

Wyoming Principals' Perceptions of Their Skill Sets and Preparation During Novice Years

By

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**Abstract**

Principals in today's schools face greater pressures regarding accountability and student performance. A focus on increased student achievement, higher graduation rates, and ensuring students are both career and college ready creates a challenge for principals. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of practicing principals in the state of Wyoming regarding their skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management during their first three years in the principalship. As well, this study revealed areas in which those principals felt best and least prepared for their first principalship. Principals identified setting learning expectations and setting staff professionalism expectations as strengths in their instructional leadership skill sets while managing student behaviors and managing resources were strengths related to organizational management. Skill sets principals acknowledged as weaknesses related to instructional leadership were engaging stakeholders and developing teacher skills while delegating responsibilities and managing time were organizational management skill deficits. Principals also reported they felt best prepared in the areas of positive culture development, managing student behavior, and instructional leadership. Budgeting, managing staff behavior, and time management emerged as areas in which principals did not feel well prepared. The results of the study showed a significant relationship between principals' perceptions of their novice instructional leadership skills and having previously worked with a mentor. This tells us that one potential support for novice principals would be ensuring they work with a mentor in their first three years as principals.

*Keywords:* principal skills, principal preparedness, instructional leadership, organizational management, mentorship

### Wyoming Principals' Perceptions of Their Skill Sets and Preparation During Novice Years

An increase in school accountability, policy change, and the dawn of new century has brought new meaning to the roles of public-school principals (Crow, 2006; Reames, Kochan, & Zhu, 2013). The traditional duties of principals: goal setting, budget, evaluation, and maintaining order, have been supplemented today with a more diverse role requiring a wide array of skills, knowledge, and expertise (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Stock & Duncan, 2010). With such expanded expectations regarding the skills of today's principals, the task becomes even greater for those principals just beginning their new careers. This study was designed to identify strengths in skills as well as needs for additional supports for novice principals who, for the purpose of this study, are defined as those principals with three or fewer years of experience.

The role for principals is filled with great challenge in a time when accountability and expectations are increasing (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Today, principals must be a leader for instruction, a manager of resources, a communicator with parents, an ambassador to the community, a cheerleader, a coach, and countless other roles all in support of student achievement (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Bennis (2003) noted that building principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century would need to lead with clear vision and voice, have strong moral code, and be able to adapt to constant change rather than simply leading with charisma and strong interpersonal skills.

Information on the turnover rate of school principals demonstrates the continual change in leadership in America's schools. Of the 98,300 public school principals in the 2012-13 school year, 33% of them were in their first three years on the job. During that same school year, 23% of those principals were new to their school. This statistic represents a 2% increase, up from the 21% turnover in the 2008-09 school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015).

Novice principals, those in the first three years of their career, may find the job more challenging than those with four or more years of experience (Hess & Kelly, 2005). The amount of time principals work, averaging between fifty-one and sixty-two hours weekly (Lee, 2012; Schiff, 2002), tough conversations with difficult or ineffective staff (Jackson, 2013), maintaining a safe, orderly environment (Cotton, 2003), managing a building budget (Stoskopf, 2013), and many other duties can quickly overwhelm new principals. Working with two diverse cohorts of novice principals, Spillane *et al.* (2015) found that while novice principals see novelty in their new role and status, the extreme demand on principals' time and the myriad responsibilities placed a great deal of stress on both cohorts of principals. Likewise, many new principals are not prepared for the feeling of isolation, strained relationships with fellow staff members, and uncertainty that comes with the more autonomous role of principal (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Bloom, 2006, Lovely, 2004).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions Wyoming principals held related to their novice skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management. As well, the study attempted to identify areas in which novice principals felt best prepared and least prepared for their first three years in the principalship. Principals with three or less years of experience were asked to rate their skill sets and areas where they felt best and least prepared. Experienced principals, those with more than three years of experience, were asked to reflect on their novice years when rating their skill sets and areas where they felt best and least prepared. By examining the perceptions of practicing principals, it could be possible to identify strengths and need for support for novice principals. Information from this study may be beneficial to

superintendents hiring and supporting novice principals as well as being of benefit to universities evaluating their licensure and master's degree programs in educational leadership.

### **Research Questions**

To examine the perceptions of current principals regarding their novice skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management, areas in which principals felt most prepared, and areas in which principals felt least prepared, the following five research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their novice instructional leadership skills?
2. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their novice organizational management skills?
3. What impact does mentoring have on the perceptions of principals regarding their novice skill sets?
4. In what specific part of the role did principals feel most prepared?
5. In what specific part of the role did principals feel least prepared?

### **Literature Review**

Principals today are faced with levels of accountability and expectations of performance unmatched by their predecessors. Requirements and mandates placed on principals by the *No Child Left Behind* act, state accountability models, as well as local and state school boards have created the myth of a "Super Principal" (Adams & Copland, 2005), the belief that one man or woman can accomplish all that is encompassed in the job expectations of principals. In examining the role principals play in their schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is important to review the complexity of the principalship and evolution of this role over time.

The earliest schools in American history were typically single room, single teacher operations, in which the teacher was hired by a local school board or parent group (Rousmaniere, 2013). Growth and development of school systems lead to multiple room school houses and, ultimately, principal teachers, or lead teachers. These principal teachers were responsible for helping and supervising other teachers while still teaching their own classes. Principal teachers eventually relinquished their teaching responsibilities and the role of principals began to evolve (Kafka, 2009, Rousmaniere, 2007).

The role of principals as it appears today is quite similar to the position as defined in the 1920s, specifically a role with political, managerial, instructional, and community responsibilities (Kafka, 2009). Principals, in many ways, have responded over time to the political and social events of their time (Hallinger, 2005; Kafka, 2009). Reactions to both Civil Rights action in the 1950s, *Sputnik* in 1960's, alarming teen pregnancy and drug use rates in the 1970s, and the Cold War of the 1980s have shaped how the responsibilities carried out by and placed upon principals have evolved. Principals clearly have been viewed over time as much more than just organizational managers and have long been community leaders both inside and outside of their school buildings (Linn, Sherman, & Gill, 2007).

The responsibilities principals have leading 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools are vast and vary from study to study (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Ediger, 2014; Muse & Abrams, 2011). In studying what principals actually do with their time Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) identified instructional, cultural, managerial, human resource, strategic, external development, and micro-political leadership as the seven most critical leadership functions for principals in all schools. An examination of elementary principals by Muse and Abrams (2011) found leading by example, building relationships, creating a vision, understanding the community, being a

manager and an instructional leader, and being kid-friendly as themes that emerged relating to the role of principals. Turner (2013) found that effective principals spend time instructing others, reading research, presenting in classrooms, and engaging with teacher teams. Similarly, O'Donnell and White (2005) determined that principals should work closely with teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in promoting positive school climate, collaborate with teachers to identify the school's mission and vision, and garner teacher feedback on their efforts. Clearly, principals are now expected to be much more than just an effective building manager (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

### **Preparation and Licensure of Principals**

Traditional programs for principals are master's degree programs through accredited state or private universities and consist of a variety of courses that represent a variety of the roles principals serve. Each of these programs must meet a predetermined set of standards, as set out by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). The NPBEA, along with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), identified the need for consistent standards for school principals and, in 1994, established the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) for this specific purpose (Ramaswami & Babo, 2012). The outcome of the ISLLC was the development of the ISLLC standards, which set the direction for nearly all state licensures and university principal preparation programs. These standards stood for a considerable length of time. However, changes in the needs of schools, student demographics, and further research brought the 2011 version of the ISLLC standards back for further review (Canole & Young, 2013; National Board Policy for Educational Administration, 2015). A collaborative effort with the NPBEA, CCSSO, and the Wallace Foundation resulted in the

release of new standards in 2015. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 contains ten domains:

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms

Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Standard 5: Community of Care and Support of Students

Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel

Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff

Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standard 9: Operations and Management

Standard 10: School Improvement

These standards reflect the responsibilities for principals in both areas of instructional leadership and organizational management and outline the framework by which principals earn advanced degrees and their licensure.

### **Instructional Leadership Responsibilities of Principals**

Principals are expected to be the instructional leaders of their schools and their work has a tremendous impact on student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood, Seashore-Lewis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Principals must accomplish this expectation while keeping an eye on the connection between their leadership and the social, demographic, and economic needs of their schools and communities (Hallinger, 2005). Increasingly, instructional leadership from principals has become a priority through federal and state accountability policies and local



pressures for higher student success, increased graduation rates, along with students who are career and college ready (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Hallinger, 2005; Louis & Robinson 2012; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008).

The instructional leadership responsibilities of principals include supervision of certified staff, monitoring curriculum, setting and maintaining a climate focused on learning, and leading the change process (Davis, et al., 2007; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty; 2005). Hallinger (2005) developed, as part of a conceptual analysis of instructional leadership theory, three instructional leadership dimensions for principals. Defining the mission of a school, guiding the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning culture are further analyzed in the following section.

#### **Defining the mission.**

Identifying the central mission of a school is essential to having successful student outcomes (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger 2011). Mission development requires principals to work with staff to set clear instructional goals for all students. Principals must focus their work to ensure the mission is clear to all teachers, students, and external stakeholders. Principals accomplish this by not only communicating but modeling the school's mission. Moreover, principals should utilize this mission to underline to the priorities for work of their staff and ensure it is known and accepted by all staff (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2011).

The mission of the school is more than a simple, or lengthy, mission statement (LaFavore, 2004). Principals must make the mission of the school evident in every decision they make, every expectation they set, and keep that focus at the forefront at all times. Effective principals establish clear expectations of staff and students and maintain a laser-like focus on those expectations throughout the course of the school year. (Schmoker, 2011)

**Guiding the instructional program.**

Principals must ensure the instructional program in their schools is consistently applied through control and coordination of curriculum and instruction. Three important elements compose the guidance of instructional program: supervision and evaluation of teachers, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 2005).

Supervision and evaluation of certified staff is among the most critical roles principals hold in relationship to instructional program (Zepeda, 2012). Supervision and evaluation implies the traditional observation of lessons and giving feedback to certified staff. More is expected of principals now as they supervise and evaluate teachers and other certified staff (Zirkel, 2010). Much of this supervision consists now of assisting teachers with planning and delivery of lessons, coaching teachers on improvement of classroom management, and support in implementing and evaluating curriculum (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). Supervision and evaluation also consists of walk-through observations or informal observations. Walk-through observations consist of principals spending between 5 and 15 minutes in the classroom, visiting at random times, collecting data and viewing lessons both for best practice strategies and for student relevance (Millar, 2009; Moss & Brookhart, 2013; Sorensen, 2010). Finally, supervision and evaluation of certified staff does mean identifying ineffective teachers and working with them to either grow their skills or out counseling them from the profession (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010). Identifying those teachers who are marginal, or even incompetent, is challenging, requires a great deal of principals' time, and takes a considerable effort to garner the appropriate documentation (Range, Duncan, Scherz, & Haines, 2012).

Principals work to coordinate curriculum by identifying learning outcomes of students aligned with the standards set by state and federal requirements. Principals, as the leaders of their

schools, bear a great responsibility in guaranteeing instructional efficiency and student learning (Else, 2013). These efforts take many forms, including serving on curriculum adoption committees, studying standards alongside teachers, and developing curriculum maps and common assessments. “Principals don’t need to be curriculum experts, but they do need to lead their schools with full knowledge of the [Common Core State Standards], the new assessments tied to those standards, and the rigor embedded in both” (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012, p. 31).

Monitoring student progress is a key indicator for principals to determine if the curricular program is effective and to ensure that progress toward academic goals is taking place. Principals need to believe their students can all be successful and continually monitor their progress. By setting high expectations of student learning, and providing support to teachers and students along the way, principals reinforce their beliefs that all students can succeed (Ediger, 2014). Principals must support the monitoring of student progress by ensuring teaching staff have ample opportunity to collaborate, utilize student data, and plan for differentiated instruction (Omogbehin, 2013). Finally, the professional development needs of teachers and principals may require support in utilizing and interpreting data for instructional improvement. Principals play an indispensable role in monitoring the progress of students toward the instructional goals set by schools (Thomas, 2013).

#### **Promoting a positive learning environment.**

Promoting a positive learning environment is important work, but often is mistaken for simply being a positive person (Hallinger, 2005). To promote positive learning environments and positive school culture, principals protect instructional time, promote professional development for teachers, incentivize performance from teachers and learning from students, and are highly visible in their schools (Hallinger, 2005). In an era defined much by the accountability efforts,

principals can find their time spread in many directions and might leave school culture to chance.

The best school cultures and climates are ones that are academically focused, promote student efforts, have good stakeholder involvement, and tend to have high teacher retention (Williams, 2011).

Development of positive learning environments does not happen instantly but rather takes deliberate, intentional actions by principals (Peterson & Deal, 2007; Roach & Kratochwill, 2004; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). Connecting the positive learning environment to the culture of the school is important and demonstrates the values, expectations, and goals of a school. Principals must focus efforts on reading, assessing, while both reinforcing and transforming the culture they want to see in their schools (Peterson & Deal, 2007).

### **Organizational Management Responsibilities of Principals**

Principals are expected to focus on school improvement and instructional leadership, yet more and more principals report that management tasks occupy more of their time and energy than does instructional leadership (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). These management tasks include budgeting, resource allocation, personnel issues, facility maintenance and management, scheduling, supervision of non-instructional staff, working with outside stakeholders, micro politics, and managing student behaviors (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Paradise, 2006; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). External pressures and continual policy changes require principals to adapt their organizations and time use to better align to today's demands (Spillane & Kenney, 2012).

Principals have a great number of responsibilities, including management and instructional leadership duties, and balancing the pressures of all their tasks make prioritizing difficult. A longitudinal study of time use from 2008-2012 found that principals are using more

and more of their time for managerial and administrative activities rather than for instructional leadership work (Grissom, Loeb, & Masters, 2013). High school principals use, on average only 10.1% of their time for instructional work, while middle school principals average 12.0% of their time, and elementary principals spend approximately 16.5% of their time on instructional efforts (Grissom, Loeb, & Masters, 2013). In a similar study, administrative and management work made up approximately 48% of principals' time, 9% of their time was spent on tasks requiring principals to be off campus, while only 7% of their time was focused on instruction (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Taylor (2007) also found connection between larger schools and the higher proportion of time their principals spent on management activities.

Management of public funds is a role that bears considerable weight on principals and requires a great deal of their time and focus (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Portin et al., 2003). Studies show principals are not typically trained well in budget management and financial decision-making as it relates to student outcomes and require more professional development in this area (Gauch, 2011; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Stevenson, 2008). Most principals enter their role without much experience in the money management process but nevertheless have a high level of accountability in this regard. Stoskopf, (2013) found the majority of principals have limited knowledge of budget development and resource management. Additionally, he concluded through his research that most principals learn the ropes of financial accountability through on the job experiences as opposed to being taught during their principal preparation programs.

Another area that consumes principals' time is the management of resources. Central to the theme of resource management is the human resources function of principals. Paramount in the human resources role is recruiting and hiring high quality personnel (Lochmiller, 2010). This includes hiring not just teachers but support staff, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, and

paraprofessionals. The ramifications of a bad hire may leave principals feeling under-prepared for this responsibility (Lochmiller, 2010; Portin et al., 2003). The human resources duties of school principals are influenced by several factors, including the unpredictability of staffing needs in schools, teacher contract limitations, and the ability of districts to support principals in their recruiting efforts (Lochmiller, 2010).

The focus on the amount of time principals spend on management activities is not intended to mean that principals are misaligning their time allocations. Consistent positive impacts have been shown related to student achievement when principals are efficient with their organizational management skills (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015; Grissom & Loeb, 2011). Principals who manage their time well prioritize the work that needs to be done and delegate responsibilities in a fair manner. Principals are willing to delegate and share the tasks of their job, but typically delegate instructional responsibilities more frequently than management, cultural, or strategic efforts (Portin et al., 2003).

Principals with greater time management skills tend to be able to overcome the challenges placed on them by the daily demands of the job (Grissom, Loeb, Mitani, 2015). Principals' time is a constant while the accountability pressures only continue to increase. For principals to be most efficient, it is important that they manage short and long term goals, delegate simple tasks, handle interruptions tactfully, prioritize their schedules, and stay focused on the work that truly impacts student outcomes (Khan, Khan, Ahman, & Naseer-ud-Din, 2015; Portin et al., 2003; Spillane, 2012). Additionally, professional development in time management strategies specific to school principals may be of benefit (Khan et al., 2015; Lee & Hallinger, 2012).

### **Novice Principals**

Principals face new pressures today due to external mandates and legislative action (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). While the belief that principals can be all things to all people, accomplish a tremendous amount, all with little support is nothing new, being expected to resolve society's social and educational inequities in a market-based environment is a new set of pressures for principals (Kafka, 2009). For novice principals, this high level of expectation may seem overwhelming. New principals report struggles with stress and time management, isolation, a lack of working knowledge, along with a desire for support and mentoring, as initial challenges with their roles (Gentilucci, Denti, & Guaglianone, 2013; Harman, 2013).

Daresh (2007) described the life cycle of principals' careers as having three distinct stages. The initial career entry stage, or a stage when principals work hard at not failing rather than working to succeed, is the novice time in principals' careers. Personal satisfaction and being confident in one's abilities are achieved during the second phase, known as stabilization. Finally, principals reach a point in their respective careers where they either become risk takers or risk avoiders (Daresh, 2007). Supporting principals through the initial stage is critical to them remaining in the profession and their advancing to additional phases of their careers (Gentilucci et al., 2013).

Early career principals are faced with a great deal of challenge from the beginning of their careers (Stevenson, 2008). Novice principals experience doing the work and making decisions while building necessary relationships, learning the culture of their buildings, and making connections with important external stakeholders (Waido, 2013). In addition to learning the job, principals must maintain the day to day operations and begin making sense of the status quo in their new sites. The challenges for novice principals can be categorized in three areas:

problems with role clarification (understanding the job description), limitations with technical expertise (knowing how to do the job), and difficulties with socialization (learning how to do things in a specific setting) (Daresh & Playko, 1989).

### Mentoring Novice Principals.

Mentoring of novice principals is not a new concept. The need for mentoring connects to the need for quality principals and the challenges novice principals face daily (Scriappa & Mason, 2014). As principals enter the job for the first time, many areas leave them surprised and unprepared for what to do next. Mentoring can be a powerful tool for socialization, support, professional development, and enhanced principal learning and may increase the odds of success for novice principals (Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengston, 2012).

Oplatka (2012), similar to Daresh (2007), described four stages in principals' career lives, including induction, establishment, maintenance vs. renewal, and disenchantment. Principals in the initial phase, induction, often feel isolated, have a fear of insufficient management training, may struggle with staff relations, and typically deal with reality shock associated with heavy responsibilities for which they were not prepared (Oplatka, 2012). Mentors provide a veteran presence, someone who has previously or is currently doing the job and having success, to guide and assure novice principals during their early career stage years (Duncan & Stock, 2010).

### **Method**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of practicing principals in the state of Wyoming regarding their skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management during their first three years in the principalship. As well, this study identified areas in which those principals felt best and least prepared for their novice principal years. Current principals in the state of Wyoming were surveyed to determine their perceptions of their



instructional leadership and organizational management skill sets. Additionally, the survey allowed participants to identify where they felt best and least prepared to take on the responsibilities of the principalship.

Principals with three or less years were asked to rate their skill sets based on their current experience. These principals were also asked to identify where they felt they were best and least prepared. Experienced principals, those with more than three years of experience, also were asked to participate in the survey. Experienced principals were asked to reflect on their skill sets and areas of best and least prepared from when they were in their novice years.

### **Survey Design**

The survey was designed to investigate the perceptions principals held regarding their novice skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management during their first three years on the job. As well, the survey attempted to identify areas in which principals felt most prepared and least prepared for their initial three years as principals. Grounded in the research are important responsibilities and duties for principals related to instructional leadership and organizational management. Drawing from the responsibilities of principals in both instructional leadership and organizational management, defined in the literature review, key skills necessary for principals' success were identified for assessment. In order to best evaluate those skills, participants responded to a series of Likert-scale items focused on instructional leadership skills. If participants had more than three years of experience, they were asked to reflect upon their skill set during their first three years as a principal. The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 26 total items and was divided into three parts; scale questions related to instructional leadership and organizational management, two open-ended questions related to areas most and least prepared for, and a demographic section. Survey items 1-18 were written as

“I am able to” statements specific to skills in instructional leadership or organizational management (see Appendix B). Respondents were given possible options for response of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. Items were rank ordered from highest to lowest based on the mean score. Another goal of this study was to identify those areas in which principals felt best and least prepared during their novice years. The next two survey [items](#) were open-ended, allowing participants to state freely what area of the principalship they felt both best prepared and least prepared for in those first three years. The final six questions of the survey collected demographic information, including gender, years of principal experience, school size, school configuration, previous experience as an assistant principal, and whether or not the participant’s district had assigned a mentor.

### **Participants**

The [potential](#) participants for this study were identified through a download of active [Wyoming school](#) principals available on the Wyoming Department of Education ([WDE](#)) website. The list included [individual](#) names, [the name of the](#) schools in which [candidates for the study](#) were principals, and [their current district](#) email addresses. Those [possible participants](#) listed more than once [on the WDE principal directory](#), typically due to their school being a combination of elementary, middle, and high school, had their multiple listings removed from the final [candidate](#) list. Potential participants all are currently identified by the WDE as a principal for at least one Wyoming school.

### **Data Collection**

Before beginning the data collection process, approval for the study was obtained through the University of Wyoming’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D). The survey was created and uploaded to the University of Wyoming’s survey tool (SelectSurvey.net) and

launched by sending the link and cover letter (see Appendix C) through email to the potential participants. The cover letter explained risks and benefits to participants along with the general purpose of the study. Participants were emailed two additional times as a reminder to participate if they had not already, and were thanked for their participation.

## Results

This section presents the results from the study of current principals in the state of Wyoming regarding their perceptions of their skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management as well as the areas in which they felt best and least prepared for the principalship. A detailed description related to the characteristics of the participants including their gender, years of experience, school size and type, along with experience they may have as assistant principals or working with mentors is included. As well, each of the five research questions that drove this study are examined through a statistical analysis. Analysis of the 18 scale questions used in the survey revealed a Cronbach's Alpha of .867. Individual scale items related to instructional leadership demonstrated consistency through a Cronbach's Alpha score of .834 while organizational management scale items held a Cronbach's Alpha score of .703. Participants were not required to select and answer for each item in the survey, which led to many of the skills having one or more missed responses. This resulted in less than a 100% total for each of the first 18 questions in the survey. Survey items 19 and 20, open-ended questions related to areas principals felt most and least prepared, were read and analyzed for themes found in the responses.

### Demographic Information

Demographic information was compiled through the final six items in the survey, including gender, years of principal experience, school size, school type, if the respondent had

experience as an assistant principal, and if they had worked with a mentor. Table 1 summarizes the findings of the demographic information.

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Information*

Characteristic	N	(%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	78	(67.2)
Female	37	(31.9)
No Response	1	(0.9)
<b>Principal Experience</b>		
0-3 years	30	(25.9)
4-7 years	26	(22.4)
8-15 years	30	(25.9)
15+ years	23	(19.8)
No Response	7	(6.0)
<b>School Size</b>		
Under 100 students	15	(12.9)
101-250 students	36	(31.0)
251-500 students	41	(35.3)
501-1000 students	17	(14.7)
1001-1250 students	1	(0.9)
1250+ students	1	(0.9)
No Response	5	(4.3)
<b>School Type</b>		
Elementary	45	(38.8)
Middle/Junior High	16	(13.8)
High School	28	(24.1)
K-12	8	(6.9)
Other	14	(12.1)
No Response	5	(4.3)
<b>Assistant Principal Experience</b>		
Yes	49	(42.2)
No	62	(53.4)
No Response	5	(4.3)
<b>District Assigned Mentor</b>		

Yes	40	(34.5)
No	71	(61.2)
No Response	5	(4.3)

**Description of Respondents**

A total of 299 emails were sent to principals in Wyoming, with a total of 115 principals participating in the study for a response rate of 38.5%. Of the 115 respondents, over two-thirds were male. Principal experience was distributed consistently across all categories, with both 0-3 years of experience and 8-15 years of experience each having 30 respondents representing 25.9% of the sample respectively. Principals from schools with enrollments between 251-500 students made up 35.3% of the sample, while schools with enrollments between 101-250 students composed 31.0% of the sample. Elementary school and high school principals made up the largest portion of the sample, 38.8% and 24.1% respectively. Assistant principal experience was found in 53.4% of the sample while only 34.5% of the sample had worked with a district-assigned mentor during their career.

**Instructional Leadership Skills**

Research question 1 asked, “What are the perceptions of principals regarding their novice instructional leadership skills?” Ten questions were used in this section to determine the perceptions principals held of their novice skill set in instructional leadership. Table 2 summarizes the percent, mean, and standard deviation for principal responses to the instructional leadership skill items in the survey.

Table 2

*Perceptions of Administrator Instructional Leadership Skills*

Skill	Percent					M (SD)
	<i>Strongly Disagree (1)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Neutral (3)</i>	<i>Agree (4)</i>	<i>Strongly Agree (5)</i>	
<u>Expectations Of Learning</u>	0.0%	1.7%	11.2%	59.5%	25.0%	4.11 (0.66)
<u>Staff Professionalism</u>	0.9%	2.6%	9.5%	60.3%	24.1%	4.07 (0.73)
<u>Positive Culture</u>	0.9%	4.3%	15.5%	50.9%	27.6%	4.01 (0.83)
<u>Instructional Goal Setting</u>	0.0%	6.0%	12.1%	59.5%	20.7%	3.96 (0.76)
<u>Vision Setting</u>	1.7%	8.6%	8.6%	58.6%	22.4%	3.91 (0.90)
<u>Evaluating Certified</u>	1.7%	8.6%	9.5%	57.8%	19.8%	3.88 (0.90)
<u>Situational Communication</u>	0.0%	8.6%	12.9%	62.9%	14.7%	3.84 (0.78)
<u>Leading Change</u>	0.0%	7.8%	15.5%	62.1%	12.9%	3.82 (0.76)
<u>Developing Teacher Skill</u>	0.9%	4.3%	28.4%	50.9%	14.7%	3.75 (0.75)
<u>Engaging Stakeholders</u>	0.0%	19.8%	31.0%	41.4%	6.0%	3.34 (0.87)

The items with the greatest mean scores, or strongest perception of novice skill, were setting expectations of learning ( $M = 4.11, SD = 0.66$ ), setting expectations of staff professionalism ( $M = 4.07, SD = 0.73$ ), and developing a positive school culture and climate ( $M = 4.01, SD = 0.83$ ). Areas in which respondents demonstrated less confidence in their skills included leading change ( $M = 3.82, SD = 0.76$ ) and developing teacher skills ( $M = 3.75, SD =$

0.75). The instructional leadership skill with the lowest mean ( $M = 3.34, SD = 0.87$ ) was engaging stakeholders.

### Organizational Management Skills

Research question 2 asked, “What are the perceptions of principals regarding their novice organizational management skills?” Table 3 summarizes the percent, mean, and standard deviation for administrator responses to the eight organizational management skill items in the survey.

Table 3

*Principal Perceptions of their Novice Organizational Management Skills*

Skill	Percent					M (SD)
	<i>Strongly Disagree (1)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Neutral (3)</i>	<i>Agree (4)</i>	<i>Strongly Agree (5)</i>	
<u>Student Behavior</u>	0.0%	0.9%	10.3%	60.3%	26.7%	4.15 (0.63)
<u>Managing Resources</u>	0.0%	1.7%	10.3%	68.1%	15.5%	4.02 (0.58)
<u>Leading Meetings</u>	0.0%	3.4%	13.8%	60.3%	21.6%	4.01 (0.71)
<u>Evaluating Non-Certified</u>	0.9%	9.5%	15.5%	56.9%	16.4%	3.79 (0.86)
<u>Budgeting</u>	2.6%	12.9%	13.8%	48.3%	21.6%	3.74 (1.02)
<u>Tough Conversations</u>	0.9%	10.3%	14.7%	58.6%	12.9%	3.74 (0.85)
<u>Delegating Responsibilities</u>	0.9%	12.1%	17.2%	57.8%	11.2%	3.67 (0.87)
<u>Managing Time</u>	3.4%	21.6%	19.8%	43.1%	10.3%	3.36 (1.05)

Management of student behavior had the highest perception ranking ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ) of the building management items in the survey with 87% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with their ability to manage student behavior. Managing resources ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and leading meetings ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) rounded out the top three rated skills related to perception principals held for organizational management. The two lowest ranked management skills were delegating responsibilities ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) and managing time ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ).

### **Impact of Mentoring on Principal Perceptions of Novice Skills**

Research question 3 asked, “What impact does mentoring have on the perceptions of principals regarding their novice skill sets?” To further analyze perceptions principals held of their instructional leadership and organizational management skills, mean scores from each of the two categories (see Appendix B) were used to create new variables. These new variables, Instructional Leadership and Organizational Management, were examined to determine if any significant relationship existed between them and previous reported work with a mentor.

Survey participants identifying previous work with a mentor perceived their instructional leadership skills as being quite strong  $M = 4.00$  ( $SD = 0.44$ ). By comparison, those participants not identifying previous work with a mentor reported numerically smaller perceptions of their instructional leadership skills  $M = 3.81$  ( $SD = 0.53$ ). An independent samples  $t$ -test was performed, with the assumption of homogeneity of variances tested and satisfied via Levene's  $F$  test,  $F(109) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .081$ . The independent samples  $t$ -test was statistically significant,  $t(109) = 2.00$ ,  $p = .048$ . Thus, perceptions of novice instructional leadership skills in principals who had worked previously with mentors is statistically significantly higher than the perceptions of



novice instructional leadership skills held by principals who had not previously worked with mentors.

Survey participants identifying previous work with a mentor perceived their organizational management skills as being strong as well  $M = 3.86$  ( $SD = 0.50$ ). Comparatively, those not identified with previous mentorships reported a numerically smaller perception of their organizational management skills  $M = 3.80$  ( $SD = 0.44$ ). Again, an independent samples  $t$ -test was performed, with the assumption of homogeneity of variances tested and satisfied via Levene's  $F$  test,  $F(109) = 0.48$ ,  $p = .489$ . The independent samples  $t$ -test was not statistically significant,  $t(109) = 0.61$ ,  $p = .540$ . This result indicates no statistically significant relationship between the perceptions principals held of their novice organizational management skills and previous work with a mentor.

### **Principal Perceptions of Best Prepared Areas**

Research question 4 asked, "In what specific part of the role did principals feel most prepared?" Of the 116 participants in the study, 107 provided a response to this prompt. Each response to the open-ended question was read completely and several themes emerged. These themes included principals identifying their ability to set a positive culture and to manage student behavior as two areas in which they felt most prepared. Principals also reported feeling well prepared as instructional leaders.

Principals elaborated about their ability to build positive culture being an area they felt best prepared for the principal job. One principal stated, "I feel confident within the area of school culture and fostering positive relationships. I was afforded the opportunity to learn from instructors who prided themselves in this area and also had the opportunity to work within schools where I was able to put my skills into practice." Principals know the importance of

having a positive culture. As one principal said, "I understand the importance of this, and it's something that I go back to consistently, even though our culture and climate remain positive. It's something I can't lose sight of as an administrator."

Principals agreed that their abilities to work with students made managing student behavior an area for which they were best prepared. Principals noted the connection with students as being "the fun and easy part of being a principal." In connection with student behavior, one principal stated, "For those first three years, student management was the easiest area to pick up. If you are solid in the classroom, managing students and having high expectations just kind of comes naturally." Another principal remarked, "I was an Assistant Principal for 9 years prior to becoming Principal. My strength coming in was my relationships with students and discipline."

Principals felt prepared in the area of instructional leadership. The responses in this category included using data and research for decision making, knowledge of the curriculum used in the building, RtI process, and leading PLC's. Many of the responses to research question 3 had clear connection to being an instructional leader, or as one principal discussed, "related directly to influencing teaching practices." Another principal commented that, "I felt best prepared to be an instructional leader. Our district has a framework in place that I was familiar with as a classroom teacher. This allowed me to be able to see the framework, the evaluation, and its instructional components from both sides." In some responses, it was clear principals had taken differing routes to their first assignment. Some had been assistant principals, guidance counselors, or social workers. A principal who emerged directly from the classroom felt that "25 years as a teacher prepared me well for this role." One respondent who wrote about instructional leadership had been an instructional coach. This coach turned principal stated, "It is my opinion

that having been in the Instructional Coach position prior to my principal position helped prepare me to have reflective conversations with teachers and helped to facilitate the teacher's growth.”

Instructional leadership encompasses a variety of job activities. A principal who responded summarized the instructional leadership preparation stating, “I was well-prepared to use data, mission, and research to guide the process of bringing staff together around a focused, cohesive school improvement plan.”

### **Principal Perceptions of Least Prepared Areas**

Research question [5](#) asked, “In what specific part of the role did principals feel least prepared?” [Of the 116 participants, 108 provided a response to this prompt.](#) As with the other open-ended question, all responses were read completely and, again, clear themes emerged.

These themes included principals reporting budgeting and evaluating certified staff as areas in which they felt least prepared to perform. Managing staff professionalism was a strong theme as well, with respondents listing their concerns with lack of preparation necessary to deal with challenging adult behaviors. While many areas of the principalship were mentioned, time management was also a clear area where principals felt they had the least preparation.

Principals indicated frequently they felt least prepared for budgeting. One principal stated, “I felt least prepared for creating and managing the school budget. This was an area that I had to work at to get a better grasp of as I moved through my first few years.” Other principals shared their concerns of “understanding the nuances of the budget” and some “felt unprepared and still do about setting school budgets.”

Principals stated many times, and in great detail, their perceived lack of preparation for managing staff professionalism. As one principal said, “Since I have started working as a building principal, I have been surprised at the number of staff that don't get along with each

other. I guess I didn't realize the extent and the number of staff that would approach me in an attempt to gain support from me against other staff members.” Another principal commented, “when I wanted to become an administrator I was told by a number of experienced administrators that the adults would be the issue more than the students.” This theme was repeated by principals through comments related to adult behaviors such as, “adults who act like their students (not turning in grades on time, avoiding extra duties, defending the status quo at all costs even though it does not benefit students).” One principal “did not appreciate the need to provide specific and clear expectations to staff in all areas”. A veteran principal stated, “they don't teach you what to do with a 20 plus vet teacher whose room smells like [cat urine], or what do you do with a teacher that has Asperger's or falls asleep in class, or what to do with teachers that take more time off than students.” Principals expect their staff to be professional but often have to “deal with those staff members who either don't want to or cannot do their job well.” When discussing staff professionalism, principals made it clear they expect staff to act professional in all manners and not to be “uncooperative/hostile staff members.” As one principal remarked, “I was unprepared for the amount of support long time employees could gather to undermine decisions if they chose to do so.”

Additional preparation needs clearly exist for principals, because the “demands that are placed on [principals] are unreal” . One principal commented about being “not prepared for how chaotic the beginning of the school year would be”, while another identified “writing proper legally defensible memorandums” as a need they had in their first three years as a principal. Other areas of need connect to skills for working with “parents that are not reasonable” or “are entitled” or simply “dealing with difficult people” and “conflict of all types.”

A final theme that emerged was time management and balancing the duties of being a principal. As one principal commented, “ensuring that all the things you have to get done are done on time and done to the best of your ability. There is a lot more that a principal has to do than some ever realize.” To the outsider, it may not be clear the demands placed on principals. Yet, as stated by a principal, “this position is true middle management. Principals are being pulled in so many different directions that it is very difficult to feel that they are making a positive difference in their school in the first few years”. Another principal described the demands on their time as, “the instructional piece during the school day and the hidden curriculum demands afterwards are tough. Most days are 12-14 hour days dealing with all the extracurricular offerings. Although the school has an athletic director, the expectations are that the HS principal be at all events. This is really a difficult task and ultra-demanding on a person”.

### **Discussion and Implications**

This research project reported the perceptions held by Wyoming principals as related to their novice skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management. Additionally, the research project reported principals' perceptions of the areas in which they felt best prepared and least prepared for the principalship. Results of the study can be summarized as follows: principals reported overall confidence in their preparedness during their novice years on the job; principals overall are more confident in their skill sets to be instructional leaders than in being organizational managers; principals agreed they were well prepared in areas of positive culture, student behavior management, and instructional leadership activities. Principals felt least prepared with budgeting, staff professionalism, and time management. Principals also reported a meaningful connection between instructional leadership skills and working with a mentor. The results of the study are limited by having only one smaller state examined and by the less than

40% participation rate. An additional limitation of the study was relying on veteran principals' memories to rate their perceptions of their novice skill sets in instructional leadership and organizational management.

Principals reported overall greater confidence in their preparation to be instructional leaders ( $M=3.87$ ) as compared to being organizational managers ( $M=3.82$ ). Consistent with the findings of Shoho and Barnett (2010), principals identified their ability to set instructional goals, hold high expectations for staff professionalism, and develop school culture as areas in which they felt well prepared as instructional leaders. Most principals agreed their ability to evaluate certified teachers was an area in which they felt confident (Zepeda, 2012). Principals cited their ability to connect with students, to be available and present, and to hold high learning expectations as clear strengths (Hallinger, 2005). Often noting their experience as teachers or as someone who had worked in the building where they became the principal, respondents identified building positive culture as an area of strong preparation. Knowing the norms of the building, having relationships in place with staff, and knowing key stakeholders were named as advantages for some principals (Daresh & Playko, 1989; Waigo, 2013). As stated by one principal, "Relationships with others was the area in which I felt best prepared."

"Really there is no way to prepare for it without experiencing it" was the response from one principal when answering where they felt best prepared. One principal "knew the importance of developing both a personal professional mission" while another felt "well prepared in the nuts and bolts of running a building." Principals responding to this study were quite confident in their ability to manage student behaviors. The finding that principals are confident in their ability to manage student behaviors runs parallel to research citing most

administrators receive at least some training in this area (Kindelan, 2011). Additionally, principals felt well prepared to lead meetings and manage resources.

Organizational management was an area principals cited for needing assistance, primarily budgeting and managing their time, during their first years on the job (Burt, 2015). As with Stoskopf's (2013) research, principals in this study acknowledged budgeting as a considerable challenge. Responding principals discussed their lack of clear understanding of how the system of budgeting worked. Principals receive training in how school finance is determined at the state and federal level but that training is limited in relation to creating and managing a budget is best accomplished (Gauch, 2011; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Stevenson, 2008). A principal with a great deal of experience commented about budget that, "I've never felt like I really have much to do with the budget. Seems like that's mostly always a district level thing." This statement may underline the varied practices districts have on budgeting and the expectations they place on principals in this area. As one principal described, "it was five years before I fully understood the budget, and then we changed Business Managers and the rules seemed to change again."

A critical area in which principals identified as feeling underprepared, both through the Likert scale questions and the open-ended question was time management. Survey data documents 25% of principals stating they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with being able to appropriately manage their time. This is consistent with Grissom, Loeb, and Mitani (2015) stating that principals struggle to find the time to be effective instructional leaders due to the time spent on organizational management and a lack of skill to manage the time appropriately. This also runs parallel to a lack of time and too many responsibilities as major challenges facing principals (Wise, 2015). One principal cited the disconnect in their preparation program with the daily demands on time easily outweighing the work of setting a vision and mission (Hornig,

Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Principals reported there were high demands on their time, with a push for instructional leadership during the day, managing budget and student behaviors, while still having activities outside of the day leading to 12 – 14 hour days being their norm (Grissom, Loeb, & Masters, 2013). Additionally, principals reported having a limited level of confidence with their skills related to engaging stakeholders and to gain traction with the political and public relations responsibilities connected to their job. These are critical roles for principals (Portin et al. 2003), but due to the constraints on principals' time, they tend to be addressed as a low priority. Principals reported a lack of willingness to delegate responsibilities to staff leaders (Portin et al., 2003), while 13% of respondents cited struggles with staff professionalism as they sole area leaving them feeling under prepared. Challenges clearly exist for principals working with relationships and trust within their staff (Carrillo, 2013).

Additional analysis of the instructional leadership and organizational management skills of novice principals uncovered a relevant connection between principals with mentoring experience and their comfort with instructional leadership. One principal responded by stating, "Most of the training came from on the job, trial and error." Research shows mentoring is an effective way to support novice principals (Daresh, 2007; Waido, 2013). Mentoring for new principals should focus not only on their areas of need but should also highlight their strengths.

Mentors need to be guides for novice principals and provide more than someone to answer basic questions (Daresh, 2007). Additionally, mentoring allows for new principals to be supported while student success remains the focus for the school (Waido, 2013). Principals citing a relevant impact on their instructional leadership skills as a result of a mentorship is an interesting finding, as many mentors struggle to focus on both areas and have often developed in their own careers



as mostly managers more than instructional leaders (Daresh, 2007). As stated by one principal, "I have had the good fortune to work with good mentor principals".

Results from this study provide three key implications for those who hire, supervise, and support novice principals. First, a need is evident for additional training and preparation in areas related to organizational management for principals. The greatest amount of principals' time will be spent in this area and it is not indigenous to teaching, where nearly all principals have their primary background (Grissom, Loeb, & Masters, 2013; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Second, provide mentoring for principals in their first year on the job. This mentoring may be related to both instructional leadership and organizational management areas but should be focused on specific needs of the individual principal. Mentoring is a powerful socialization strategy, provides non-judgmental feedback and guidance for early career principals, and has reciprocal benefit for mentoring principals (Duncan & Stock, 2010; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012). Finally, have structured support and professional development for principals focused on time management. Principals cited repeatedly their struggles with managing their time and feeling overwhelmed with the duties of their role. One principal stated, "I feel inadequate in my ability to balance my time and responsibilities. Delegation of duties is not an area of weakness, however managing paperwork seems to be." Principals who manage their time effectively are able to balance the high demands of their jobs and have overall positive impacts on student achievement and school success (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015; Khan et al., 2015; Lee & Hallinger, 2012).

Results of this research project also have implications for universities and principal licensure programs. Similar to the above summary for hiring and supervising of novice principals, university and licensure programs may consider the following: develop collaborative

partnerships between universities and school districts for principal preparation and mentoring; and embed time management training throughout preparation programs. The development of partnerships between universities and school districts should be considered for furthering both mentoring programs and current internship practices. Partnerships between universities and school districts have mutual benefits and may result in greater applicant pools, earlier and more sustained success for principals, and increased collaboration between universities and school districts (Whitaker, 2006). Collaborative efforts proven to be most effective include cohort groups, shared input from both the university and the school district, allow for both entities to have a say in selection of participants, and training for both the candidate and the mentor principals (Whitaker, 2006; Zepeda, Bengston, & Parylo, 2012). Preparing principals through training in time management techniques may include supporting principals in goal setting, delegation of responsibilities, setting priorities, controlling their schedules, and simply learning to say no (Su, 2013). Practicing these techniques with feedback and in connection to other key elements in preparation programs may demonstrate some benefit for aspiring principals. As stated by one principal, "time management is also a huge gap in preparedness. Ensuring that all the things you have to get done are done on time and done to the best of your ability." The use of real world scenarios or case studies places aspiring principals in a position to have to solve problems and to have to grasp the high demands that will ultimately pull them in many directions (Grissom, Loeb, & Masters, 2013; Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

Principals face a great deal of pressure and accountability in today's educational environment. As outside influences such as federal, state, and local legislation continue to focus on principals' performances as school chief officers, the duties and complications that come with being the principal will only increase. Pressures for principals to demonstrate greater student

achievement, increase graduation rates, and ensure that students are both career and college ready have revved up the expectations of principal abilities. The end result is an extreme need for principals to receive support in the training and preparation phase through their novice years of the principalship.

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**Appendix A**

**Perceptions of Wyoming Principals Regarding Their Novice Skill Sets Survey**

**Perception of Principal Skills**

Please select the best response for each question, reflecting on your first three years in your first building principalship assignment

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to set a clear academic vision for my building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to develop my building budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to accurately evaluate non-certified staff (support staff, secretaries, custodial)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to accurately evaluate certified staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully create positive school culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully engage all stakeholders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to develop the professional skills of classroom teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to manage building resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully manage my time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to develop instructional goals for my building	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully manage student behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to maintain high expectations for student learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to maintain high expectations for staff professionalism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to lead productive meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am able to delegate responsibilities in a fair, responsible manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully lead change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to have difficult conversations with staff members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to successfully communicate in volatile situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Open-ended**

Please be descriptive and as complete as possible.

19. What is the one area in which you felt best prepared in your initial three years of the principalship?

20. What is the one area in which you felt least prepared in your initial three years of the principalship?

**Demographics**

What is your gender

- Male
- Female

How many years have you been working as a building principal?

- 0-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-15 years
- 15 + years

Which of the following best describes your role as a building principal?

- Elementary school principal
- Middle school/junior high principal
- High school principal
- K-12 principal
- Private/Online school principal
- Other



Did you serve as an assistant principal prior to your first principalship?

- Yes
- No

Did your district provide you with a mentor or specific administrative professional development?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes your school?

- less than 100 students
- 101-250 students
- 251 - 500 students
- 501-1000 students
- 1001 - 1250 students
- more than 1250 students

## Appendix B

### Alignment of Survey Questions to Research Questions

1. *What are the perceptions of novice principals regarding instructional leadership?*

**Survey Questions:**

2. I am able to set a clear academic vision for my building
4. I am able to accurately evaluate certified staff
5. I am able to successfully create positive school culture
6. I am able to successfully engage all stakeholders
7. I am able to develop the professional skills of classroom teachers
10. I am able to develop instructional goals for my building
12. I am able to maintain high expectations of student learning
13. I am able to maintain high expectations of staff professionalism
16. I am able to successfully lead change
18. I am able to successfully communicate in volatile situations

2. *What are the perceptions of novice principals regarding organizational management?*

**Survey Questions:**

1. I am able to develop my building budget
3. I am able to accurately evaluate non-certified staff (support staff, secretaries, custodial)
8. I am able to manage building resources
9. I am able to manage my time
11. I am able to successfully manage student behavior
14. I am able to lead productive meetings
15. I am able to delegate responsibilities in a fair, responsible manner
17. I am able to have difficult conversations with staff members

3. *In what specific part of the role did principals feel most prepared?*

**Survey Question:**

19. What is the one area in which you felt best prepared in your initial three years of the principalship?

4. *In what specific part of the role did principals feel least prepared?*

**Survey Question:**

20. What is the one area in which you felt least prepared in your initial three years of the principalship?

## Appendix C

### Survey Cover Letter

Dear Colleague,

The role of the principal has changed significantly over time and being well prepared for the role is critical. As a seated principal in the State of Wyoming, we are interested in your perceptions concerning your own preparation for the role of building principal. Specifically, we are interested in your perception of your first three years in the role of building principal. To that end, you are invited to complete a survey that should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes. As you complete the survey, please do so reflecting on your first three years as a building principal.

One potential benefit for you might be the opportunity to reflect on your first three years as an administrator, identify areas of their personal growth, and possible areas where growth may continue for in your professional future. The potential risk for you is minimal. You may request a copy of the final research summary but no individual or grouping data will be provided. Please be assured that I will not share individual responses. Also, no identifying information will be collected. If you do disclose identifying information in your survey response, I will delete it and will not use it in the report of the study. Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may choose whether or not to participate or to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and participation. Please contact me, Darrin Peppard (307-371-8947 or [dpeppard@uwyo.edu](mailto:dpeppard@uwyo.edu)) if you have any questions about the research project or if you are interested in obtaining the results after the data have been collected and summarized. Additionally, you may contact my research committee chairman, Dr. David Hvidston (307.766.2071 or [dhvidsto@uwyo.edu](mailto:dhvidsto@uwyo.edu)) if you have any concerns regarding this research project. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the University of Wyoming IRB administrator at 307.766.5320.

If you consent to participate in this study, please click on the link below to go directly to the survey.

<https://survey.uwyo.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=l2K34720L&Preview=true#>

Darrin M. Peppard  
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership  
University of Wyoming  
Laramie, WY

**Appendix D**

**IRB Approval Letter**

UNIVERSITY  
OF WYOMING

Vice President for Research & Economic Development  
1000 E. University Avenue, Department 3355 • Room 305/308, Old Main • Laramie, WY 82071  
(307) 766-5353 • (307) 766-5320 • fax (307) 766-2608 • [www.uwyo.edu/research](http://www.uwyo.edu/research)

September 8, 2016

Darrin Peppard  
Student  
Education/Educational Leadership  
University of Wyoming  
Faculty Advisor: Dr. David Hvidston

**Protocol #20160908DP01292**

Re: IRB Proposal "*Perceptions of Principals Regarding Novice Skill Sets*"

Dear Mr. Peppard-

The proposal referenced above qualifies for exempt review and is approved as one that would not involve more than minimal risk to participants. Our exempt review and approval will be reported to the IRB at their next convened meeting September 22, 2016.

Any significant change(s) in the research/project protocol(s) from what was approved should be submitted to the IRB (Protocol Update Form) for review and approval prior to initiating any change. Per recent policy and compliance requirements, any investigator with an active research protocol may be contacted by the recently convened Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) for periodic review. The DSMB's charge (sections 7.3 and 7.4 of the IRB Policy and Procedures Manual) is to review active human subject(s) projects to assure that the procedures, data management, and protection of human participants follow approved protocols. Further information and the forms referenced above may be accessed at the "Human Subjects" link on the Office of Research and Economic Development website: <http://www.uwyo.edu/research/human-subjects/index.html>.

You may proceed with the project/research and we wish you luck in the endeavor. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Colette Kuhfuss*  
Colette Kuhfuss  
IRB Coordinator  
On behalf of the Chairman,  
Institutional Review Board