A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION CONCERNING THE
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: PERSPECTIVES OF MISSOURI PRINCIPALS AND
ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

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By
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DEDICATION

First, I want to thank my wife, best friend, and greatest cheerleader. Julie, there is nothing in my life that you have not made better. Your ability to exceed the needs of our family while maintaining a job is a constant inspiration to our girls, others, and myself. I am blessed to have you as the Godly and caring wife that you are. I am thankful that you choose me to be your life partner on this journey. Eden, Eme, Issy, Ilee, and Lilly, you are simply the best. A father could not be more proud of his daughters. Your patience and understanding throughout this process blesses me. I love you all!
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SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION
**Background of Study**

School administrators are under increasing pressure to improve student performance expectations (Oxley & Baete, 2012). Today, educational administrators implement instructional reforms like the Common Core State Standards that must align with state and national expectations (Odden, 2012; Oxley & Baete, 2012; VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). This ever-accumulating demand from government initiatives, state requirements, and building programs influences the responsibilities and duties of educational administrators, and assistant principals (APs), in particular. With pressures on educational administrators broadening at a rapid pace, the responsibilities of APs have changed and there is a call for training beyond initial administrative leadership preparation (Gill 2012; Hutton, 2013; Oliver 2005). Universities and organizations such as the Interstate Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA), and National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA); formerly known as ISSLC, strive to prepare educational leaders for the rigors of their profession.

It is unclear if the initial preparation of educational leaders, in relation to the role of APs, has kept pace with growing demands associated with the position. Researchers have identified multiple skills needed in order to fulfill the most commonly identified job duties or responsibilities assigned to the role of AP (Clayton, 2014; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Lazaridou, 2009; Reich, 2014; Smith, 2010; Williams, 2012). These skills include knowledge of school discipline and law (Clayton, 2014; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014; Williams, 2012), instructional leadership (Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014; Williams,
2012), management of people (Reich, 2012; Smith, 2010), and management in general (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013).

According to Panati (1984), the position of assistant principal (AP) originally formed through a desire to aid building principals with their duties and responsibilities while providing an opportunity for those interested in becoming a principal to develop those skills needed to become an effective building principal. APs today are educational leaders that hold responsibilities and duties that reach far beyond those assigned to their predecessors (Glanz, 2004; Reich, 2012; Weller & Weller, 2002). While there are similarities in that APs past and present handle issues such as school discipline and general managerial matters, the level of responsibility assigned to APs has increased exponentially (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2012).

A lack or absence of effective AP specific preparation within the initial coursework requirements of educational leaders is apparent (Hutton, 2013; Oliver, 2005). Another focal point concerning AP preparedness is the absence of applicable and in-depth preparation during the certification process, which is relevant to the position of AP (Hutton, 2013; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014). Illinois addressed what they saw as shortcomings in initial preparedness of principals by changing requirements for those wishing to assume leadership roles as principals (VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). Across the nation, additional on the job training has become optional for some APs and yet a requirement for others (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014). Whether required or encouraged, post certification training for APs is commonplace in its application yet absent of congruity from school district to school district and state to state (Gill, 2012; Oliver, 2005).
In the state of Missouri, public school administrators receive differentiated instruction that is specific to their desired certification. Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) play a major role to help guide and direct Missouri’s educational administrative acceptance of qualifications and standards. Certifications for a building principal in elementary, grades 6 through 12, or K through 12 building, are available. Those individuals desiring a district level administrative position require yet another level of preparation and certification in order to meet state qualifications; however, there is no certification for the position of AP. With national recognition of the ever-expanding role of APs and multiple certifications acknowledging the importance of diverse administrative positions in the state of Missouri, this study will bring further data related to the initial preparation of educational leaders as it relates to APs and whether or not it is keeping pace with the needs and demands that accompany the position.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem is that little research exists specifically addressing the initial developmental preparation of APs while there is a declared need for further improvement concerning the initial preparation and continual training of building principals and APs (Clayton, 2012; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Kwan & Walker, 2012). Clayton (2012) pointed out “strong principal training programs remain the exception, not the rule” (p. 25). Oliver (2005) identified “a dire need for assistant principals to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional development programs” (p. 89). A call for more collaboration between K-12, higher education, and the private sector is directed at improving the skills needed to be a successful AP or principal (Clayton, 2014; Lazaridou, 2009). Gill (2012) and Hutton (2013) identified a need for more hands-on training and
mentoring of APs so that they might acquire skills or tools not originally given, addressed, or attained during the initial preparation.

**Problem of Practice**

While AP duties and responsibilities have evolved over time, initial administrative preparation as it relates to the AP has not. AP duties and the level of responsibility assigned to them by the district office or their lead principal vary from district to district and building to building. Identifiable skills such as dealing with discipline, management, and conflict mediation, are fundamental tools/skills that APs need to be successful administrators (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Williams, 2012). In addition to the previously mentioned abilities and the ever-increasing amount of responsibilities that schools demand (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002), APs share responsibilities in dealing with issues that include curriculum development, instructional practices, and cultural changes (Gill, 2012; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2012). Accompanying the identification of these important AP skills is a call for further or continued training in AP development (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014). What is absent in current research and literature is an answer as to the “how” or “at what point” it is best to address shortcomings in AP preparedness.

In 2014, MDESE identified 3,472 K-12 certified administrators within the state of Missouri. There are 1,221 educational leaders or 35 percent of recognized as APs (MDESE, 2014). As the number APs in administration continues to expand, the importance of AP specific training and preparedness continues to grow. With half of all public school administrators in Missouri are designated as APs, ineffectively training or preparation of APs could have a negative effect on buildings, school districts, and
Missouri’s educational system as a whole (Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Madden, 2008). The relevance of AP training and preparedness is a subject of discussion in current research not just within the state of Missouri but across the world (Clayton, 2014; Lazaridou, 2009; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014).

**Gap in Literature**

The evaluated writings on preparation and certification for APs, periodicals and magazines devoted to APs, opportunities for the training of APs, identifiable skills needed to be an AP, and a need for specific AP training help to identify concerns in AP preparedness. While there is a gap in literature that highlights a shortcoming in the preparedness of APs to effectively administer or perform job duties upon completion of their initial certification program, the gap if filled by this research may identify shortcomings in preparedness. The identification of concerns related to a lack of specific preparation that educational leaders receive during initial course work and certification in relation to APs establishes a need for further research. The position of AP continues to grow with the demands of an ever-changing educational system. Such a change in AP responsibilities requires an adjustment in how organizations and institutions prepare APs for the positions of leadership and the support they hold.

**Purpose of the Study**

The overarching purpose of this study is to gain further insight that will aid in identifying possible shortcomings in the preparedness and overall development of administrators as it relates to the position of AP. In order to achieve the stated goal, the researcher will gather data that aids in bringing understanding into the discussion of AP training and preparedness. This study provides needed data and information that will
assist in examining the current preparation process of certified K-12 educational leaders in Missouri. Specifically, gathered data will assist in filling current gaps of knowledge regarding AP preparedness. Additionally, gathered evidence will aid in addressing what training lead principals in K-12 buildings do or do not receive concerning the development and utilization of APs throughout the state. There is an identifiable lack of information related to initial preparation and training of educational leaders as it relates to the position of AP. The combined data of AP and lead principal’s perspective gives aid to filling a gap of information associated with AP preparation.

Gathered evidence will aid in clarifying and addressing the current identifiable responsibilities and duties that exist between lead administrators and APs within the K-12 setting. These areas of responsibility include AP mentoring, AP specific skills, people management, teacher evaluations, and instructional development. Further, gathered evidence may provide supplemental help in identifying AP specific needs directly related to the preparedness of APs as they enter our educational work force. Addressing these areas of educational leadership will help in the continued growth and development of administrators.

**Research Questions**

There are four research questions guiding this study: All research questions will use qualitative and quantitative data gathered through mixed methods surveys. One survey utilizes a logic model to provide three separate categories of respondents with similar questions. Participants are APs, building principals who have been or have APs (L1), and building principals who have never been or had an AP (L2). It is through
multiple perspectives addressing similar questions that this survey looks to gain strength and relevance.

1. How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?

2. To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?

3. What in the initial preparation of administrators best prepares assistant principals for their duties?

4. Is there a need for a change in the initial administrative preparation directly related to the position of assistant principal?

Conceptual Framework for this Study

This research advances from a desire to identify if AP specific training should be a component of initial preparation for school administrators and educational leaders certified in K-8, 7-12, and the superintendence in the state of Missouri. With approximately half of all public high school administrators in Missouri (2014) identified as APs, failure to fully prepare or utilize any component of educational leadership preparation is problematic. To reach an understanding concerning this perceived absence of AP specific administrator preparation, the “emic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14) perceptions of APs and building/lead principals provides usable data in developing perspective.

With a call for “assistant principals to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional development growth activities” (Oliver, 2005, p. 89), further information helps to identify why such a need for additional AP training exists. Collected data aids in “assessing a program’s effect on the clients it serves” (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).
Clients for this study are APs and lead principals in Missouri. This focus on educational administrator’s initial preparedness is a direct attempt to identify a possible absence of instructional focus that would specifically benefit educational leaders in successfully carrying out their duties and responsibilities as it relates to the AP. Ultimately, the framework for this study is to “examine potential unmet needs of people” (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 227) or in this case educational administrators. While the previous statement is more indicative of a needs assessment, the conceptual idea behind this study focuses more intently on “when” administrators receive AP specific guidance during their initial preparation. Research ultimately converges on when or if instruction related to AP preparation did or did not occur. This focus on the timeline of distributed information or instruction aids in determining if participating educators feel institutional preparation related to APs should or should not change.

Elements of a needs assessment and program evaluation combine to build infrastructure for a conceptual framework to guide this study. Similar to program evaluation, this study works to connect its research questions to “determining program effectiveness” (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, p. 133, 2013). The overall program in a state of evaluation is concerned with the initial development of educational leaders. APs represent one component of the overall educational leadership that aids in developing, guiding, and forwarding academic performance.

This study collects data in order to define a possible problem or concern through the assimilation of collected information. Bardach (2012) identified eight steps in policy analysis of which step one is to “define a problem” (p. 1) and step two is to “assemble some evidence” (p. 11). It is by aiding in steps one and two of Bardach’s process that
steps three through eight receive assistance. Steps three through eight of Bardach’s process consist of “constructing alternatives” (p. 16), “selecting criteria” (p. 31), “projecting outcomes” (p. 47), “confronting the trade-offs” (p. 63), “deciding” (p. 69), and “telling the story” (p. 70). This evaluation assists in giving awareness to those assessing gathered data related to APs. Educational administrative insight focused on AP skills helps to determine whether initial educational leadership preparations support a lack in guidance or preparedness related to APs in general.

AP skills/tools are similar to other administrative positions while demonstrating a singularity in their responsibilities that is as separate from others as they are from one another. Figure 1 utilizes a Venn diagram to give a visual characterization of the stated similarities and differences of educational leaders. Components from two areas guide this study. Program and policy evaluation are the segments used to guide this study. These items aid in gathering and disclosing AP and building principal perceptions as they relate to initial educational preparation related to APs.

Figure 1. Venn Diagram of Educational Leadership Skills
Design of Study

A mixed method design for this study was determined to be the best method in which to provide answers concerning the proposed research questions. Participants consisted of lead and assistant principals from school districts across Missouri. Quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed for trends. Quantitative and qualitative data was compared to one another in order to attain a thorough and comprehensive examination of collected data (Creswell, 2009).

Setting

In order to “provide a more complete understanding of the research problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 19), the collection of multiple forms of data was noted in order to give strength and validity to this study. Collected data were both qualitative and quantitative. The amount of accumulated data was limited due to constraints of accessibility and time. Knowledge and insight gathered from educational administrators in positions of leadership at buildings located in urban, rural, and inner city school districts throughout the state of Missouri. These perspectives provide the foundational setting for this research. An electronic survey delivered questionnaire to administrators. Questions for participants focused on their insight and experience in relation to the preparedness of APs to perform job duties effectively. The questionnaire also asked administrators what they might have benefited from in relation to AP preparedness, and what they believed would benefit or improve educational leadership preparedness as it relates to APs.
Participants

An invitation to participate in this study was sent to educational leaders throughout the state of Missouri and was the foundation of the investigation. Survey participants consisted of APs and lead principals who represent kindergarten (K) through 12, K-8, elementary, junior high, and high school buildings. Selected participants were individuals identified as lead and assistant building principals in Missouri during the 2015-2016 school year. Survey contributors gave relevant and timely insight as to current needs related to the initial training of lead and assistant principals. Expert and timely information gathered from the survey groups gave two distinct perspectives on the initial training of APs while aiding with the development of validity for this study (Fink, 2013; Merriam, 2009). These groups were divided into assistant principals (group one) and lead principals (group two). To assist in establishing consistency, all those participating in the electronic survey group were identified by MDESE as certified educational administrators within the state of Missouri.

Survey group one consisted of lead building administrators or principals. This initial group provided the perspective of building lead principals that had been or had APs. This administrative perspective differed from the other survey groups. It was by gathering multiple viewpoints from specialized individuals that data akin to a “focus group” (Krueger & Casey, 2009) aids in strengthening this data.

Survey group two was similar to group one. Participants identified themselves as building principals that either had not been, have, nor had an assistant principal. The gathering of this educational perspective is anchored in Krueger and Casey’s (2009) idea of multiple perspectives giving strength to data.
Survey group three consisted of assistant principals that work or have worked in a K-12, K-8, kindergarten, elementary, junior high, or high school building. This group did not include individuals that have moved on to a lead administrative position. The functional point of view from acting and former assistant principals brings validity to gathered data in relation to AP preparedness (Fink, 2013).

Neither the selection nor rejection of survey participants was a result of age, ethnicity, gender, or race. To help in addressing limitations of time and accessibility, contacted individuals are all identified by MDESE as certified educational administrators in Missouri. Participants of the survey graduated from colleges, universities, and institutions across the nation. Some participants hold administrative certification in multiple states.

**Data Collection Tools**

A mixed method approach of gathering research information was determined to be a more accurate design than either qualitative or quantitative analysis could provide on its own (Creswell, 2009). A single database allowed for an efficient and effective comparison of qualitative and quantitative evidence (Fink, 2013). “Survey Monkey” provides an electronic platform for gathering both forms of data from administrators throughout the state of Missouri. Three separate but congruent survey strands provided varying perspectives to gather data from AP and lead principals. Survey number one and two ascertains lead principal input while survey number three gains assistant principal perspective and insight. Upon identification as an AP, lead principal, or lead principal with no AP experience nor AP, Survey Monkey provided participants with the appropriate platform of questions.
Survey questions contained both qualitative and quantitative segments. Open-ended questions provided data for a qualitative segment and use of a Likert scale in responding to other questions provided information of a quantitative nature (Fink, 2013; Merriam, 2009). It is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative design that aide in bolstering the validity of this study through triangulation (Creswell, 2009). The survey contained 41 questions. Questions one through three were demographic in nature. Questions four and five identified participants as a lead or assistant principal. Questions six through eight determine if the participant is a building principal who has never been or had an AP or one who has. APs answer questions 9 through 21. Question 9 is demographic, 10 through 16 are qualitative, and 17 through 21 are quantitative. Building principals that have been, have, or had an AP answer questions 22 through 32. Questions 22 through 28 are qualitative while 29 through 32 are quantitative. Building principals who have never had or been an AP address questions 33 through 41. Questions 33 through 38 are of a qualitative nature while 29 through 41 are of a quantitative nature. A Likert scale aided in categorizing responses from quantitative inquiries.

A letter of notification accompanies each electronic request for participation in the survey. This letter apprises participants that completing the survey communicates consent of notification (Fink, 2013). Assignment of a random number to individuals completing the survey provides anonymity. Protection of individual identity aids in increasing the integrity of the survey by elevating concerns of possible reprisals connected to the acquired data (Fink, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In order to protect those participating while simultaneously eliciting the most forthcoming answers possible,
information within the letter informed participants of the importance of confidentiality and privacy.

**Data Analysis**

The overall design of this study was built on a foundation that uses “convergent parallel mixed methods” (Creswell, 2009, p. 15). It was through the timely collection and comparison of qualitative and quantitative data that provided the most inclusive insight. The distribution and collection of three separate but congruent surveys provided the basis of quantitative and qualitative data.

Respondents on the electronic surveys used a Likert scale to convert some of their answers into a quantitative format. The Likert scale presented individuals with an opportunity to respond to questions on varying levels of agreement or dissatisfaction (Creswell, 2009; Fink, 2013). Congruently, a second survey sent to lead principals took advantage of the same data collection method. Some of the questions for AP’s and lead principals were the same. Questions on the survey asked for specific insight that aligns with each survey group’s job perspective in relation to the position of the AP. By establishing a convergence of “several sources of data or perspectives of participants,” (Creswell, 2009, p. 201) validity is established. The identification of individual feedback is available but not the identity of that individual. The protection of individual participant’s identity provided anonymity to individuals and increased the likelihood of reliability (Creswell, 2009; Fink, 2013).

After the collection of data, an examination of qualitative and quantitative information took place separately but congruently (Merriam, 2009). Next, the examination of the collected data occurred in order to compare and contrast trends from
the perspective of AP and building leads. A comparison of qualitative statements to answers of a qualitative nature aided in categorizing and comparing data.

**Significance of the Study**

The state of Missouri identifies over 3,000 (DESE, 2014a) active public school building level administrators during the 2013-2014 school year. Just over half of these educational building leaders are assistant principals in kindergarten through high school settings. This study looked to bring important data concerning initial administrative preparation related to APs. It was important to gather a larger body of information associated with initial AP preparation. Assembled data gave assistance to the development of AP preparedness so educational leaders might keep pace with the ever-expanding responsibilities associated with the position of AP. APs across the nation consistently expressed a need for further training (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Failing to identify or understand why APs feel underprepared for their positions only serves to waste valuable time and money. Scholarly work identified a need for further training in relation to APs but identified no congruency in answering what, how, or when improvement in relation to AP development is to occur.

The significance of this study has potential to affect multiple educational entities in primary through secondary settings. Groups such as CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, MPEA, and NPBEA are deeply involved with secondary educational intuitions in developing and preparing educational leaders. This data can help to create dialogue that will guide leadership in addressing concerns related to AP preparedness. It is with data that direct conversation concerning AP preparedness will advance training to help APs in effectively dealing with the rigors of their job. Gathering timely and relevant input from
practitioners helps in maintaining conversation directed at continued growth in the preparation of educational leadership as it relates to the ever-changing role of today’s AP.

**Summary**

There is an identifiable need accompanied by a call for specific educational leadership training in relation to APs (Clayton, 2014; Kwan, & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014; Williams, 2012; Yu-Kwong, & Walker, 2010). The appeal for further instruction is a direct result of ever-expanding responsibilities and duties assigned to building APs. Discipline (Reich, 2014), instructional leadership (Oliver, 2005; Williams, 2012), management of people, (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013), and general management skills (Kwan & Walker, 2012) are just of few of the identifiable tools or skills needed to be an effective AP.

Responsibilities and duties for APs today reach far beyond those assigned to their predecessors (Reich, 2012). Accompanying this exponential increase in AP responsibilities (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013) is the call for more AP professional training (Oliver, 2005). It is only logical that leadership training associated with the position of AP keep pace with increasing obligations. Appropriate and timely training will aid in developing APs. Merriam and Bierema (2014) described andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 42). An important component of adult learning is dialogue. Dialogue or effective communication must take place in order for compelling instruction to occur (Bruffee, 1999). True communication can only take place when instructional leaders are willing to engage in conversation. The expansion of responsibilities and duties assigned to APs does not appear to be keeping pace with initial training and development associated with the position of AP. In order to best prepare
educational leaders for success, it is important that AP preparation keep pace with the ever-evolving duties of APs.
SECTION TWO:

PRACTITIONER SETTING
Introduction

APs today hold an appointment that originated in order to prepare inexperienced educational leaders for the responsibilities associated with those of a lead building principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). The title or role of an AP is a concept designed or founded in a system that originated over a hundred years ago (Glanz, 2004). An important similarity in today’s AP to those of the past, is the acknowledged responsibility of the AP to support the lead principal in whatever capacity is deemed best (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002).

While the AP position originated in order to train or prepare future administrators for educational leadership, AP expectations are not what they once were (Daresh, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). Many studies today “demonstrate that duties and responsibilities of APs are at times so different from those of principals that the assistant principalship does not provide appropriate training for becoming a principal” (Glanz, 2004, p. 84). Today, APs “seldom have consistent, well-defined job descriptions, delineation of duties, or way of measuring outcomes from accomplishment of tasks” (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 7). A basic understanding of identifiable skills and responsibilities assigned to APs helps in understanding the guiding questions behind this study.

Identifiable AP skills include knowledge of school discipline and law, instructional leadership, management of people, and management in general (Clayton, 2014; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014; Williams, 2012). Varying AP responsibilities consist of event supervision, student discipline, staff development, counseling (pupil and staff), public relations, and whatever
is assigned by the lead principal (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Simpson, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). An absence of consistency in AP duties and responsibilities (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013) separates the AP from other educational leadership positions.

There is an expectation that APs are to “do everything the principal cannot get to” (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 8). APs serve to fill the gap in areas ranging from student discipline to the implementation of school policy and curriculum (Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). Facilitating collaboration between students, students and teachers, or the lead principal and teachers, is commonplace for APs (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). One moment an AP can be collaborating with a teacher and then correcting the very same instructor a few hours later for failing to follow or meet school policy (Glanz, 2004). This idea of collaboration and correction is a fine-line to walk. APs make building level decisions with the understanding they do so while collaborating with or following guidance from a building lead (Daresh, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Simpson, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). The AP utilizes many of the same skills as other educational leaders in Missouri while maintaining a similar degree of autonomy that other leadership positions hold from one another (see Figure 1).

This lack of consistency concerning assigned duties and responsibilities of APs furthers the difficulty of effectively preparing APs for their jobs (Reich, 2014; Weller & Weller, 2002). In the state of Missouri, initial AP preparation does not vary from that of a lead administrator. While differentiation exists in the certification for administrative positions in K-7, 7-12, and district level leadership (2005), no such diversity or separation is available during institutional development in relation to AP usage or responsibilities.
The primary mandate of APs is to aid the lead principal in attaining his/her established goals while supporting identified policies and procedures as if they are his or her own (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011; Reich, 2012). The responsibility placed on APs to serve others, build consensus between individuals, and place community needs over self are leadership skills propagated and emulated in such educational institutions as CAEP, NPBEA, MDESE, and MPEA. Not all those who lead do so from the front.

“Leadership is a highly sought-after and highly valued commodity” (Northouse, 2013, p. 1). There are as many variations on what makes a successful leader as opinions. Every organization utilizes some form of leadership to advise and direct its members toward the completion of its goals. Gulick and Urwick (1973) stated, “work division is the foundation of organization; indeed, the reason for organization” (p. 79). Leadership is an integral part of the work division within an organization. Multiple individuals combine to make a grouping. Various members of an organization work together in order to achieve desired goals and objectives. Programs within organizations help to “achieve some agreed-on objective(s)” (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 10). The stated focus of this study is to provide data that aids in examining initial program administrator preparation in relation to APs. A basic understanding of previously mentioned organizations helps in giving an informed perspective.

It is by examining information related to initial AP preparedness through a lens developed on Communitarianism, Servant Leadership, and Gap Theory ideas that helps to move this inquiry forward. Accompanying organizational overviews is a look at the political framework in examining organizations, and leadership themes guiding CAEP,
CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA. The section closes with implications for research and summary.

**Organizational Overviews**

“The beginning of the 21st century has been characterized by an unprecedented number of anticipated retirements and documented principal shortages” (Petzko, 2008). APs are an essential component in educational leadership today (Glanz, 2004; Simpson; 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). With a stated shortage in principals, the importance of effective and timely training related to educational leaders cannot be understated. The initial preparation of educational leaders in relation to APs is a piece of educational leadership preparation. Gaining a brief organizational overview of CAEP, CCSSO, NPBEA, MDESE and MPEA aids with insight and perspective related to how educational leadership preparation programs receive input and guidance.

**Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation**

July 2013, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) officially merged to create CAEP (2015e). Currently, 13 states work in an alliance to improve collaboration between school districts and higher education, create more effective state policies, and to “increase use of formative and summative candidate performance assessments to ensure candidates can demonstrate knowledge and skills needed in today’s classrooms, and collect data on candidate performance in classrooms to help preparation programs improve” (CAEP, 2015d).

CAEP is a professional educator’s organization with a stated mission to “advance excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality
and supports continuous improvement to strengthen PK-12 student learning” (CAEP, 2015a). CAEP held its first board meeting in 2010 and is comprised of member organizations that form a coalition of policy makers, teacher organizations, and content area specialists. The six strategic goals: increase level of educator preparation, promote continuous improvement, advance research and innovation, increase accreditation’s value, be a model accrediting body, and be a model learning organization, guide the overall vision of “excellence in educator preparation” (CAEP, 2015a). CAEP aids, guides, and directs individuals and organizations in helping to improve educational standards.

**Organizational Leadership of CAEP**

CAEP is an organization that holds both real and referent power (French & Raven, 2005) as an accreditation body for many states. While CAEP is not the accrediting body for every state, it exhibits sway with others through a consolidation of local, state, regional, and national organizations by working with them toward one goal. CAEP takes on some Communitarianism characteristics with its need for decision-making that emphasizes the importance of all members from within the school community when making decisions (Baxter, Thessin, & Clayton, 2014; Berreth & Scherer, 1993; Merry, 2005). The perceptions of APs and lead principals in relation to the initial preparation of administrators as it relates to the AP, aids in meeting CAEP’s overreaching goal to improve educator preparation. Providing more data to support CAEP’s stated goals aids in the group decision-making process. The use of gathered data from this study helps CAEP to fortify an established source of power with a “reputation built on expertise” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 203).
Council of Chief State School Officers

Established in 1946, CCSSO sponsors or works with multiple organizations that influence educational institutions and companies at every level (CCSSO, 2015a). CCSSO promotes educational advancement and collaboration through Innovation Lab Work (ILW), National and State Collaboration for Educator Effectiveness (NSCEE), Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP), and the NPBEA. CCSSO “is a nationwide, nonpartisan, and nonprofit membership organization” with an over reaching goal to help students in becoming “productive members of society” (CCSSO, 2015a). CCSSO offers three separate levels of membership for cooperate sponsorship of meetings held throughout the year (CCSSO, 2015d). Sponsors include Advanced ED, McGraw-Hill Education, Apple, Corwin Press, Texas Instruments, Data Recognition Corporation, and International Business Machines Corporation. It is through the collaboration of public and private entities that CCSSO hopes to foster school improvement.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration. NPBEA is one such organization that CCSSO works with to improve education.

In November of 2015 the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) were approved by the NPBEA. These standards, formerly known as the ISLLC standards, articulate the knowledge and skills expected of school leaders. Subsequently, a committee was convened to develop a set of national educational leadership preparation standards (NELP) that align to the PSEL standards (NPBEA, 2016).
NPBEA collaborated with the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) in order to develop professional standards to guide educational leaders (NPBEA, 2016). These ten standards are: (1) mission, vision, and core values, (2) ethics and professional norms, (3) equity and cultural responsiveness, (4) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (5) community of care and support for students, (6) professional capacity of school personnel, (7) professional community for teachers and staff, (8) meaningful engagement of families and community, (9) operations and management, (10) school improvement (NPBEA, 2015).

**Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE)**

MDESE “is the administrative arm of the state board of education” (MO.gov, 2015). MDESE works in conjunction and cooperation with community leaders, educators, legislators, and other government agencies. MDESE is responsible for childhood to adult education within Missouri (MO.gov, 2015). MDESE employs about 1,700 people and manages a budget of approximately $5.4 billion (MO.gov, 2015). Ninety-six percent of the MDESE budget is allocated to local school districts throughout the state (Mo.gov, 2015). The Commissioner of Education leads MDESE in cooperation with local and national organizations in continually elevating instructional practices and educational standards in Missouri. One way of uplifting educational standards is to work alongside other such systems that hold similar educational interests. MDESE is one of several state educational systems that utilize Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CCSSO, 2015a) formerly known as the Interstate Schools Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). MDESE uses the seven standards to guide and direct the overall development of educational leadership (DESE, 2015b).
Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA)

MPEA is another organization within the state of Missouri that “is committed to preparation programs encompassing the professional standards that develop educational leaders who promote the success of every student” (MPEA, 2015a). The board of directors for MPEA has a DESE liaison and 12 members representing 17 different institutions with programs dedicated to developing educational leaders (MPEA, 2015b). Board members consist of current and retired educational administrator professors from institutional programs such as the Lincoln University, University of Missouri, Missouri State University, and Southwest Baptist University among others. MPEA partners with organizations to facilitate workshops, collaborate on research, and promote the overall development of educational leadership in the state of Missouri (MPEA, 2015a). In an effort to maintain and foster further communication with organizations such as DESE, MPEA representatives regularly attend meetings and hold open lines of communication outside of regularly scheduled assemblies.

Political Frame in Examining Organizations

CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA each work with sub-organizations within their own entities while often collaborating with outside institutions in order to attain a common goal. With multiple coalitions, a need for networking, and constant negotiation, it is important to recognize the impact that politics has on organizations and the decisions they make. “Politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 190). It is by examining the impact or influence of power, conflict, and coalition intertwined within the identified organizations that a better understanding of how they make decisions is
attained. Understanding influences on the decision making process within these organizations helps to realize how these entities frame and influence the initial development of educational leaders within Missouri.

Power

Politics is often associated with the use of power. Levi (2014) devoted a chapter to “Power and Social Influence “(p. 143) in his book *Group Dynamics for Teams*. In the book *Classics of Organizational Theory*. Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) devoted chapter six to “Power and Politics Organizational Theory” (p. 283) with six subsections authored by as many different individuals. The use of power in teams and organizations is a common theme of study. Power is often associated with politics and organizations. March (1966/2005) denoted that the application or use of power within organizations is visible through the control and use of resources of the organization itself or individuals within.

Arguably, CAEP’s main source of power resides in its ability to accredit or deny credit to applying institutions and professionals. CAEP has seven committees that “help bring recommendations to the board of directors and carry out the work of the organization” (CAEP, 2015b). While the board is not able to make accreditation decisions, it does appoint members to the supporting committees that review accreditation and performance for CAEP (2015b). This shared power provides a set of checks and balances within CAEP’s organization in order to lend itself to a more democratic form of governance in its use of power.

Besides providing a venue for multiple organizations and entities to collaborate, CCSSO is able to wield power by providing resources to its members:
One of the Council’s most important responsibilities is to serve its members through building the capacity of states and their leaders. This requires creative problem solving to address complex issues, and access to technical assistance and resources that may not be readily available. The Council’s Business and Industry partners are a select group of institutions and organization that engage in the work of the Council and participate in CCSSO’s membership meetings (CCSSO, 2015c).

CCSSO’s ability to provide resources for states and interested organizations works in conjunction with its capacity to provide a setting for like-minded groups to gather. The Servant Leadership quality of CCSSO also aids in providing much of its power.

DESE shares or distributes its power by allotting its resources between multiple departments within the organization itself. The two major divisions within DESE are Learning Services, and Financial and Administrative Services (DESE, 2014c). Sub sections within Learning Services include educator quality, Data System Management, and Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services (DESE, 2014c). The Division of Financial and Administrative Services House Budget, Human Resources, and Administrative Services are interdependent of one another (DESE, 2014c). The intertwined dependency of separate divisions and departments lends itself to political solutions within DESE itself. In dealing with outside institutions, DESE can use its positional power “to deliver jobs, money, political support or other rewards” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 203) in exchange for compliance.

“MPEA is committed to preparation programs encompassing the professional standards that develop educational leaders and promote the success of every student”
Through its members, MPEA utilizes lines of communication to maintain and develop educational administrators and their programs (MPEA, 2015b). DESE is an organization that maintains a liaison position on the MPEA board of directors while 12 individuals represent 10 different Missouri universities (MPEA, 2015a). MPEA regularly views selected research and presentations from individuals or groups who have submitted requests to do so.

Conflict

Levi (2014) stated, “conflict helps improve the quality and creativity of decisions” (p. 130). Every organization and team has to deal with either internal or external conflict. For the purpose of this paper, the researcher looked at departmental or organizational conflicts that may be associated with CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA. Conflict may manifest itself from within an organization or from outside interests. All four organizations adhere to a similar goal or philosophy. Ultimately, CAEP certifies members of MPEA who in turn report to their institutions, who report to DESE, which is a member of the CCSSO. This intertwined association of educationally interested individuals and groups must negotiate a “integrative agreement” (Levi, 2014, p. 135) that addresses the ultimate goal of educating students.

Role of philosophy in conflict. Different philosophical positions on how to reach a common goal can create conflict among the most amiable teams and organizations. Philosophical principles are the lens in which individuals and groups determine what they see. Many people and entities agree on the importance of education, yet not all come to consensus as to how or even who should provide that education. A multitude of philosophical perspectives are absent of an agreed upon method to settle a dispute or
provide resolve aids in discouraging the ability to reach consensus. Federal, state, and local governments today work within and through CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA. It is through established goals and boundaries that institutions are able to aide in the collusion of multiple individual philosophies in order to establish a common goal.

Addressing conflict and civil issues are at the heart of many national and regional educational organizations. Local, state, and regional philosophies were forced to merge and find a common ground in order to come to consensus. It is “the federal government that led the call for excellence and equity in education” (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011, p. 29) with initiatives in math and science. This national initiative led to “desegregation litigation, pioneering civils rights legislation and compensatory education programs” (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011, p. 29). It is philosophical shifts such as desegregation, civil rights and compensatory education that provides the foundation for educational systems today (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011). With a shift in educational policy or thought, a new focus on the use of evidence-based decision making has prominence in resolving conflict and examining performance in education today (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011). CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA all utilize data to make decisions, promote change and settle conflict.

Data and conflict. The influence of data in settling disputes has power in each of these programs by providing relevant nonpartisan information. Disputes within organizations most often arise over how to apply available means. “The political frame stresses that the combination of scarce resources and divergent interests produces conflict as surely as night follows day” (Bolman & Deal, 2011, p. 206). CAEP (2015c) and CCSSO (2015c) balance desires from government and private interests by gathering then
using data to inspire agreement between multiple interests. DESE (2015b) and MPEA (2015c) regularly implement or evaluate programs and policy designed to improve student performance based on statistical information. McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) noted the importance of using data when assessing programs so those making decisions can make focused determinations according to desired goals or needs.

**Influence of business and politics on conflict.** Business and political interests are arguably the two most prominent enthusiasts behind conflict in education today. Business leaders desire an able-bodied work force while political interests are much more varied. Both interests seek to influence public policy in order to meet their established agenda. St. John, Daun-Barnett, and Moronski-Chapman (2013) stated, “public policy decisions are made through political process involving social interest and the use of rationalizations and research” (p. 36). Upon occasion, public education succumbs to the desires and needs of both politicians and business. Local and national companies often work with school districts by providing opportunities for students to grow and resources for schools to utilize.

**Coalition**

Bolman and Deal (2008) described organizations as “coalitions composed of individuals and groups with enduring differences who live in a world of scarce resources” (p. 209). Because there are limitations to such resources as money and time, CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA collaborate on a regular basis. These organizations regularly depended upon one another to oversee programs, share data, and hold one another accountable. It is a likeminded approach to improving student education that encourages these organizations to collaborate while working closely together.
This coalition of organizations maintains a focus of helping students to achieve which facilitates a collaboration that attempts to address educational needs at a local and national level. CAEP attempts to “advance excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality…in order to…support the development of all students” (CAEP, 2015c). CCSSO is a nationwide, nonpartisan, and nonprofit membership organization…committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning” (CCSSO, 2015b). DESE is a member of CCSSO and interacts closely with CAEP and MPEA. This coalition of educational institutions bolsters their overall ability to improve student education.

**Agenda setting.** One way coalitions achieve control is through their ability to set or control the agenda. Bolman and Deal (2008) referred to an agenda as “a statement of interests and a scenario for getting the goods” (p. 214). A like-minded focus from multiple entities on the centralized goal of student achievement is helpful in moving past one level of agenda setting. Instead of looking for commonalities on major issues, this identified coalition works to target how they will achieve their goal. Prioritizing issues is still a part of the process. CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA hold a common goal while each has its own vision. It is policy that guides organizational vision and aids these groups in accomplishing educational improvement.

**Policy.** Struggle over how to best facilitate student success can lead to the splitting of resources and conflict. Organizations adopt policy in order to support a vision to guide or direct resources while minimizing conflict (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Mitchell, Crowson, and Shipps (2011) described policy making as a struggle over ideas. Vision and policy morph from ideas that pattern and guide the direction an organization
will take. A loss of direction or clarity creates confusion, conflict, and a loss of purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

**Tunnel vision.** A loss of vision is not the only concern for organizations in establishing policy. A focus lacking in breadth is just as detrimental to an organization as an absence of one. With such focused intention, there is a danger of failing to see a perspective outside of the established norm. The federal government became so engrossed in affecting change with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that it failed to take into account capacity, capability, and excellence (Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011). A congruent idea or objective forwarded by multiple sources does not ensure its fulfillment. McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) stressed the importance of multiple viewpoints when evaluating a program or policy. A policy that fails to account for multiple views, data, political influences, and resources is not likely to succeed (Bolman & Deal, 2008; McDavid, Huse, Hawthorn, 2013; Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011; St. John, Daun-Barnett, & Moronski-Chapman, 2013). Success in established practices and tradition contribute to a resistance to new ideas ((Bolman & Deal, 2008; McDavid, Huse, Hawthorn, 2013; Mitchell, Crowson, & Shipps, 2011; Northouse, 2013; Shafritz, Ott, Jang, 2005; St. John, Daun-Barnett, & Moronski-Chapman, 2013).

**Summary of Political Frame in CAEP, CCSSO, DESSE, and MPEA**

It is through individual ideas that visions take form and policy is developed. Ideas within an organization should not be stifled or too narrowly confined if growth is to occur and stagnation avoided (Northouse, 2013). Organizations depend on ideas to develop policy that will maximize the use of its resources (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Political influences in the form of power, conflict, and coalition influence policy.
Organizations such as CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA form a coalition with an over reaching goal designed to improve student education. The interdependency these organizations have upon one another is impactful to each. Because of the interdependency that these organizations have, any adjustment to the initial preparation of educational leaders affects CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA as a whole and cannot be limited to a single entity.

**Leadership Themes Guiding CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA**

A unified goal to improve education within a coalition of organizations does not guarantee harmony or a unified style of leadership. “Leadership is a complex process having multiple dimensions” (Northouse, 2013, p. 1). Goleman (2011) identified “a high degree of emotional intelligence” (p. 1) as the most common trait in effective leaders. Kotter (1990/2011) noted leadership is more about coping with change while management is about coping with complexity. Like individuals, organizations gravitate to a particular design of leadership but are not limited to that approach. “Authentic leaders demonstrate a passion for their purpose, practice their values consistently, and lead with their hearts as well as their heads” (George, Sims, & Mclean, 2011, p. 164). The list of possible styles to lead is as extensive as the list of organizations.

Leaders make decisions every day that may hinder or help their organization (Campbell, Whitehead, & Finkelstein, 2011). Whether a leader gravitates to a technical or artistic approach, the impact of one’s leadership style has a profound effect on his or her organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Identifying some of the more prominent styles of leadership within an organization helps to gain perspective on how these groups...
operate. Servant Leadership, Communitarianism, and Boundary Spanners are all themes of leadership exhibited by CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA.

**Servant Leadership**

Servant Leadership is a style guiding and directing others while placing the needs of others before self (Bowman, 2005; Northouse, 2013; Spears, 2010). According to Greenleaf (2002):

> The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 27)

The ten characteristics providing a foundation for Servant Leadership are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Northouse, 2013; Spears, 2010). Listening, stewardship, and building community are three Servant Leadership traits that come to the forefront of recognizable leadership attributes in CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA.

**Listening.** CAEP, CCSSO, and MDESE spend considerable time and resources gathering data. Gathered data from CAEP, CCSSO and MDESE includes consultation or input from its membership. Each of these organizations use accumulated evidence and input that is consistent with their members’ desire to improve education. “The servant leader seeks to identify the will of the group and helps to clarify that will” (Spears, 2010,
These organizations’ leadership exhibit the Servant Leadership trait of listening to those they lead by utilizing established internal departments dedicated to gathering knowledge to guide the decision making process.

While the MPEA does not possess the internal structural capacity of CAEP, CCSSO, and MDESE, it does maintain open lines of communication with these entities and others. Most notably, MPEA’s leadership exhibits the Servant Leadership trait of listening. It is through their personal interaction and regularly scheduled conferences MPEA takes notice of input from individuals and organizations. Representatives from MDESE, CAEP, and various graduate programs present regularly at spring and fall conferences (MPEA, 2015b).

**Stewardship.** In Servant Leadership, Spears (2010) noted that those exhibiting traits of stewardship use “openness and persuasion, rather than control” (p. 29) to guide others. This focus on open conversation and dialogue from all members empowers them to hold “their institutions in trust for the greater good of society” (Spears, 2010, p. 29). CCSSO and CAEP are national organizations entrusted with responsibilities directed at improving education for every child (CCSSO, 2015d; CAEP, 2015c). CAEP focuses specifically on accreditation for educator preparation while CCSSO works to improve student education with educational data and information systems, innovation lab network, legislation and advocacy, standards, assessment and accountability (CCSSO, 2015d).

Leadership for MDESE and MPEA interact on a national level yet direct the greater portion of their focus on educational matters related to the state of Missouri. MDESE’s charge is to work with educators, government agencies, politicians, citizens, and community leaders in order to build and maintain a strong public educational system.
DESE, 2015d). MPEA leadership acts in stewardship of varying universities by providing information and insight that aids in the training and development of educational leaders.

**Building community.** It is important to build community within educational institutions and organizations in order to achieve or succeed (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Merriam, 2014; Northouse, 2013). The Servant Leader seeks to build “community among those who work within a given institution” (Spears, 2010, p. 29). Leadership within CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA “have shared interests and pursuits and feel a sense of unity and relatedness” (Northouse, 2013, p. 223). A shared vision of improving education as a whole gains strength through each organization’s specialized contribution toward improving student learning. These organizations find themselves bound together by their collective goal.

**Communitarian**

“Communitarianism is a social philosophy that maintains that society should articulate what is good—that such articulation is both needed and legitimate” (Christensen & Levinson, 2003, p. 224). Leadership within CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA make decisions not based on personal preference or need but on what is best for their organization. Each institution’s leadership takes into consideration what is best for their organizational community. Accompanying each organization’s cooperate goal is an overreaching focus of bettering education. According to Baxter, Thessin, and Clayton (2014):
ISLLCC standards are explicitly communitarian in that school leader does not place emphasis on only “each student” or on self, but also on a collected school community equally comprised of multiple and diverse constituents. (p. 14)

CCSSO aids in sponsoring these standards. CAEP, MDESE, and MPEA adopted standards of educational behavior in order to provide guidelines for the development and maintenance of educational leaders. Clear connections and identifying components of community within and between these organizations are evident.

**Boundary Spanners**

Edmondson (2012) identified education, status, and physical distance as the three types of boundaries. Those individuals or organizations that negotiate or persuade others to participate in harmony, work in the capacity of Boundary Spanners (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Williams (2010) categorized Boundary Spanners into those who have an assigned job or responsibility to work at bringing people together and those who take on the role as part of their job. Regardless of the reasoning, bringing individuals and organizations together is a crucial and influential role in any system.

CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA work to bring individuals and organizations together. CAEP and its subsidiaries work to provide venues for K-12 and even post-secondary educators in order to meet, collaborate, and develop national standards of excellence in education (CAEP, 2015a). CCSSO endeavors to bring together educators, educational institutions, individuals, and organizations in order to improve education (CCSSO, 2015, C). MDESE and its leadership act as Boundary Spanners between local and national government entities (MDESE, 2015d) while MPEA leadership operates to
unify and link Missouri schools responsible for initial administrative preparation with one another and other organizations such as CAEP, CCSSO, and MDESE (MPEA, 2015c).

Implications for Research

The purpose of this study was to gain further insight concerning initial administrator preparation as it relates to AP’s in the K-12 setting. The position of AP is no longer just a training ground for those wishing to move into a lead administrative position (Daresh, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). APs today hold positions of leadership and responsibility considered important to a school’s success (Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Simpson, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). There is concern and even doubt that initial preparation for APs has not kept pace with the demands and responsibilities associated to the job (Cohen, 2008; Reich, 2014).

Servant leaders look to lead others by placing their needs before self (Spears, 2010). Communitarianism leadership requires “the identification of the ego and the isolation of the self from decision-making” (Baxter, Thessin, & Clayton, 2014, p. 13). Boundary Spanners work to unify parties of differing perspectives in order to reach a goal (Williams, 2010). Each of these leadership styles reach out to serve the needs of others so they may reach goals and objectives. These styles of leadership resonate with the stated educational objectives and visions of CAEP, CCSSO, DESE, and MPEA. It is by providing further data and insight to the initial preparation of APs that those desiring to serve will receive useful information in aiding to improve education.

It is through the values found in Communitarianism, Servant Leadership, and Boundary Spanning that gathered data helped in furthering open lines of communication and growth. Servant Leadership is built on strong relationships established through
listening, showing empathy, and ethical behavior (Northouse, 2013; Smith, 2005). Communitarianism seeks to include all in establishing group norms and standards by listening, developing effective relationships, and communication (Baxter, Thessin, & Clayton, 2014; Etzioni, 2003). Boundary Spanners, as well, utilize effective communication, strong relationships, and ethical practices to be effective leaders (Beltramo, 2014; Bolman, & Deal, 2008). Each of these leadership practices places high value in listening to those with whom they work, lead, and serve.

It is by maintaining a Servant Leadership attitude while applying boundary spanning skills between multiple entities that a Communitarian decision on how to apply gathered data related to AP training can best serve education as a whole. Bruffee (1999) spoke to the importance of the appropriate or accurate language to take advantage of higher levels of communication. Relaying acquired data while applying the same leadership traits emulated within the targeted organizations gives familiarity to those receiving the proposed evidence. Effectively relaying or presenting gathered information is not adequately conferred without taking into account the audience receiving it (Merriam, 2009). Trust must be established or identified between the presenter and those receiving information for efficient dialogue to take place.

Creswell (2009), Merriam (2009), Field (2012), and McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) all spoke to the importance of integrity in gathering data to be presented as evidence. Individual trust is built on one’s integrity, “people trust you when you are genuine and authentic, not a replica of someone else” (George et. al., 2011, p. 163). By presenting information from a perspective of leadership that is true to not only the
targeted organizations but that of the researcher, an honest and compelling line of inquiry may bring new vision to initial administrative preparation as it relates to APs.

Summary

The organizational leadership of CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA successfully exhibits traits of Servant Leadership, Communitarianism, and Boundary Spanners. Individual and organizational success is in meeting the needs of others, bringing separate parties together, and coming to consensus. These organizations hold to established precepts because they adhere to membership expectations concerning leadership. CAEP and CCSSO deal with a great deal of political power, MDESE leans on an established amount of referent power (French & Raven, 1959/2005), and MPEA embraces its attributes of persuasion (Russell & Stone, 2002) and expertise to reach its goals. All of these educational associations work with, depend on, and refer to one another in making decisions. This data was collected and examined through a lens forded on interdependence, cooperation, and Servant Leadership in a desire to provide further insight regarding initial administrator preparation. In a hope encouraging discussion on this subject, an articulated and organized summary of gathered information will be presented to the MPEA.
SECTION THREE:

SCHOLARLY REVIEW
Introduction

“Assistant Principals (APs) have tough and varied jobs necessary to ensure our schools run smoothly” (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013, p. 204). The role of AP remains one of the least researched topics on educational leadership in books and journals today (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002; Yu-Kwong, & Walker, 2010). Accompanying this lack of AP research is an increase in duties and responsibilities associated with the position (Clayton, 2014; Kwan, & Walker, 2012; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014; Williams, 2012). With an increase in AP responsibilities, why does so little research exist?

Marshall and Hooley (2006) stated, “the ambiguity and the random nature of school need or perception of need…has directed or guided…the evolution of the assistant…principal… more than any clear data or research” (p. 2).

In today’s educational setting, data driven decisions and accountability guide educational leaders in the choices they make (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001). Failing to address an identified problem or shortfall in today’s educational setting is inconsistent with current trends. An acknowledged problem concerning the AP calls for further research into the initial training of educational leaders in relation to the position of AP (Clayton, 2012; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Kwan & Walker, 2012). Specific data related to the initial preparedness of educational leaders as it relates to APs will help to address this concern.

Educational leaders and school districts from Pennsylvania to California look to improve the effectiveness of APs across their respective states (Gill, 2012; Oliver, 2005; Pietro, 1999; Williams, 2012). Improvement initiatives related to APs include mentoring, one-day seminars, and a combination of both (Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013;
A lack in AP preparedness related to a shortfall in initial instructional preparation appears to be a national concern that varies from state to state. In 2014, MDESE identified 3,472 K-12 certified educational administrators within the state of Missouri. Of the MDESE recognized administrators, 1,221 were APs (MDESE, 2015a). The purpose of this study is to gain data that will contribute to insight concerning the preparedness of educational administrators in relation to the position of AP.

In order to bring further understanding and provide more data related to educational leaders as it applies to AP preparation, a review of literature and explanation of the conceptual framework guiding this study follows. Succeeding an explanation of the established conceptual framework is a description regarding AP history. Following AP history is a brief explanation addressing how AP responsibilities and duties have evolved into its present representation. An inspection of literature opens by identifying the most prominent responsibilities and duties associated with individuals appointed serving as an AP. Material related to administrator preparation and its relevance to AP performance concludes the literature review.

**Conceptual Framework**

The lens through which literature and data were evaluated is influenced by components of Servant Leadership theory, Communitarian theory, and the concept of Boundary Spanners. These theories aid in identifying relevant information and perspectives tied to this study’s goal of gathering relevant data related to initial AP preparedness. In order to see clearly through this established lens, one must have a definition of the AP. The most common interpretation for the position of AP is identified in the name or title itself. The commonly accepted definition of the “assistant principal”
is to aid or help building principals (Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). It is the degree, capacity, or manner to which APs aid and work with their respective leadership that is continually taken into consideration and evaluation (Daresh, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). In order for APs to aid or help lead principals in his or her duties, they must be prepared to adequately serve in whatever capacity is deemed necessary.

Educational leaders such as building principals and superintendents experience some differentiation of assignments from district to district but neither is as subject to a variation of responsibilities and duties as those holding a position as AP (Scott, 2011). This fluctuation or inconsistency of assigned duties and responsibilities to APs lends itself to a level of flexibility or willingness to serve. Servant Leadership advocates for individuals to place the needs of others above his or her own (Bowman, 2005). Placing the needs of others before one’s self is not conducive to having flexibility in leadership.

Similarly, Communitarianism identifies a call for decision-making that emphasizes input from all members of the school community (Baxter, 2014; Berreth & Scherer, 1993; Merry, 2005). Communitarian decisions are based on what is best for the whole community or school as the community sees fit (Berreth, & Scherer 1993). Educational institutions such as CAEP and CCSSO come to settlement on varying issues with an over reaching goal to better the educational community as a whole (CAEP, 2015c; CCSSO, 2015c).

Coming to consensus in order to decide upon a course of action between differing opinions is aided by individuals encouraging compromise across boundaries (Williams, 2010). These individuals providing bridges between gaps of opinion and ideology are
called “boundary Spanners” (Edmondson, 2012). APs often act as a liaison between students and parents, parents and teacher, or teachers and lead principals (Beltramo, 2014). Due to their efforts, “boundary spanners…often experience isolation in their attempts to meet the conflicting needs of two groups while trying to maintain the appearance of distance needed for trust” (Beltramo, 2014, p. 114). Obligations often-associated with those in AP leadership positions require them to serve others as they support the lead principal by developing consensus and acting as mediator in conflicts (Weller & Weller, 2002).

Servant Leaders, Communitarians, and Boundary Spanners all believe selflessness is a fundamental attribute that should be personified by those in positions of leadership. Each theory asserts that a certain amount of selfless service must take place in order for success to materialize (Baxter, 2014; Beltramo, 2014; Berreth, 1993; Bowman, 2005; Merry, 2005). In relation to service, a primary component of the AP position is to aid the lead principal in attaining his/her established goals. Support manifests itself through AP backing of identified policies and procedures as if they are his/her own. The responsibility to place the needs of community over self, serve others, and build consensus between individuals are identifiable skills found in the PSEL standards, and aid in developing the conceptual lens through which evidence is viewed.

This research utilized the previously mentioned lens and advanced from a desire to identify why AP specific preparation is not available or absent during the required course work of school administrators and educational leaders certified in K-8, 7-12, and superintendents in the state of Missouri. With half of all public high school administrators and one third of all building administrators in Missouri determined to be
APs (DESE, 2015a), the identification of what is important components related to the initial preparation of educational leaders associated with the position of AP should not be overlooked. To reach an understanding concerning this absence of AP specific administrator preparation, the sometimes “emic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14) or conflicting perceptions of AP’s, lead principals, district level administrators, and educators combine in developing perspective and usable data. Three areas of significance help to focus the theoretical looking glass of this study.

First, an identification of the significant skills needed in order to be an outstanding or successful AP is identified. The identified skills are tied to duties and responsibilities typically associated with AP responsibilities. An examination of current literature aided in identifying then determining the significant skills of APs. These identifiable and significant skills include a knowledge of school discipline and law, leadership instruction, management of people, and management in general (Clayton, 2014; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014; Williams, 2012). This identification of AP skills or tools provides a baseline from which to scrutinize both quantitative and qualitative data.

Second, an understanding or insight concerning the impact of initial instructional curriculum as it applies to APs is important. An absence of uniformity in the dispensing of AP authority and duty in buildings and school districts across the nation (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013) establishes ambiguity in effectively determining what instructional training APs should receive during their initial education. To date, introductory AP preparation does not vary in any aspect from that of a lead administrator nor does the lead administrator receive specific preparation related to mentoring those in
the position of AP. Differentiation exists in the state of Missouri concerning certification of administrative positions as it relates to K-7, 7-12, and district level leadership (DESE, 2015b). No such diversity or separation is available during initial institutional development of educational leaders in Missouri related to AP usage or responsibilities.

Third, an examination similar to the assessment of program outcome or impact in relation to administrator preparation delivers further insight concerning APs (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). This assessment gathers information on the perceptions of individuals certified as educational leaders in the state of Missouri. Focusing on outcome perceptions of initial preparation impact assists in keeping research from wandering outside of the established parameters. This data aids in making post assessment decisions and addressing a possible action plan (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013), should a need be identified.

With a call for “assistant principals to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional development growth activities” (Oliver, 2005, p. 89), further information will serve in helping to identify why there is such a consistent call for additional AP training. Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, (2004) noted the importance of collecting data in order to assess whether a program is effectively serving client needs. This focus on educational administrator’s initial preparedness is a direct attempt at identifying if there are absences of instructional focus that would specifically benefit or hinder AP’s in successfully carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Ultimately, the conceptual framework for this study is to “examine potential unmet needs of people” (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 227) or in this case APs. While the previous statement is
more indicative of a needs assessment, the conceptual idea behind this study is more interested in “when” the need can or should be met. This research ultimately focuses on when or if instruction concerning the position of AP occurs. The focus on when information or preparation is received helps to direct a researchers’ glimpse into whether or not institutional leadership preparation related to APs should or should not change.

**Historical Perspective on the Assistant Principal**

The Sumerians receive credit for starting the first schools, as we see in today’s world. Around 3500 B.C. a Sumerian school administrator was identified with the name of “ummia” which we identify as “expert” or “professor” (Panati, 1984, p. 152). While the name has morphed from ummia to principal, school administrators still perform an important if not essential role in a school setting and are considered by some to be experts. Over the centuries, the role and responsibilities of school administration have evolved with changing demands. Pierce (1935) noted that earlier principals from the 1700’s acted in the capacity of both teacher and administrator. It was not until the late 1800’s and early 1900’s that larger schools in cities such as New York aided in advancing a need for fulltime administrators in the role of principal and AP (PiP, 1999). “As schooling expanded, so did the educational bureaucracy, with the number of principals doubling between 1920 and 1930” (Glanz, 2004, p. 4). Today’s building level administrative titles/roles in Missouri include high school, junior high, middle school, and elementary principals with the additional precursor of assistant to accompany each position should the need arise. The role of the AP “originated as an administrative function” (Glanz, 2004, p. 7) to support the lead principal. While APs today still hold the responsibility and duty to support the lead principal, they are now educational leaders
that hold authority and commission reaching far beyond those assigned to their predecessors (Reich, 2012). The function and burden of the AP has increased exponentially (Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2012).

The state of Missouri collaborates with organizations such as CCSSO, MPEA, and NPBEA in order to align and develop educational standards. An element of this partnership was the adoption of ISLLC standards; now PSEL, which are used to guide and direct Missouri educational administrators through their certification and service. Certification for a building principal in elementary, grades 7 through 12, or K through 12 building are available. Those individuals desiring a district level administrative position require yet another level of training and certification in order to meet state qualifications. However, there is no specialized certification or initial training for the position of AP. Across the nation, additional on the job training has become a necessity for some APs and a requirement for others (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014). School administrators are under increasing pressure to improve student performance while being asked to implement instructional reforms such as Common Core State Standards and standards based grading in order to align with state and national expectations (Odden, 2012; Oxley, 2012; VanTuyle; 2014). This expanding demand to improve student performance continues to affect and influence assigned responsibilities and duties given to APs.

**Evolution of the AP**

Marshall and Hooley (2006) stated, “The ambiguity and random nature of school need or perception of need seem to direct the evolution of the assistant more than any clear data or research” (p. 2). A lack of research related to APs gives service to Marshall
and Hooley’s thoughts. APs have become more a product anchored to individualized district and building need instead of a leadership position developed then established with discernable data. Weller and Weller (2002) pointed out “no universal definition of the role or clearly defined job description of the position of assistant principal exists…and…thus is open to interpretation by principals and central office personnel alike” (p. xiii). This uncertainty of positional responsibility from building to building and district to district provides challenges in leadership preparation related to APs. Daresh (2004) described the position of AP as one in which individuals are often seen as “neither fish nor fowl…and caught on an island of ambiguity which is often thought of as neither teacher nor…real administrator” (p. 3). A lack in consistency related to assigned duties and responsibilities associated with the position of AP seems to be the only persistent classification of an AP’s assignment when he or she goes to work for the first time (Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002).

Despite this inadequacy of uniformity in the assignment of authority and leadership for APs, a pattern of responsibilities and duties commonly assigned to those holding the title of AP is currently identifiable. Assistant principals are “generally viewed as managers” (Weller & Weller, 2002, p. 4) and usually perform more management tasks than principals; management of people (Reich, 2012; Smith, 2010), and management in general (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013) are common responsibilities assigned to those in the position of AP. Kotter (2011) stated, “leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action” (p. 37). While debate still exists as to whether management is a style of leadership or component of it, all agree that managers or management is a significant ingredient to organizational
success (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Levi, 2014; Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005). How or what constitutes a primary responsibility associated with AP management differs according to the identified needs of each school district or building principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002).

Many AP duties lend themselves to the management of students and staff. Glanz (2004) identified 25 different duties commonly performed by AP’s. Weller and Weller (2002) gave examples of school districts describing AP responsibilities ranging from 12 to 27. Daresh (2004), Glanz (2004), Simpson (2000), Weller and Weller (2002), and Marshall and Hooley (2006) each identify the role of disciplinarian and supervision as the primary management responsibility for APs today. What is not addressed in literature is how the AP is to prepare for or adapt to the ambiguity of responsibilities and duties assigned to them outside of supervision and discipline. This fluctuation of AP duties and responsibilities anchors itself in an identifiable set of skills needed to fulfill the multiple and shifting responsibilities associated with today’s AP.

**Administrator Preparation**

Building administrators are receiving increasing pressure from school boards and superintendents in the form of accountability as it relates to students’ academic performance (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001). This increased pressure from those above building principals has changed the way educational leaders perform their job (Hess & Kelly, 2005). “The evidence indicates that preparation has not kept pace with changes in the larger world of schooling, leaving graduates of principal preparation programs ill equipped for the challenges and opportunities posed by an area of accountability” (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Literature indicates a lack of preparedness for educational leaders in
general that may be over shadowing what appears to be an absence of initial AP
preparation over all.

With a change in the responsibilities and duties required by superintendents and
school boards it stands to reason that training used to prepare administrators should adapt
to these requirements as well. Literature indicates that effectively using appropriate
research, backed with accurate data, and with the correct tools is important in order for
building administrators to be successful. Hess and Kelly (2005) pointed out that if
building leaders are to use “accountability as an effective management tool…they should
be…equipped to make use of data, research, and the associated technology” (p. 18). Hess
and Kelly (2005) indicated what they saw as inconsistency or shortfalls in the area of
“data, technology, or research” (p. 18) in the initial programs of preparation for building
principals.

In contrast to the Hess and Kelly (2005) data identifying a shortfall in building
principal preparation, educators identified as novice or rookie superintendents found
general satisfaction in their initial academic preparation for duties and responsibilities
tied to the superintendency (Petersen, Fusarelli, Kowalski, 2008). Novice was defined as
an individual with prior experience in a superintendency while individuals in their first
year were considered rookies (Petersen, Fusarelli, Kowalski, 2008). “Inadequate district
finance,” “state accountability programs,” and “state pressure to implement change”
(Petersen, Fusarelli, Kowalski, 2008, p. 12) were identifiable pressures similar in nature
to what building level administrators felt (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Hess & Kelly,
2005). These identifiable pressures affecting the preparedness of superintendents and
building level principals are not the only concerns directed at initial administrative training programs.

Another prevalent question in current literature addresses concerns directed at the preparedness of APs moving into leadership positions. A need for further insight into AP preparedness also finds support in a growing number of conferences and training opportunities specifically targeting AP needs and development (Case, 2016). Consistency in a call for further training related to AP preparedness is apparent. While research is limited, some research on AP preparedness is available.

In 2008, Madden developed a study to examine AP preparedness that compared real tasks to perceived or ideal tasks. The overall purpose of Madden’s (2008) research was to “determine whether or not the role of assistant principal in the public secondary schools in the state of Georgia prepares one to serve as a principal” (p. 6). The original design of the AP was to prepare APs for the role of lead principal (Panati, 1984). The Madden study indicated that roles assigned to APs did not prepare them for the role of a lead principal. The identified ideal tasks for APs were Leader of Staff Personnel, Instructional Leader, Management of School, and finally Pupil Personnel. This data were similar to research from Weller and Weller (2002) when comparing actual roles and responsibilities of the AP to the perceived or desired AP role. In a study that differed from Weller and Weller (2002), “correlations between the ideal and actual task showed that there were significant positive correlations between the ideal and actual tasks performed” (Madden, 2008, p. 76) as it relates to the preparation of APs transitioning into lead principals. Both studies indicated that ideal and actual tasks assigned to APs are important factors in developing an AP’s ability to lead a building.
In 2011, Scott investigated expected tasks of public school APs at the secondary level versus actual tasks. Scott (2011) noted, “to prepare a new generation of educational leaders requires different competencies than those of previous generations of school leaders” (p. 20). Her study comprised responses from 283 APs from the state of Indiana. The distributed survey was to all secondary schools consisting of grades 9-12 and 7-12. The survey examined “six major competencies: management of school, leadership in staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel” (Scott, 2011, p. 18). “Recruiting and retaining competent administrators” (Scott, 2011, p. 14) was found to be a problem.

Kwan and Walker (2002) also identified retention and a lack of job satisfaction in educational leaders as a problem that further AP preparation would positively address. Success and satisfaction build upon one another. Scott (2011) believed “it is imperative to determine exactly what areas of competencies reflect the “real” work performed by secondary school assistant principals to help establish viable candidates” (p. 15) for the position of lead principal. Over 80% of respondents in Scott’s survey were satisfied with their role as AP. Some discrepancy between the perceived and actual job responsibilities was identifiable. Scott (2011) determined that in the task areas of “Management of schools, Leadership in Staff personnel, Instructional Leader, and Student Activities” APs desired more job responsibility than they were actually performing. This information identifies the importance of APs’ contributions as educational leaders but does not address initial leadership preparation as it relates to APs.

“Many assistant principals are not receiving the proper preparation for the role and responsibilities of the principalship” (Reich, 2012, p. 77). Reich’s 2012 survey “was
sent to high school assistant principals from 617 high schools representing 531 school
districts in the state of Missouri” (p. 55) and received responses from “100 participating
assistant principals” (p. 55). Gathered responses from this 2012 survey revealed that APs
feel ill prepared for the duties and responsibilities associated with the position. A 35-
question survey based on a seven point Likert scale provided quantitative data. Only the
reported perceptions of APs experiences provided perspective for the study’s responses.
While AP perspective is essential to research related to AP preparedness, it does not
provide a complete picture. Further data from the viewpoint of lead principals would
help in providing additional dialogue in examining then addressing AP preparedness.

Nieuwenhuizen (2011) provided a similar vision of AP insight to Reich’s work in
that only the perspective of APs was taken into account. Support for course work that is
more “skill-oriented in discipline…and…student management” (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011, p.
202) is a common theme among administrative desires. Twenty-two out of 24 surveyed
APs responded to a 2011 survey from Nieuwenhuizen. All participants were active
employees of Pleasantville School District during the time of the study. Nieuwenhuizen
(2011) “selected the qualitative descriptive study coupled with CRT (Critical Race
Theory) for…research design as it became apparent from the interviews that race was a
factor in the work” (p. 31). Nieuwenhuizen (2011) identified “a mismatch with the skills
taught in administrative preparation programs and actual job of the assistant principal” (p.
4). Specifically, APs identify a lack of training in their initial educational leadership
preparation as it relates to APs. Interviewed APs “felt that the training they had was
designed for principals and had little to do with the daily operation of
schools…and…discipline” (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011, p. 162). While this data were helpful
to the Pleasantville School District, its limited scope provides only a small segment of
evidence concerning AP preparation.

Williams’ (2012) study used a different method of gathering information than
Reich (2014) and Nieuwenhuizen (2013). She employed “the Delphi Method of
collecting information from a group of experts” (p. 96) to identify dispositions and skills
needed to be an effective disciplinarian in four leadership categories. Experts would
possess what Nonaka refers to as “tacit knowledge” (p. 98) as it relates to educational
leadership. The leadership categories identified were political and community leadership,
strategic, instructional, and organizational (Williams, 2012). Williams study determined:
“(1) being honest, visible, and ethical, (2) being a good communicator, (3) establi-
ishing a positive school climate, and (4) being fair and consistent” (p. 96) were the most needed
AP skills for success. These four standards were based on NCATE (now CAEP)
standards that provide the foundation for ISSLC educational leadership guidelines, which
are now “Professional Standards for Educational Leaders” (PSEL). Williams’ study
(2012) concluded “that there is limited research which includes the assistant principal at
the secondary level” (p. 107) and dealing with discipline in particular. Two separate
groups of experts of 10 then 12 were “selected” (Williams, 2012, p. 95) for the panels.
One limitation of this study lies in the limited number of participants. A second concern
lies in a lack of specificity related to the description or identification of credentials related
to members of the Delphi panel. The description of “other professionals with expertise in
the area of assistant principals and discipline” (Williams, 2012, p. 95) also lends itself to
a lack of credibility.
The initial training for educational leadership is a rich component of secondary public education. The stated purpose of a 1999 study conducted by Pietro (1999) was to “examine the perceptions of western Pennsylvania principals and assistant principals regarding the importance of their university training program in preparing them for the role of assistant principal” (p. 3). In all, 1,113 surveys mailed to 309 APs and 804 lead principals throughout western Pennsylvania provided data for the study. APs accounted for 211 surveys and lead principals 445 in order to garner 656 completed surveys. A 50% survey completion with over a thousand participants lends itself to accuracy in collected data (Creswell, 2009). The results of this study indicated that both principals and APs see educational administration programs as important in preparing APs for their role (Pietro, 1999). Furthermore, Pietro’s (1999) data indicated that consideration be given to specific course and curriculum requirements at the university level that include administrative training that is specific to APs. Despite Pietro’s (1999) recommendation, no AP specific training exists in current administrator preparation programs.

It is the preparation of APs to move into the role of lead principal that guide the developmental focus of Cohen’s 2008 study. Multiple questions based on AP perceptions lead this study. Inquiries centered on what relevancy APs felt that daily experiences and graduate programs had on preparing them to become a lead principal give foundation to this study. The researcher used Pearson’s correlation coefficients and found there was not only a positive but significant relationship “between assistant principals’ efficacy and the perceived importance of formal university course work” (Cohen, 2008, p. 88).
This information supports the importance of initial educational administrative course work. Data revealed graduate leadership, school finance, activity management, and human growth and development courses all showed a positive and significant relationship previously identified. Cohen’s (2008) study was comprised of 115 principals and APs. All individuals taking part in the study were “employed in suburban school districts located in metro Atlanta (Pennsylvania) area” (Cohen, 2008, p. 87). This study ranked on the job training as the most significant and important in preparation for the job of principal, followed by formal university coursework, workshops/conferences/in-service and then programs such as Principal Academies. This study encouraged future researchers to “explore what specific topics within the leadership course are most relevant to preparedness for principalship” (Cohen, 2008, p. 89). Limitations of this study included a pool of participants lacking in geographic diversity. Again, data related to AP preparedness for the lead position do not provide information directly related to the job of AP itself.

Hutton (2013) used a “mixed method approach…to conduct the evaluation of the training program for secondary school principals conducted in a three-year period between 2006 and 2009” (p. 31). A total of twenty-eight graduates participated in the study of which 15 provided an interview three years after program completion for an impact evaluation. This study was conducted in an effort to respond to “concerns for the leadership deficiencies in the school system” (Hutton, 2013, p. 32) of Jamaica. Hutton (2013) concluded any new presentation of a principal preparation program should be done in “partnership with the principals’ and teachers’ organizations, the central ministry and the entities responsible for delivering the program” (p. 46).
This study indicated that educational leadership preparation is not an issue exclusively embodied within the United States, or Missouri. The recognition of need for unilateral cooperation between all those involved in the development of educational leaders is supported by the problems exhibited in the training and certification of educational leaders in Jamaica. Apparent concerns or issues of educational leadership development is not limited to the United States. Organizations and institutions within the United States, such as CAEP, CCSSO, MDESE, and MPEA, recognize the importance of administrative development and support from multiple entities. Due to differences in certification and preparation, directly applying these results to administrator preparation in the United States proposes possible issues associated with reliability. A larger sampling of participants would aid in strengthening the validity of these findings (Creswell, 2009; Field, 2012).

Another study that took into account administrator perceptions focused on mentoring programs as they applied to new APs (Curry, 2009). This research used a qualitative case study in order to develop “a better understanding of administrators’ perceptions of mentoring programs for new assistant principals” (Curry, 2009, p. 48). This qualitative data are but one aspect needed in what Garvin and Roberto (2013) described as the process of decision-making by giving strength to “inquiry” (p. 77) through the perceptions of new APs. Nine participants provided data for this case study, five APs at the elementary level…three principals serving as mentors…and one director of leadership development” (Curry, 2009, p. 48). The focus group in this particular study is small in comparison to a national investigation but identifies the importance of mentoring programs in pedagogical development.
A better understanding of The High Stakes Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), a mentoring program for new APs, located in Georgia was the focal point of this study. The analysis of data and data collection occurred simultaneously. “The researcher, in looking for the common themes, made certain that the common themes were aligned with the three research questions” (Curry, 2009, p. 53). This alignment to research questions gave validity and strength to study results (Creswell, 2009; Field, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Newly hired APs felt the mentoring program was beneficial and effective (Curry, 2009). Mentoring aids in developing a sense of community embraced by leadership philosophies identified with the scholar-practitioner (Schultz, 2010), and Servant Leadership (Jennings & Stahl-Wert, 2003). Limited exposure, time constraints, and a lack of support beyond the mentoring program provide strength in developing barriers to the gathered data related to the mentoring program’s effectiveness (Curry, 2009). Finally, Curry (2009) noted that successful pairing of mentor and mentee was a benefit to APs and vital to a positive experience. Developing or maintaining a positive experience for APs helped to develop success but does not give answers related to how initial leadership training might better prepare its leadership as it relates to the position of AP.

New policies and legislation designed to improve principal preparation in the state of Illinois required institutions providing principal preparation programs “to redesign their programs and apply for program approval from the Illinois State Educator Professional Licensure Board” (VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014, p.116). The Illinois directive to revamp educational leader’s preparation was the focus of a study by VanTuyle and Reeves (2014). Topical questions guiding this study focused on the Illinois reform of
principal’s preparations. These new policies and legislation from Illinois lawmakers support a need for the improvement in preparation of APs.

This study utilized background literature gathered from around the nation combined with demographic data from Illinois to examine the impact of these new rules on rural schools within the state. VanTuyle and Reeves (2014) pointed out successful programs in Kentucky, Oregon, and Alaska have stylized components within their training designed to meet the unique needs of rural administrators. This study suggested that Illinois follow suit with other states and adjust to the individualized needs of rural schools.

Research such as this gives evidence to the importance of specialized preparation of educational leaders and the positive impact it can have on student performance. Educational institutions across the nation are adjusting and changing their educational administrative programs in order to meet “voices of national concern as to whether U.S. schools are preparing their students for the future’s global competition” (VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014, p. 113). Adjustments to our educational preparation are needed if we are to keep pace with ever increasing demands.

**Administrator Certification**

Educational leaders in buildings and districts across the United States aid in determining whether US educated students will compete globally (VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). “The importance of principals is echoed repeatedly by educators, researchers focused on leadership, and organizations concerned with ensuring that all students have access to high-quality schools” (NASSP & NAESP, 2013). The importance of effective and quality in initial leadership preparation should not be underestimated or overlooked.
Preparation for educational leaders within the US attempts to monitor and maintain a level of consistency and excellence for the betterment of education as a whole (CAEP, 2015c; CCSSO, 2015c). These national standards for excellence in educational leadership are adopted in Missouri (DESE, 2015e; MPEA, 2015c). Specialized certification for elementary principals, secondary principals and the superintendency aid in defining, evaluating, and maintaining effective leadership preparedness for educational leaders seeking educational leadership positions in Missouri (MSU, 2016a; UM, 2016a).

**Elementary principal.** Missouri recognizes the importance of specialized leadership preparation for elementary building principals by offering specific initial administrative coursework and state certification to those wishing to become an elementary building principal along with the usual courses for preparation of school administrators. Aiding teachers in the development and mastery of teaching practices specifically tied to elementary teaching practices is a component absent from secondary and superintendent instruction (MSU, 2016d; UM, 2016b). These courses typically focus specifically on elementary curriculum. Courses such as “The Elementary School Principal”, “Curriculum for Elementary Principals”, “Elementary School Curriculum”, and on site internships are examples of specific courses (MSU, 2016b).

**High school principal.** Missouri also recognizes the importance of specialized leadership preparation for those seeking certification as high school building principals by offering specific initial administrative preparation and state certification to those desiring to become building administrators at the secondary level along with the usual administrator courses. Similar to requirements for elementary principals, initial
preparation for high school principals focuses on curriculum and requires intern experiences (MSU, 2016c; SEMO, 2016). The differentiation between elementary and secondary certification is approximately 12 hours that target secondary or elementary experiences (MSU, 2016b; MSU, 2016c; SEMO, 2016a).

**Superintendent.** Initial certification specifically tailored for the superintendent is more prevalent than classes associated with elementary and secondary administrators in Missouri. Classes such as “Public School Finance”, “School Plant Planning”, “The Superintendency”, and “Politics of Education” are among some of the initial classes specifically directed at preparing educational leaders for the responsibilities and duties associated with a superintendency (MSU, 2016e). Certification for the superintendency in Missouri requires on site internship classes related to superintendent duties and responsibilities along with several classes associated or directed at district level finance (MSU, 2016e; UM, 2016c).

**Administrative Skills**

Daresh and Playko (1994) identified technical, social, and self-awareness dexterity as over-reaching skills needed by “aspiring administrators and experienced principals” (p. 37) to successfully lead. Technical skills include “developing and managing a budget…evaluation of staff…and school law” (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 38). Socialization and self-awareness skill include the identification of key players and self-confidence in ones’ actions (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 38). The adoption of ISSLC standards by MDESE and other educational institutions show support or agreement for findings from the Daresh and Playko study (CCSSO, 2015a; MDESE, 2015b). “An increasing number of states are beginning to appreciate that, because of the difficulties
associated with the principalship, strategies need to be derived to provide special support to administrative newcomers” (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 42).

ISSLC originally identified seven standards to “emphasize the core leadership responsibilities most critical to improving the academic success and personal well-being of children” (CCSSO, 2015a, p. 7). In 2008, ISSLC improved upon the “first standard for educational leaders” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 1). NPBEA developed ten Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) which has been adopted by many of the same organizations that adopted ISSLC standards (NPBEA, 2015). There is consensus in literature and organizations that developing a shared vision, support for instruction, developing staff, effective management, and the cultivation of community are among the skills needed for any administrator to be successful (CCSSO, 2015).

**Summary**

This literature review examined relevant information regarding the preparation of educational administrators in relation to the position of AP. A conceptual framework was presented in order to give insight and perspective concerning the guiding principles of this study. A brief history of the AP and its evolution followed the conceptual framework. Literature also helps to identify the most prominent responsibilities and duties associated with the building APs. Common themes concerning the development of APs centered on management of school, leadership in staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel (Reich, 2012; Scott, 2011; Weller & Weller, 2002). A knowledge of school discipline and law were the most consistently identified skills associated with successful APs (Clayton, 2014;
The review of literature concluded with material deemed pertinent to administrator preparation and its relevance to AP performance or preparation.

Many consider the position of AP a launching point or training stop for those interested in a career as a school administrator (Daresh, 2004; Simpson, 2000; Weller & Weller, 2002). There is consensus that improvement or change in administrator preparation will help in the improvement leadership and ultimately student performance (Hutton, 2013; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014; Scott, 2011; VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). Even with the acknowledged importance of the position of AP, a scarcity of research and literature pertaining to the role of AP was apparent (Hutton, 2013; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014; Scott, 2011). An incongruity between perceived and actual duties associated with the position of AP is complicated with inconsistencies of duties and responsibilities assigned to APs across the nation (Pietro, 1999; Scott, 2012). This incongruity of perception concerning the position of AP was as varied as the number of school districts across the nation (Glanz, 2004; Oliver, 2005; Weller & Weller, 2002). What authors do agree upon is that AP leadership is an important and continually developing leadership position in education today.

This scholarly review examined the preparedness of educational leaders as it relates to the position of APs. With approximately one third of all Missouri administrators classified as APs (DESE, 2014a), the impetus of maximizing AP initial preparation cannot be overlooked (Cohen, 2008; Madden, 2008). It is the lack or absence of applicable data concerning AP preparedness that has raised concerns across the nation (Clayton, 2012; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Reich, 2014). Educators today face ever increasing and changing pressures from both external and
internal influences. Accompanying today’s educational pressures is the change of AP duties and responsibilities, which mandates a call for training beyond the initial scholarly preparation (Gill 2012; Hutton, 2013; Oliver 2005).
SECTION FOUR:
CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE
TO BE SUBMITTED TO:
MISSOURI PROFESSORS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
Executive Summary

Initial Administrator Preparation as it Relates to the Assistant Principal

Introduction

With new pressures on educational administrators broadening at a rapid pace, it is unclear if the initial preparation of educational leaders, in relation to the role of assistant principals, has kept pace with growing positional demands.

While researchers have identified multiple skills needed in order to fulfill the most commonly identified job duties or responsibilities assigned to APs (Clayton, 2014; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Lazaridou, 2009; Reich, 2014; Smith, 2010; Williams, 2012), specific initial preparation as it relates to the AP is not identifiable.

With recognition of the ever-expanding role of APs and multiple certifications acknowledging the importance of diverse administrative positions in the state of Missouri, this study brings further data related to the initial preparation of educational leaders as it relates to APs.

Methods

Of the 2,590 surveys emailed, 572 participants responded with 452 completing the survey. Multiple forms of data “provide a more complete understanding of research problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 19). APs, lead principals who had been/have an AP and leads who have never been/had/have an AP comprised three survey groups. A six point Likert scale provided quantitative data while open-ended questions allowed for qualitative information.

Findings

Evaluations, discipline, instruction, and management were reported as the top four responsibilities or duties for APs and lead administrators.

Over half of lead administrators who had/have APs were able to identify “little” or “nothing” in initial coursework that directly related to the development or preparation of APs.

Over half of the three survey groups indicated satisfaction with their initial preparation for their respective jobs.

Over 80% of participants agreed that initial preparation directly related to the position of AP would be beneficial to administrators.

Answer to Research Questions

How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?

- Lead principals do not show strong support in their initial coursework’s ability to prepare them to train and guide their assistant principals.
• Lead administrators do not feel they have received specific preparation related to the training of APs.

**To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?**

• APs feel they receive “little” or “no” training during initial preparation that directly related to the position of AP.
• Lead principals feel they have received no specific training during initial administrative preparation to guide or train APs.

**What courses in the initial preparation of an administrator best prepares assistant principals for their duties?**

• School law & Legal information
• Evaluation and supervision of staff

**Is there a need for a change in the initial administrative preparation directly related to the position of assistant principal?**

• There is little to no AP specific preparation in initial administrator coursework.
• Leads and assistants feel that AP specific preparation would be beneficial.

**Recommendations**

**First:** The identification of the specific coursework and information that lead administrators believe significant in their ability to help and utilize APs is needed. Gathered data can aid in strengthening prevailing practices as it applies in the initial preparation of administrators in relation to the position of AP. Research from this study specifically points to additional guidance related to discipline, people skills, and teacher evaluation.

**Second:** Specific coursework designed to help lead principals in developing APs will aid all administrators. Developing AP skills in specified areas in one way to bolster initial administrative preparation. Another area of focus should be that of AP utilization.

**Third:** APs in this study identified the importance of collaboration in their educational process. Guiding institutions should give further thought as to the development or evaluation of mentoring and internship programs for APs.
A Study of Educational Leadership Preparation Concerning the Assistant principal:
Perspectives of Missouri Principals and Assistant principals

Presented by
Dr. Jeffry K Wead

Committee Members
Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dr. Kim Finch, Dr. Jon Turner, Dr. William Agnew
Preface

The genesis of this study has always been to gather practical data, information, and insight in order to advance Assistant Principal (AP) success. Ultimately, gathered data will aid in contributing to scholarly works while helping to improve Missouri’s educational system. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MSESE) identifies 3,472 individuals as certified K-12 administrators (2014a). Missouri categorizes 1,221 of its educational leaders as APs (MDESE, 2014). APs make up approximately one third of all building administrators in Missouri. In order to gather data from the perspectives of educational leaders in the state, 2,590 building administrators received surveys asking for their perceptions as it relates to their initial educational preparation associated with the job or duty of AP.

Respondents were divided into three separate groups: APs (AP), lead administrators who had been or have an AP (L1), and lead administrators who had not been or had an AP (L2). AP, L1, and L2 each addressed some demographic information then answered seven qualitative and four quantitative questions. The triangulation of perspectives aids in giving validity to the findings (Creswell, 2009). Four research questions guided the direction of this survey.

1. How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?

2. To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?

3. What in the initial preparation of an administrator best prepares assistant principals for their duties?
4. Is there a need for a change in the initial administrator preparation directly related to the position of assistant principal?

Upon request, MDESE provided e-mails for lead and assistant principals in Missouri. MDESE produced requested information according to available records. Some school districts had not yet furnished contact information (e-mail addresses) for building principals and APs. The lack of information may have been due to school districts not being completely up to date with changes in position and new hires. With 2,590 surveys distributed to Missouri educators, 572 responded, and out of those 572 responses, 452 administrators forwarded remarks resulting in an overall completion rate of 17%. Three groupings of surveys were distributed through Survey Monkey. APs comprised 204 responses, lead administrators who have never had or been an AP provided 58, and lead administrators who have been or had/have an AP provided 190 responses.

**Rationale**

The responsibilities and duties of APs have changed from the original design (Gill 2012; Hutton, 2013; Oliver 2005). There is agreement on what skills are necessary to be a successful AP and that further training is needed (Clayton, 2014; Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Lazaridou, 2009; Reich, 2012; Smith, 2010; Williams, 2012). What has not been determined is how to properly aid educational leaders in the training, use, and development of APs. Ultimately, this study looked to a program evaluation of the initial educational leadership preparation as it relates to APs or what McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013), described as “potential unmet needs” (p. 227). Collected data aid in gauging educational leadership programs influence on AP preparedness and the impact it
has on its clientele, educational leaders (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Providing this data to those in a position to encourage meaningful dialog could affect change in educational communities across Missouri and the country.

**Presentation**

The overarching *purpose* of this study was to provide further data and insight directed at the *initial preparation* of educational leaders as it relates to the position of AP.
Little research exists that specifically addresses the initial preparation of APs while there is a declared need for further improvement concerning the initial and continual training of building principals and APs.

Research Questions

1. How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?
2. To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?
3. What courses in the initial preparation of administrators best prepares an assistant principal for his or her duties?
4. Is there a need for a change in the initial administrative preparation directly related to the position of assistant principal?
This paper develops focus by combining these three ideas in order to guide and direct the project.

These identified conceptual commonalties of Servant Leadership, Communitarianism, and Boundary Spanners also connect to the Professional Standards of Educational Leader’s Guidelines (NPBEA, 2015).
While APs hold similar job duties and responsibilities as lead principals, they are not the same.

While all of these skills or duties are a component of initial administrative preparation to some degree, no AP specific instruction is identifiable.
While other administrative positions in the state of Missouri require specific initial preparation and certification related to their job, individuals filling the duties of AP require neither.
EXISTING RESEARCH

- **Cohen** (2008) – University work vs actual job (AP)
- **Pietro** (1999) – AP specific training
- **Hutton** (2013) – Study of Jamaican leadership training
- **Curry** (2009) – Mentoring programs
- **VanTuyle & Reeves** (2014) – Illinois revamp of training

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

With a call for “assistant principals to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional development growth activities” (Oliver, 2005, p. 89) further information will serve to identify AP training.
The use of lead administrators with no AP experience helps to provide a base of information along with a different perspective on initial administrative preparation related to the AP.

Over 77% of all participants identify themselves as having 11 or more years in education.
Only 4.1% (10) of lead principals had logged in less than a year of experience.

The dominant age of APs and leads is 31 to 50 at 80%.

Data indicate 157 (35%) lead principals identified themselves as having past experience as an AP; 137 (30%) lead principals identified themselves as having APs.
Over 56% of APs completing the survey declared one to five years of experience in the position while over 29% identified six to ten years in the job.
In question 10, APs were asked to identify their top three duties/responsibilities as it related to their current position. Relationships (25), supervision (25), assessment (24), and attendance (23) were mentioned. All responses outside of the top three combined were categorized with fewer total responses than discipline and behavior alone. Participants identified discipline as the number one AP duty.
While APs identified “school law” as the most impactful class during their initial coursework at 25%, it falls well short of the 76% APs used to identify discipline and behavior as their number one responsibility in slide 10. It is not clear if there is a difference between school discipline and school law and discipline. Evaluations and supervision of staff garnered 15% of responses to rank second while 53% of AP respondents indicated evaluations as a primary duty. A disconnect between initial preparation of APs and actual duties and responsibilities can be seen by comparing the top three duties/responsibilities identified by APs in question 10 (discipline 76%, elevations 53%, instructional leadership or professional development 14%) and what they felt coursework most prepared them for (school law 25%, evaluation/supervision of staff 15%, and relationships/communication 15%) from question 11. Note that the third spot in both questions are not similar.
In response to question 12, APs identified relationships as an area in which coursework least prepared them for when dealing with responsibilities associated with their job. The classification of relationships encompassed students, staff, and community. This response indicated some disconnect between AP coursework and what they described as a need. In a similar disconnect to preparation and application of skills and duties, APs ranked course work dealing with “discipline” as the number two least impactful with 18% and staff evaluations third at 15%. Slide 10 notes that discipline and behavior (76%) then evaluations (53%) are the top two AP duties.
School law and information related to legal aspects were identified by APs as the most important or helpful coursework in their assigned role. The identification of collaboration during coursework (slide 13) can be tied or linked to the importance placed on relationships as seen in question 11 (ranked third) and 12 (ranked first). While class work in general was identified as helpful in AP preparation, the lack of specificity in responses reveals little. Interestingly, there is an absence of responses identifying evaluations as an area where coursework was helpful.
The top three rankings for post course training directly related to AP jobs were evenly spaced. While evaluations and leadership training were distinguishable in their identification, a lack of specificity is notable. Responses such as “district level” training “professional development” (Q1432; Q1453; Q14144), “monthly training” (Q1431), and “in house workshops” (Q146) referred to general and non-descriptive terms. Mentoring and student intervention tied one another in the fourth spot with 24 responses or 12% each. Items such as “character education” (Q149), “anti-bullying” (Q1421), “behavior intervention” (Q14153), and “Reids Interrogation” (Q14156) were categorized under student intervention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training directly related to evaluations</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training related to leadership</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“District level” training</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student intervention</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When asked to give information/advice to administrators while in their certification/coursework, participants felt strongly enough about “practicums” and “scenarios” for it to be mentioned specifically by (Q151, Q157, Q158, Q1540, & Q15106) among others. The firm identification of practicums and scenario lends itself to the importance that APs place on initial development related to “hands on” or “real time experience.” Individuals who have a successful practicum or deal appropriately with scenarios are often individuals who exhibit good people skills and the ability to network. Teacher evaluations was easily identified as coursework and consistently ranked within the top three AP duties. The fourth highest response consisted of 10 references about legal or discipline information.
Responses of “?”,” N/A,” and “nothing” were categorized together and led all others. It is interesting that the highest response to this particular question avoids giving a definitive answer. Budget and finance is an area of preparation APs identified as least used. Neither budget nor finance were identified as one of the top three or four skills needed in order to be a successful AP.
Question 17 focused on AP training and what help he/she received from lead principals that was similar to coursework. Over one-third of surveyed APs (39%) feel that what they learn from their lead principal is not the same or similar to what they learned in their initial preparation. While the highest combined response (61%) was for agree, 28% only agreed somewhat. As indicated in previous questions (10, 11, & 13), the data identify a possible disconnect in the prioritization of AP need and what they received during initial administrator education preparation.
According to this survey, 159 APs (79%) agreed they receive guidance from their lead principals. Of significance, is one third of responses using “Agree Strongly” to identify daily guidance from their lead principal. With APs identifying daily guidance from the lead principal as the prevailing response, it is apparent the lead principal places some significance on providing daily guidance for their APs.
Almost half of the responses in question 19 correspond to a statement of “Agree Somewhat.” Agree somewhat is not a strong recommendation of support. Only five APs “Agree Strongly” that their coursework adequately prepared them to be an AP. Almost a fourth (22%) disagreed, indicating a lack of preparation from coursework for their role as AP.
A solid 35%, or over one third, of participants disagreed that they received specific guidance related to what an AP does. Of the 65% that say they received specific guidance, only 16% “Agree” and only 3% “Agree Strongly.” This does not show overwhelming support for specific guidance related to AP duties during initial administrative preparation. These responses are similar to qualitative feedback in questions 10 through 15 because they identify an apparent disconnect between initial AP preparation and their actual duties or responsibilities.
Over all, APs identified satisfaction with the preparation they received from coursework. A combined total of 80% of respondents agreed they felt prepared for their role as AP. It is notable that 38%, or 77 of 204 responses, were “Agree Somewhat.” This data seem in disagreement with previous information signaling a disconnect between AP preparation and actual job duties/responsibilities.
APs in this survey identified discipline/behavior, evaluations, and instructional leadership or professional development as the top three AP duties. While APs firmly establish their top three duties, outcomes from survey questions do not exhibit a similar confidence of initial AP preparation. APs identified a lack of preparation in dealing with relationships, discipline, and staff evaluations. Question 12 provided data to support a lack of initial preparation in AP initial development. Results from this particular question rank dealing with relationships, discipline, and staff as areas they feel coursework least prepared them for their job. APs single out instruction related to evaluations as the top training received after completion of college courses.

A disconnect between AP duties and initial preparation is identifiable in this study. APs identified discipline/behavior, evaluations, and professional development or instructional leadership as the primary duties or responsibilities while indicating that the primary focus of their initial preparation does not coincide with their job duties.
Questions 10 through 16 help to identify this disconnect between job duties and AP preparation.

Perspectives of Lead Principals
Who Have an AP
or
Have been an AP
(L1 Group)
L1 participants gave “little or no” preparation as the top answer in response to question 22. A lack of lead principal preparation in utilizing or training APs is not conducive to optimal AP development. In question 14, APs identify leadership training as a common post coursework discipline while lead administrators identify leadership training as one of the more impactful classes during their initial preparation. Ironically, APs and lead administrators receive the same training.
When L1 administrators were asked to identify courses or coursework that least aided them in preparing APs, 55 of 124 identified “little” or “nothing.” L1 administrators make a poignant statement with 44% agreement in not specifically identifying individual or distinct coursework. Many participants did not answer the stated survey question directly. Instead of identifying “coursework,” many L1 administrators stated that “none” of their initial preparation equipped them to train APs. The next closest answer to this question was finance with 14%. All other responses were less than 7% at best.
L1 administrators identified evaluations as their top duty or responsibility. Similarly, APs ranked evaluations as the number two duty or responsibility. Evaluation placed first among L1 administrators of all duties and second with APs. L1 administrators also ranked curriculum fourth, finance/budget fifth, and discipline as number six when asked to identify their top duties/responsibilities.
L1 administrators responded similarly to this question as in question 23. With 40% of responses signifying unsure or nothing and 44% giving a similar answer to a related question (23), it is apparent that L1 administrators do not feel initial administrative preparation sufficiently equipped them to supervise APs. Again, as in question 23, L1 administrators give an answer regarding coursework (experience) that is outside of the original request for information. This response lends itself to how important experience is to L1 administrators.
Over half of respondents were unable to identify any training directly related to helping or developing APs. This response is consistent with other answers (Q23, Q25) related to L1 administrator’s preparation to train or develop their APs. What is not clear is if L1 administrators feel a need to acquire training that will aid in developing APs or if the training is simply not available. Regardless of its availability, L1 administrators indicated they are receiving minimal amounts of specific training related to AP development.
In response to question 27, delegation of duties (30), communication (26), and experience (25) were the top three responses while all other categorized comments received no more than 12 responses and only three of those (self-knowledge/examination, relationships, and work ethic) reached double digits. L1 administrators identify the importance of APs knowing their “appropriate roles and responsibilities” (Q2729). While prior data indicate the most common AP duties and responsibilities, the importance of communication for AP success is supported once again in this survey. It is worth noting that L1 administrators identify “experience” in four of the last six survey questions as an important component in administrative development.
Of the 106 (Q 28) answers given to identify information used least by administrators, 31% stated they could not identify anything. This answer led all other responses by no less than 14%. Participants’ responses categorized as “all good” were not direct answers to the question but usable data nonetheless because the lack of knowledge itself provides insight.
When asked if their initial school instruction was helpful in developing their AP skills, 63% agreed it helped while 50 APs or 37% disagreed. The most common answer was “Agree Somewhat.” A 23% combined total (agree, agree strongly) was not the most confident endorsement. According to previous answers from this survey (Q22, Q23, and Q25), little specific information was given during initial administrative preparation to help administrators in developing APs.
Responses show 38% at “Agree Somewhat” then a combined total of 40% of “Disagree Somewhat,” “Disagree,” and “Disagree Strongly.” Data collected from this question identified L1 administrators lack of initial preparation related to the development and training of APs. Again, this information is supported by and supports previous survey questions (Q22, Q23, Q25, & Q29).
Most L1 participants do not feel they received specific preparation related to the duties of what an AP does. With a 70% disagreement (Disagree Strongly, Disagree, and Disagree Somewhat), there is virtually little doubt L1s do not feel they received specific preparation related to AP duties. Only 29% agreed at all that they received any specific guidance related to AP duties. This lack of guidance associated with specific AP duties is similar to an absence of specific training related to developing or helping APs (Q30).
L1 participants were split on whether or not they felt coursework adequately prepared them to utilize the position of AP. Even with an acknowledged lack of specific initial preparation related to developing or training APs (Q25 & Q28), 55.5% of L1 participants identified they were able to utilize their APs. L1 administrators consistently identified a lack of specificity during initial administrative training that is related to the AP.
Responses from questions 22, 23, and 25 indicate a lack of specificity in the initial preparation for administrators as it relates to the assistant principal. This lack of preparation is associated with utilizing, training, and preparing APs for their job or duties. Of the top three answers given to identify coursework that helped prepare L1s utilize APs, only leadership is easily categorized as a class. The other top two answers identified as helpful were “nothing” and “experience.”

L1 administrators identify a lack of direction in their initial administrative preparation; related to helping APs, 40% indicate they have received or obtained little to no training that aligns with helping or developing their APs (Q25). L1s give statements referring to professional development, state opportunities, and experience as programs they use to help them develop or aid APs post coursework. The lack of specificity in answers to question 26 could indicate an inability of L1s to determine what instruction they need or is appropriate.
Finally, the split in responses addressing satisfaction of L1s initial preparation to help APs is telling (Q32). Such a discrepancy in answers indicates possible confusion for the question or simple disagreement among L1s. In questions 32, 45.5% of 137 participants disagreed that they were satisfied with current practices designed to aid L1s in preparing APs.

The last group of participants were administrators that had never been or had an AP (L2). This final perspective helps to bring a different glimpse into administrative preparation with gathered data. L2 participants also differ in experience due to their lack of background in larger school buildings. Missouri does not require buildings with less than 400 students to have the position of an assistant principal.
L2 administrators provided 101 responses for question 33. A typical response can be seen in:

*I would say that one of the best classes that I took during my administration coursework was the school law. I still feel that the yearly meetings with the school lawyers is the most beneficial activity that we do. I actually felt that the collaborative course work was very helpful. There were still many unexpected situations that I faced but that comes with the territory when working with people* (Q3311).

“Internships and field experience” received several mentions. L2 participants felt courses related to legal issues, the use of conversation and collaboration, and internships or field experience most prepared them for their job. The recognition of law or legal coursework for L2s is similar to APs identification of their top responsibility. APs also identified internships as coursework that would benefit or help prepare APs for their job (Q15).
A total of 94 participants provided data for this question. While L2s responses identified research (15%) and writing/bookwork (13%) as areas of coursework that least prepared them for the job, only L1s in question 28 recognized this with a response of “data/research” (10% ranked fourth). Both APs and L1s identified budget/finance as coursework not often used as did L2 participants (7%).
Discipline, Instruction/Learning, Management, and Evaluations consistently ranked among the top four responses from lead and assistant principals in relation to duties and responsibilities. It is interesting to note each of the top four categories mentioned by L2s hold a top three placement for APs and L1s. Discipline ranked one for both APs and L2s. Instruction ranked two for L1s and was not mentioned by APs. Management also ranked three for L1s and evaluations was number one.
Question 36 L2

Since completion of your college classes, what types of training have you received directly related to your job?

Nonspecific professional development & conferences: 43 responses for (43%)

Leadership development: 21 responses for (21%)

Student interventions: 15 responses for (15%)

Question 36, with 100 responses, asked participants what types of training they have received that directly related to their job since completion of their college courses. A lack of specificity topped answers for this question with responses of professional development and conferences (43%). The category of leadership development (21%) varied in courses and styles but focused on a specific subject. Student interventions showed various answers with training that focused on areas such as deescalating conflict, restraining techniques, and intervention programs for trouble students.
Most interesting in these responses are the similarities between answers. All answers failed to mention coursework. All answers require interaction with others in order to provide a solution or gain knowledge. Again, administrators found common ground in identifying areas such as practicums (APs Q15 & L1s in Q27) and experience (L1s in Q27). L2s and L1s showed more similarity in what information they would pass on to other administrators than did APs.
L2 participants accounted for up to 80 responses to question 38. The top three answers were within four percentage points of one another. There was no dominant or outstanding response. “Finance and Budget” (9%), “Papers” and “Writing” (8%), and “Data” and “Statistics” (8%) are answers outside the top three and worth mentioning in order to highlight the assortment of answers. Over 15 other categories were identified from participants’ responses.
Most administrators “agree” (41%, 37%, 6%) or 84% total, that coursework related to the position of AP would benefit initial administrator preparation. Only 16% (1%, 5%, 10%) out of 101 responses “disagree” that initial administrative coursework related to the position of AP would help. Despite a lack of experience with APs, L2s provided overwhelming support for specific coursework related to AP development.
Principals who had never been or have not had an AP reported that their initial coursework would be helpful to both APs and lead principals. With an absence of experience related to APs, it is interesting that L2s believe coursework is beneficial for AP and L1 growth yet identify a need for further coursework related to the position of AP (Q39).
With over half of 103 participants (61%) identifying agree or strongly agree (88% agree somewhat) that they were satisfied with initial coursework and how it prepared them to do their job, it is apparent they were satisfied with their administrative coursework. Only 12% identified dissatisfaction with their initial coursework and how well it prepared them.
L2 administrators identified discipline, instruction, management, and evaluations as their top duties. The identified L2 rankings encompass duties/responsibilities established as the top three for APs. When asked to identify what coursework most prepared them for their job, L2 participants identified law or legal coursework (33%) as number one. Similarly, APs identified school law or legal issues as the most helpful coursework in their job.

Despite no experience as an AP or having an AP under their supervision, L2 participants feel that their administrative preparation is beneficial to APs and L1s. L2s also feel coursework specifically focused on APs and how to train one would benefit administrators. Similarities in responses from APs and L2s related to informative or helpful coursework and duties established how similar these jobs are. While similar, it is apparent that AP and L2 duties/responsibilities are not the same.

Finally, L2 participants identified that they are pleased with their initial administrative coursework. When asked to identify coursework they used least, L2
participants ranked “not sure” first (14%) “all good” (13%) second. Neither of the top two answers provided clarity in answering what coursework was used least.

**Research Question 1**
How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?

**One:** Administrators do not show strong support in their initial classwork to prepare their assistant principals.

**Two:** Lead administrators do not feel they have received specific preparation for supervising assistant principals.

Administrators identified overall satisfaction in the education they received from their respective institutions. They identified a lack or absence of *specific* training related to developing or training APs. When L1s were asked if “initial school instruction was helpful in developing” (Q29) AP skills, the most common answer was “agree somewhat”. Another 37% of responses fell under strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree. Only 23% of participants identified agree or strongly agree. In question 26, 53% of L1 participants indicated they had received or obtained little to no training that aligned with helping or developing their APs. Question 32 garnered 45.5% dissatisfaction from 137 participants concerning their initial preparation to help develop APs. While administrators note an ability to pull information and guidance from coursework to help develop APs, they note a lack or absence of specificity.
Data identifying coursework to help lead principals prepare their APs for the job garnered 40% (50) out of 126 responses of “unsure” or knew of “nothing” that helped them to prepare APs. A similar question asked what coursework prepared lead administrators “for utilizing and training an assistant principal.” Their qualitative responses once again identified answers referring to “nothing or little” with 37% or 50 out of 137. When lead administrators were asked if they received specific guidance related to the duties and responsibilities of an AP, an average rating of “disagree” indicated that they had not received specific guidance in this matter. Interestingly, 53% of L1s indicated they have received little to no specific training that aligns with helping or developing their APs.

In answer to whether or not leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates, data reveal two main points. One, lead administrators do not feel they have received specific training related to developing or utilizing their assistant principals. L1s identified a lack of preparation associated with utilizing, training, and developing APs. Two, most lead principals feel somewhat prepared to aid and direct their subordinates but with no specific training that they have received from coursework.
Research Question 2
To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?

**One:** APs feel they received “little” or “no” training directly related to the position of AP.

**Two:** L1 and L2 administrators feel they received little to no specific training during their initial preparation in order to develop or guide APs in their jobs.

Close to half of polled APs (48%) “agree somewhat” that they received similar guidance or help from their lead principal that was related to the duties of what an AP does (Q19). Similarly, 46% of APs “agree somewhat” that they received “specific guidance” in their administrative coursework. Of the 202 respondents (Q20), 35% “disagree strongly, disagree somewhat, or disagree.” Only 19% of responses for question 20 agreed or agreed strongly that they received AP specific training. These responses did not show overwhelming support for initial administrative preparation in relation to the position of AP.

APs identified relationships, discipline, and staff evaluations as the top three areas where their initial administrative coursework fell short (Q12). APs responded with “nothing” in identifying classwork they had used least (number one) followed by budget (Q16). It is also notable post completion of coursework, APs identified staff evaluation with 25% of their responses (Q14) as the number one training or instruction received post completion of coursework.
L1s responses (Q30) identified weak support for their initial administrative coursework’s ability to prepare them to develop their APs for the duties and responsibilities associated with their position. Combined responses for disagree somewhat, disagree, and disagree strongly were 40%. Responses of agree and agree strongly combined for 22% of L1 feedback.

The extent to whether or not educational intuitions prepare APs for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an AP identifies two points. One, APs do not feel they receive specific AP training during initial administrative coursework. Two, L1 administrators feel they received no specific training during their initial administrative preparation (coursework) directed at developing or training APs in their job responsibilities and duties.
Research Question 3
What courses in the initial preparation of administrators best prepares assistant principals for their duties?

One: School law & Legal information was identified as the most important coursework in preparing APs for their job.

Two: Evaluation was identified as second most important coursework in preparing APs for their duties.

In question 11, APs ranked school law first with 25% of responses as coursework that most prepared them for their job. Also, APs identified school law or legal information as the most helpful in their role as AP with 30% of responses. These identified courses/coursework and information corresponds with established AP top duties. The importance of school law and discipline in preparing APs for the rigors of their position is evident.

Coursework related to the evaluation/supervision of staff took the second spot with 15% to identify its importance to APs in job preparation. The act of collaboration (18%) was identified as the second most helpful information APs received from coursework. While the evaluation and supervision of staff is an identifiable course, collaboration is not so easily categorized as information itself. It is important to recognize that APs identified and felt strongly enough about the process of receiving information on the importance of (collaboration).
In the third spot with 15% of responses (Q11), APs identified relationships or communication as coursework that most prepared them for their job. When asked for information from coursework that helped them most in their job, a response of all classwork received 9% and third place. Information related to all class work (9%) in the third spot does indicate that APs received a salient amount of information related to their job.

Coursework related to school law and legal information is identified as the most prominent coursework and information for APs. Coursework related to the evaluation and supervision of staff and information garnered from collaboration ranked second in aiding APs in their roles. Finally, APs felt that coursework related to relationships or communication and information from all class work helped prepare them for their duties as well.
There is consensus between APs and lead principals that “little” to “no” AP specific training exists during initial preparation of educational administrators. Some 53% of 132 lead administrators indicated they received *little to nothing* directly related to helping or developing their AP. Both lead and assistant principals identified some type of ongoing training after they had completed course work. The most common training identified by administrators in this survey focused on teacher evaluations and leadership.

APs identified school law, evaluation/supervision, and relationships as coursework that most prepared them for their role as AP (Q11). APs also identified dealing with relationships, discipline, and staff evaluation as coursework that least prepared them for their job (Q12). This seeming split or contrast of data goes to support a lack of congruency or focus as it relates to initial AP preparation.

L1s identified a lack or absence of guidance on how to utilize and train their APs. Also, L1s were split on whether or not they were satisfied with the coursework they did receive in order to train their APs. L2 administrators identified that further training or
guidance specific to the position of AP would be beneficial to all administrators. Despite a lack of experience as an AP or never having an AP under their supervision, L2 participants believe administrative preparation would be beneficial to APs and L1s. L2s also noted that coursework specifically directed at APs and how they might be prepared would benefit administrators.
**Recommendations**

*First:* Research directed at developing coursework specifically related to the position of AP will aid in the overall development of administrators.

It is apparent that initial preparation specifically related to the position of AP is lacking if not entirely absent. While APs indicated the initial preparation they received included what they identified as their most important or customary responsibilities, APs also felt their initial preparation or coursework in many of the same areas was lacking. By targeting identifiable areas of need or importance in relation to AP duties, all administrators cannot help but benefit from the results.

Consultation between guiding institutions will aid in helping to understand why APs identify similar coursework as most and least helpful in preparing them for their respective positions. The identification of the specific coursework and information that lead administrators believe significant in their ability to help and utilize APs is needed. Gathered data can aid in strengthening prevailing practices as it applies in the initial preparation of administrators in relation to the position of AP. Research from this study specifically points to additional guidance related to discipline, people skills, and teacher evaluation.
Lead administrators indicated that specific guidance in how to develop and utilize an AP was not apparent during initial administrative preparation. Lead administrators struggled to identify any other course than leadership in aiding them to develop or guide APs. With approximately one third of all administrators in Missouri designated as an AP, it would be detrimental to the educational system to ignore an opportunity to provide the best possible training.

Specific coursework designed to help lead principals in developing APs will aid all administrators. Developing AP skills in specified areas in one way to bolster initial administrative preparation. Another area of focus should be that of AP utilization. Lead administrators with an understanding of best practices in the utilization of APs helps to strengthen education.
In this study, APs identified the importance of collaboration in their educational process. When APs were asked to identify information they felt would better prepare others for the job, they identified practicums and scenarios as the most impactful information to aid them in their development. People skills and networking came in second. Both of the suggestions center more on interacting with others than on actual coursework. A partnership between certifying institutions and local schools would be beneficial to all in developing a unified or structured internship program for APs.

**Recommendations**

*Third:* Guiding institutions should give further thought as to the development or evaluation of mentoring and internship programs for APs.
SECTION FIVE:
CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP
TO BE SUBMITTED TO:
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Initial Administrative Preparation as It Relates to the Assistant Principal

What Are We Doing?

Background

School leadership is under constant pressure to improve student performance through ever-increasing expectations (Oxley & Baete, 2012). Educational leaders are entrusted with the responsibility to administer and enforce instructional reforms such as No Child Left Behind and Common Core State Standards (Odden, 2012; Oxley & Baete, 2012; VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). Administrators implement said programs with expectations from local, state, and national systems. These ever-accumulating requirements established through government initiatives, state requirements, and building programs influence and guide the responsibilities and duties of building principals and their assistant principals (APs). With ever-expanding pressures on principals and their APs broadening at such a rapid pace, AP duties have adjusted accordingly. Accompanying AP changes is a shuffling or expansion of duties and a call for a change in the current administrative leadership preparation (Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Oliver, 2005).

In order to keep pace with ever-changing demands placed on educational leaders, institutions committed to preparing these individuals must provide timely and relevant instruction during administrator’s initial preparation. Organizations such as the Interstate Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE), Missouri Professors of Educational Administration (MPEA), and National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) strive to help one another in order
to prepare educational leaders for the pressures associated with their chosen profession. It is through data and collaboration that these guiding institutions aid in preparing today’s educational leaders.

**Focus**

While institutions strive to equip principals and APs for the rigors of their profession, it is apparent that some aspects of administrative initial preparation has not kept pace with the shifting demands of the job. According to Clayton (2012), “strong principal training programs remain the exception, not the rule” (p. 25). APs today are educational leaders that hold responsibilities and duties reaching far beyond those assigned to their predecessors (Glanz, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). APs are expected to fill an integral role within their buildings upon arrival. Within the initial preparation of educational leaders is an apparent lack or absence of effective AP specific training (Hutton, 2013; Oliver, 2005). Another concern related to AP preparedness is the absence of applicable and in-depth preparation during the certification process, which is relevant to the position of AP (Hutton, 2013).

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) identified 3,472 K-12 certified administrators within the state of Missouri (2015a). There are 1,221 educational leaders recognized as APs (MDESE, 2015a). As the number of APs in administration continues to expand, the importance of AP specific training and preparedness continues to grow. With roughly one third of all public school administrators in Missouri designated as APs, ineffectively training or preparing APs could have a negative effect on buildings, school districts, and Missouri’s educational system as a whole (Gill, 2012; Hutton, 2013; Madden, 2008). The relevance of AP
training and preparedness is a subject of discussion in current research, not just within the state of Missouri but across the world (Clayton, 2014; Lazaridou, 2009; Nieuwenhuizen, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Reich, 2014).

**Purpose**

The overarching purpose of this study was to gain further insight that would aid in adding to the preparedness and overall development of administrators as it relates to the position of AP. In order to advance information and insight, gathered data helped to bring further understanding related to the discussion of AP training and preparedness. This study provided further knowledge and information to assist in examining the current process of preparation for certified K-12 educational leaders in Missouri. Specifically, gathered evidence assisted in filling current gaps of knowledge regarding AP preparedness. Additionally, gathered material aided in addressing specific training that lead principals in K-12 buildings did or did not receive. This information was focused on addressing the development and utilization of APs throughout the state.

Little research exists that brings intentional focus on educational leadership preparation as it relates to the AP. Williams (2012) looked at specific skills and disposition important for APs to be effective disciplinarians. Simpson (2000) and Weller and Weller (2002) gave advice on what APs need and should know in order to be an effective AP. Reich (2014) spoke how the job of AP aids in preparing them to become leads. While all of this information is useful and pertinent to educational development, it does not directly address the initial administrator preparation in relation to the AP.

**Design**
This study asked for the perceptions of 2,590 Missouri administrators identified as principals and assistant principals. Due to limitations in the electronic delivery system, questionnaires were sent out in three separate but concurrent waves. Of the 572 respondents, 452 completed the questionnaire for a 17% completion rate. Over 77% of those participating identified themselves as having more than ten years in education. Male and female respondents were divided at 50% and further divided into APs, principals who had been or have/had an AP (L1), and principals who had not been or had/have an AP (L2).

The combined data from APs and two different lead principal perspectives give aid to filling a gap of information associated with initial AP preparation. The following research questions were used to develop and guide the survey questionnaires:

1. How effectively do educational leadership programs prepare lead administrators in the development of administrative subordinates?

2. To what extent do educational institutions prepare assistant principals for the duties and responsibilities associated with being an assistant principal?

3. What in the initial preparation of an administrators best prepare assistant principals their duties?

4. Is there a need for a change in the initial administrative preparation directly related to the position of assistant principal?

The survey for both APs and leads who had experience as or had an AP consisted of seven qualitative and five quantitative questions. Leads without APs or experience as an AP answered seven qualitative and three quantitative questions. Questions were designed to cross-reference one another in order to gain multiple perspectives. It is through what
Creswell (2009) identified as triangulation that this survey gains strength. Questions with open ended responses provided qualitative insight while a six point Likert scale was the platform for gathering quantitative data.

**Assistant Principals**

Surveyed APs identified discipline/behavior, evaluations, and instructional leadership or professional development as the top three AP duties. This study’s identification of top three AP duties is similar to findings from Nieuwenhuizen (2013) and Williams (2012), among other researchers. The identification of practicums and scenarios as beneficial to initial AP preparation supports Curry’s (2009) findings that newly hired APs felt mentoring programs were beneficial to their development. The cross-referencing of collected data helps in identifying a trend in administrative initial preparation that is not limited to Missouri educators.

While Missouri APs firmly establish their top three duties, outcomes from survey questions do not exhibit a similar confidence of initial AP preparation. Question 12 of the survey asked participants to identify what part of their role as AP they felt coursework least prepared them for their duties. APs pointed out a lack of coursework or initial preparation devoted to dealing with relationships, discipline, and staff evaluations. Data determined a lack of applicability or suitable coursework in APs initial developmental preparation. Results indicated dealing with relationships, discipline, and staff are areas that APs feel coursework least prepared them for within their job. It is notable that APs singled out instruction related to evaluations as the top training received after completion of college courses.
A disconnect between AP duties and initial preparation is identifiable in this study. Missouri APs establish discipline/behavior, evaluations, and professional development or instructional leadership as the primary duties or responsibilities while indicating that the primary focus of their initial preparation does not coincide with their job duties. Nieuwenhuizen (2011) identified “a mismatch with the skills taught in administrative preparation programs and actual job of the assistant principal” (p. 4). “Many assistant principals are not receiving the proper preparation for the role and responsibilities of the principalship” (Reich, 2012, p. 77). This study corroborates findings from both Reich and Nieuwenhuizen. While coursework provides some information and direction that is beneficial for APs, it fails to meet the same level of preparation furnished to other administrative positions.

**Lead Administrators with Assistant Principal Experience**

Responses from lead administrators with experience indicated a lack of specificity in the initial preparation for administrators as it relates to the assistant principal. Multiple questions ask lead administrators to identify coursework that prepared them to utilize and train or develop their APs. Responses bring to light the absence of AP specific coursework. This lack of preparation is associated with utilizing, training, and preparing APs for their job or duties. How can APs be expected to improve and perform if those assigned to guide and direct their growth lack the training to guide them? Of the top three answers given to identify coursework that helped prepare lead principals to utilize APs, only leadership is easily categorized as a specific class. The other top two answers identified were “nothing” and “experience.” While neither answer was directly related to specific coursework or information, they reveal much. This lack of specificity or
inability to identify AP specific coursework only punctuates the lack of impact that coursework has had on its students.

Lead administrators also identified a lack of direction in their initial preparation; related to helping APs, 40% indicated they received or obtained little to no training that directly aligns with helping or developing their APs. Lead administrators also provide statements referring to professional development, state opportunities, and experience as programs they use to help them in developing or aiding APs post graduation. It is this lack of focus or detail in identifying coursework that aids in helping APs that indicates a shortfall in the ability of lead administrators to determine what instruction is needed or appropriate.

Finally, a split in responses addressing the satisfaction of lead administrator’s initial preparation to help APs is telling. Only 55.5% of 137 lead principals felt coursework adequately prepared them to utilize the position of AP. Such a discrepancy in answers indicates a lack of confidence or support in initial coursework related to the utilization of APs. What is certain is that current practices designed to aid lead principals in preparing APs garnered just shy of one half of 137 participants’ dissatisfaction.

**Lead Principals with no Assistant Principal Experience**

Lead administrators with no AP experience identified discipline, instruction, management, and evaluations as their top duties. The identified administrative rankings encompass duties/responsibilities established as the top three for APs and leads with AP background/experience. When asked to identify what coursework most prepared them for dealing with their job, these participants identified law or legal coursework (33%) as number one. Similarly, APs identified school law or legal issues as the most helpful
coursework in their job. It is interesting that administrators without an AP/AP experience and APs both identified coursework related to educational law/discipline as the most helpful.

Despite no experience as an AP or having/had an AP under their supervision, these lead administrators feel their administrative preparation was beneficial both to APs and lead administrators. These administrators also feel coursework specifically focused on APs and how to train them would benefit administrators dealing with APs. Participants disagreed they were satisfied with current practices designed to aid L1s in preparing APs. Similarities exist in the job duties of superintendents and building principals, k-7 administrators and 7-12 administrators, and principals and their assistants. While similar, none of these duties was the same. Interestingly, each of these similarities in job duties or responsibilities is recognized with coursework/training directly related to their position…except for assistant principals.

Finally, administrative participants in this portion of the survey identified that they are pleased with their initial administrative coursework. Questions of administrators without AP experience asked for limited information referring to AP specific training and how to utilize them. Supporting their contentment in their initial preparation, these same lead administrators identify coursework used least with statements such as “not sure” first (14%) and “all good” (13%) second. While neither of the top two answers provided clarity in answering what coursework was used least, this inability to provide an answer to the question supports their contentment in the instruction they received while identifying a shortfall or oversight of AP specific coursework.
Conclusions

Over all, lead principals do not feel they have received *specific training* related to preparing or guiding their subordinates. Lead principals indicated weak support for the idea that their initial administrative preparation helped them to effectively develop and utilize their APs. Both APs and lead administrators feel they received "little” or “no” training directly related to the position of AP. Coursework related to school law and legal information is most beneficial to preparing APs for their job duties with instruction centering on collaboration and conversation taking second. Finally, there is no identifiable AP specific training during initial administrative development and preparation.

Recommendations

It is apparent that initial preparation specifically related to the position of AP is lacking if not entirely absent. While APs indicated the initial preparation they received included what they identified as their most important or customary responsibilities, APs also felt their initial preparation or coursework in many of the same areas was lacking. By targeting identifiable areas of need or importance in relation to AP duties, all administrators cannot help but benefit from the results.

Consultation between guiding institutions will aid in helping to understand why APs identify similar coursework as most and least helpful in preparing them for their respective positions. The identification of the specific coursework and information that lead administrators believe significant in their ability to help and utilize APs is needed. Gathered data can aid in strengthening prevailing practices as it applies in the initial preparation of administrators in relation to the position of AP. Research from this study
specifically points to additional guidance related to discipline, people skills, and teacher evaluation.

Lead administrators indicated that specific guidance in how to develop and utilize an AP was not apparent during initial administrative preparation. Lead administrators struggled to identify any other course than leadership in aiding them to develop or guide APs. With approximately one third of all administrators in Missouri designated as an AP, it would be detrimental to the educational system to ignore an opportunity to provide the best possible training.

Specific coursework designed to help lead principals in developing APs will aid all administrators. Developing AP skills in specified areas is one way to bolster initial administrative preparation. Another area of focus should be that of AP utilization. Lead administrators with an understanding of best practices in the utilization of APs help to strengthen education.

In this study, APs identified the importance of collaboration in their educational process. When APs were asked to identify information they felt would better prepare others for the job, they identified practicums and scenarios as the most impactful information to aid them in their development. People skills and networking came in second. Both of the suggestions center more on interacting with others than on actual coursework. A partnership between certifying institutions and local schools would be beneficial to all in developing a unified or structured internship program for APs.
SECTION SIX:

PRACTITIONER REFLECTION
Leader and Scholar

It has taken 51 years with events both great and small to help me become the educational leader I am today. The process of completing this dissertation is one such event. Endless hours of studying, writing, and reflecting upon what I have or have not done comes with a price. Every minute devoted to improving myself is one less I was able to spend with my family, friends, and co-workers. Keeping the sacrifice of time at the forefront of my thoughts aids in giving focus and drive to the dissertation process. It is with this concentrated focus that I have been able to take in the “whole process” associated with cohort nine and grow not just as an educational leader but as a person.

Northouse (2013) identified “empowering… putting followers first…and…behaving ethically” (p. 225) as just a few of the behaviors that Servant Leaders will exhibit. These behaviors are essential in order to be a successful leader. My time in the Army allowed me to see the pros and cons associated with the use of “legitimate power” (French & Raven, 2005, p. 315). I believe there is a time and place for the use of all five types of power described by French and Raven (2005). This program has helped me to recognize my style of leadership leans more toward the use of “referent power” (French & Raven, 2005, p. 316) in my daily interaction with students and staff.

I have come to understand the importance of determining how and when to appropriately exert what power I do possess. Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) identified the importance of recognizing political entities, power players, and simply coming to terms with organizational complexities. I regularly take into account all of these things when making decisions or simply speaking with others. Components of this program and the
subsequent dissertation process have increased my knowledge and understanding of not only organizations but also how to recognize good and bad practices. Information on program evaluation from McDavid, Huse, and Hawthorn (2013) helped to highlight the design of a study and can determine if useful or accurate information is gathered. Accuracy when dealing with organizations and the people within them is important.

Levi (2014) gave insight into group dynamics in relation to decision-making, leadership, and managing conflict along with other subjects as it relates to “group dynamics.” It is guidance and information from authors such as Levi (2014) that has broadened my understanding of organizations and people. This broadened understanding is not limited to what I see in others. Because of information gained from my classes, I take a thoughtful and organized approach to my personal reflections. I consider why I see and hear things the way I do. I am constantly looking for that “Fred” from the “Wicked Problem” in summer one to garner every perspective possible. The responsibility that comes with the understanding I am a “white privileged male” is not one I take lightly. This program and dissertation process has positively influenced the importance of constant growth.

This expansion of knowledge and understanding has tempered my actions and influenced how I view others. Further, I now accept the perceptions of others and how they see me with more acceptance. It is through explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994) such as the ability to identity or label political, referent, and coercive power (Bolman & Deal, 2008) that my tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994) is bolstered and strengthened. I now make a stronger effort to understand the “why” when dealing with personnel, parents, and students.
My improved understanding and broadened perspective takes into account not just the importance of listening to what others have to say, but why they are attempting to deliver a certain message. Giving validation to other’s communication also aids in giving validation to the person and the message. The inclusion of multiple perspectives is important to how I lead. The newly acquired and improved knowledge gained from this program, along with the research and writing throughout the dissertation process, has allowed me to become a better leader. Experiences associated with cohort nine and the Springfield contingent have been no less impactful in my leadership growth.

The impact this program and dissertation has had on how I lead educators is noticeable. No less poignant is how I have been influenced as a scholar. I can honestly say that until I acknowledged the possible end of this program the word “scholar” in relation to myself had not been a consideration. Reflecting upon what has transpired, I see now that my growth places me in the scholarly ranks. It is by looking to what it has taken to get to this point and understanding that this process is ongoing that allows me to accept I am more of a scholar than I ever thought possible. I have embraced my new journey in relation to learning must be what Merriam and Bierema (2014) described as a self-directed learner. I have become a lifelong learner not just out of necessity but also out of desire.

The importance of “how to conduct a survey” (Fink, 2014), “research design” (Creswell, 2009), and Merriam’s (2009) insight on qualitative research reinforce why it is important for me to improve my knowledge base. If I am to lead and guide other educational leaders, I must have a broader base of knowledge and understanding from which to pull. Field’s (2012) use of humor and wit in bringing to life statistical analysis
only affirmed “scholarly” subject matter can be delivered in a manner that is both entertaining and informative.

With guidance from this program, I am able to accept or recognize the importance of continuing my education. Becoming that scholar practitioner is not just what I see as necessity in my continued educational or scholarly growth but individual maturation. I once considered reading stories and information from articles and books related to education and leadership as a chore. Today, I look to books such as HBR’s “Making Smart Decisions” and “Leadership” as not just a necessity to continue my professional growth but a component needed to fill my desire for personal fulfillment.

The dissertation process itself has helped me to grow as leader and scholar. One of my top five abilities as identified by Strength Finder, is that of achiever. I enjoy completing tasks. Long hours and difficulty do not bother me as much as failing to complete an assignment. In contrast to my achiever strength is a desire to plan in detail. I would rather just do. During the dissertation process, I have been reminded of the importance for me as a leader to pay attention to the details and plan ahead. Failing to look to details and just move ahead only wastes time and energy. As a leader, wasting time and energy can be harder on those around me than myself. Doing my best to emulate traits of Servant Leadership should not involve creating work for others.

As this process has aided me in my growth as a leader, it is equaled by how I see myself as a scholar or life-long learner. Instead of seeing short-falls in some of my academic areas, I now accept that they are simply opportunities to grow. The dissertation process has helped me to become more confident in my ability and desire to learn and to write. I understand the importance of doing all I can to continually advance my academic
knowledge and standing. The usefulness of continued educational and professional reading was impressed upon me during the dissertation process. I was unaware that some key information in my paper had recently changed. Failing to continually grow or stay abreast academically (reading) had a negative impact on my scholarly ambitions. I examine as much as read professional articles. I look for how data were gathered and whether or not I agree with assumptions made. This process has allowed me to feel comfortable in describing myself as academic.

Son, soldier, student, athlete, husband, father, teacher, coach, leader, and scholar. At some point in time, I have been able to apply one or many of these identifiers to myself. Each title brings with it a brief view or small piece of a larger puzzle/picture. This dissertation process has influenced me not just as a leader and scholar but also as a life-long learner. I look to continue my understanding of others and myself. I am no longer satisfied with completing a task or goal but seek to understand the why behind a task or assignment to which I have been assigned. I look to understand why others make the decisions they make. I accept that the perceptions of others are their reality, and in order to have meaningful dialogue, the use of data coupled with appropriate use of power can make or break an organization. I see that my duty as a scholar is to continue my personal and professional journey. As a leader and scholar of MUs cohort nine, I believe my continued growth as a leader and scholar must progress until I am no longer on this earth “and beyond.”
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Appendix A

Demographics

1. What is your age?
   - 21-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - 61-70

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

3. How many years have you been working in education?
   - 1-5
   - 6-10
   - 11-15
   - 16-20
   - 21-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-35

4. Are you a lead building principal?
   - Yes
   - No
Assistant Principal

5. Are you an assistant principal?
   - Yes
   - No

Building Principal

6. How many years have you been a building principal?
   - Less than a year?
     - 1-5
     - 6-10
     - 11-15
     - 16-20
     - 20+

7. Have you ever been an assistant principal?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Do you currently have or have you ever had an assistant principal?
   - Yes
   - No

9. How many years have you been an assistant principal?
   - Less than a year.
     - 1-5
     - 6-10
     - 11-15
10. What are your top three duties/responsibilities in your current position?

11. In your current job, what part of your role as assistant principal do you feel your coursework most prepared you to do your job?

12. In your current job, what part of your role as assistant principal do you feel your coursework least prepared you to do your job?

13. What information during course work helped you in your role as assistant principal?

14. Since completion of your college classes, what types of training have you received directly related to your job as assistant principal?

15. What information would you give to administrators during their certification/coursework to better prepare them to be an assistant principal?

16. What information given during your class work have you used the least?

17. I receive training and help from my lead principal that is similar to what I received in my course work for my role as AP?

18. My lead principal provides daily guidance for my job as assistant principal.
19. My coursework adequately prepared me to be an assistant principal.
   - Disagree Strongly
   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

20. I received specific guidance in my administrative coursework related to the duties of what an assistant principal does.
   - Disagree Strongly
   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

21. I am satisfied with the education I received from my administrative coursework and how well it prepared me for my role as AP.
   - Disagree Strongly
   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

Building Principal with/had AP

22. What part of your educational administration coursework most prepared you for utilizing and training an assistant principal?

23. What part of your educational administration coursework least prepared you for utilizing or training an assistant principal?

24. What are your top three duties/responsibilities in your current position?
25. What information during your educational administration coursework helped you to prepare your assistant principal for the role as assistant principal?

26. Since completion of your college classes, what types of training have you received directly related to helping or developing your assistant principal?

27. What information would you give to administrators during their certification/coursework to better prepare them to help their assistant principal?

28. What information given during your college classes in educational administration have you found you use least?

29. Training from my initial school instruction was helpful in developing my assistant principal’s skills/ability.

   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

30. My educational administration coursework adequately prepared me to help my assistant principal.

   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

31. I received specific guidance in my initial coursework training related to the duties of what an assistant principal does.

   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
32. I am satisfied with the education I received from my administrative coursework and how well it prepared me to utilize the position of assistant principal.
   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
   - Agree Somewhat
   - Disagree Somewhat
   - Disagree
   - Disagree Strongly

Building principal who has never been or had an AP

33. What part of your educational administration coursework most prepared you for your job?

34. What part of your educational administration coursework least prepared you for your job?

35. What are your top three duties/responsibilities in your current position?

36. Since completion of your college classes, what types of training have you received directly related to your job?

37. What information would you give to administrators during their certification/coursework to better prepare them?

38. What information given during your college classes in educational administration have you found you use least?

39. I believe that initial administrative coursework related to the position of assistant principal would benefit either assistant principals or principals who have assistant principals.
   - Agree Strongly
   - Agree
40. Do you believe your initial administrative course work related to the position of assistant principal would benefit either assistant principals or principals who have assistant principals?

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Agree Somewhat
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly

41. I am satisfied with the education I received from my administrative coursework and how well it prepared me for my current position.

- Agree Strongly
- Agree
- Agree Somewhat
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree
- Disagree Strongly
Appendix B

Dear Colleague,

You are receiving this email because you are a building principal or assistant principal in a Missouri school. I would greatly appreciate your help.

In order to complete my doctoral dissertation with the University of Missouri, I am completing a research study that examines the perceptions of building administrators concerning their initial preparation as it relates to the assistant principal.

I am aware of how busy this time of year is for you; this survey should take no more than 7 minutes to complete. All answers will be used only to provide data for this study. Your privacy is important; answers are not identifiable to individual responses. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information provided for this study. A detailed letter recording informed consent for this study is available at the following web address:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SO4TWixY1n2h9JkrSNXVM2CFXCw7m1lxd-MEUdchrWc/edit?usp=sharing

If you have any questions, you may contact me at jeffwead@gmail.com or call (417) 655-2222.

Thank you for your help!

Jeff Wead
Assistant Principal
Willard High School
515 Jackson
Willard, MO 65781
Appendix D

A Study of Educational Leadership Preparation Concerning the Assistant Principal: Perspectives of Missouri Principals and Assistant Principals

Consent Form

Building Administrator,

I am an assistant principal at Willard High School and a student in the University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative Doctorate in Educational Leadership. I am conducting a mixed methods study to gather insight concerning the initial preparation of educational leaders as it relates to the assistant principal.

While this survey identifies participants by e-mail address, your privacy is important. Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence and used only to compile data for this research study. All information naming schools or individuals will be removed, and only summary results will be reported. This researcher understands that any comparison data discussed will require the proper use of pseudonyms. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all questions. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information that you have provided in this mixed method study.

I am asking for your participation. The survey will take no more than 7 minutes of your time to complete. It will ask you some basic demographic information and your perceptions concerning initial administrative training related to the position of assistant principal.

Prior to making a final decision about participation, please read the following statements:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary.
- Participants may stop at any time or may choose not to answer all questions.
- All responses will remain confidential as results will be presented in summary form and pseudonyms used where appropriate. All identifying information will be removed.

The research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject research participant, please call Missouri University Campus IRB at (573)882-9585. If you have questions regarding the review and procedures of this study, you may contact Dr. Cynthia MacGregor at (417) 836-6046 or cmacgregor@missouritstate.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this survey, you may contact me at (417) 655-2222 or at jeffwead@willardschools.net. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jeff Wead
Assistant Principal
Willard High School
VITA

Jeff Wead spent his formative years living in California, then Kentucky. After a four-year stint in the Army, he moved to Springfield, Missouri in order to complete his education. Jeff acquired his undergraduate then Master’s degree from Southwest Missouri State University and Education Specialist from Missouri State University. As a teacher, coach, and administrator, he has over 20 years of experience. He and his wife are blessed with five daughters who help make each day an adventure. He is currently an Assistant Principal at Willard High School in southwest Missouri.