadership Skills Survey. Follow-up, semi-structured interviews with six principals provided qualitative data, along with optional comments from the survey. Triangulation of the data occurred through the use of rich, thick descriptions from the interviews to further explain data obtained from the surveys.

The study findings revealed no significant differences between the two types of mentoring programs in the support provided to beginning principals to assist in developing instructional leadership skills. In addition, data indicated both programs were weak in providing the targeted support. Strengths and weaknesses within each of the six standards of instructional leadership skills were identified and discussed. Additional methods of developing these skills were also investigated.

Implications for practice were identified to assist in making improvements to the statewide Administrator Mentoring Program as well as to district-created programs. In addition, improvements to university preparatory programs and internship opportunities were suggested.