

2013

# Learning and Reflection in the Midst of Persistent Challenges on Practicing School Leaders' Time

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## Recommended Citation

Reese, Kenyae L.; Lindle, Jane Clark; Della Sala, Matthew R.; Klar, Hans W.; Knoeppel, Robert C.; Campbell, Michael; Buskey, Frederick C.; Marion, Russ; and Flores, Roberto, "Learning and Reflection in the Midst of Persistent Challenges on Practicing School Leaders' Time" (2013). *Publications*. 7.  
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This paper was prepared for presentation at the 2013 annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration. Please do not quote or cite this paper without permission of the authors. Correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to Kenyae L. Reese, Department of Leadership, Counselor Education, Human, and Organizational Development, Eugene T. Moore School of Education, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-0707. Email: [Kenyae@clemson.edu](mailto:Kenyae@clemson.edu).

Among the many scarce resources that principals must conserve and use wisely, time may present one of the more persistent challenges to their leadership practices. A simultaneous and equally challenging practice for school leaders is engaging in systematic reflection that serves to mitigate time constraints and emotional upheavals of the job. Reflection, and resistance to it, emerged as a theme during a yearlong-program that emerged from a school-university partnership, focused on the development of district-level coaches to support experienced principals in becoming more reflective leaders for continuous school improvement. The program uncovered principals' resistance to the pauses in their practices that reflection requires. These principals and coaches also reported emotional reactions to persisting mandates on school accountability. This paper offers some insights into how reflection may balance the ongoing emotional dynamics and time constraints of schooling, and the degree to which the mentoring program supported principal protégés in this effort. The research questions guiding this study asked *what are the participants' reflections on the usefulness of time spent in the pilot program as it relates to their professional learning? In what ways does the coach/mentoring relationship support time and emotional challenges faced by practicing principals? How does the coach/mentoring relationship facilitate reflection about the principals' professional practice?*

### **Leadership 3.0**

The district-level coach/mentor program, called Leadership 3.0, was a pilot designed to provide support for practicing principals of a rural consortium of school districts. The companion program, Leadership 2.0 engaged practicing principals in using data to build the capacity of their schools, and to enhance their personal and professional leadership capacities to drive improved student outcomes. Unlike urban districts, most school leaders cannot be rotated to different schools since the numbers of schools in rural districts are limited. Therefore, the coaching model employed a cross-district approach whereby coach/mentors

were selected from nearby school districts to support practicing principals employed in other districts. These nine school districts also have small central offices where the district leaders serve in multiple roles. Superintendents selected both protégé-principals and coaches. The protégé-principals were selected based on their prior success in their initial induction in the role for five years or more and for their potential to improve their schools. Superintendents also selected the coaches from their district offices and loaned them to principals in neighboring districts.

District-level coach/mentors participated in seven monthly professional learning workshops where they learned helping skills and practiced giving feedback in a variety of simulations geared to drive school improvement. Coach/mentors also completed exit slips after each session, in addition to online surveys between sessions. To facilitate the on-going relationship between coach/mentors and protégé-principals, the pairs met regularly (via online or face-to-face) to discuss challenges and assess growth. The university team created several instruments used during the dyad discussions that included semi-structured observation instruments, reflections on videos of the principals' work, and logs. Coach/mentors also participated in interviews three-times in the year.

### **Coaching/Mentoring**

The term coach/mentor was intentionally used in this study to reflect the two roles. Literature indicates that mentors support protégés personal growth goals including career advancement (Daresh, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Grogan & Crow, 2004; Mertz, 2004; Lester, Hannah, Harms, Vogelgesang, & Avolio, 2011). By way of providing continuous feedback and systematic support, coaching embodies a larger mission beyond the individual to address the needs of the organization. Using coaching models to improve systemic needs may be particularly important in rural districts where local talent from which to draw future leaders may be more limited than in urban districts (Korach & Sanders, 2012;

Mitgang, 2012; Mitgang, Gill, & Cummins, 2013; Orr, King, & La Pointe, 2010; Parylo, Zepeda & Bengston, 2012).

Effective coach/mentoring provides a platform for leaders to reflect on the amount of change needed in their schools, and to seek support in making careful, and well thought out decisions towards that change (Daresh, 2004). Although mentoring is an example of a positive and valuable endeavor associated with improvements in educator's practices and school improvement efforts (James-Ward & Potter, 2011), literature on mentoring tends to favor aspiring or entry-level leaders rather than, or in addition to, school leaders at mid-career (Hall, 2008; Harris, Ballenger & Leonard, 2004; Parylo, Zepeda & Bengston, 2012; Wasonga & Murphy, 2006). Nevertheless, the most effective mentoring relationships extend beyond the initial years of leadership (Grogan & Crow, 2004), and are mutually beneficial to both parties (Daresh, 2004; Mertz, 2004). Meaningful mentoring relationships for protégés can facilitate ongoing professional development experiences, potentially improving, expanding, and deepening their leadership capacities and personal growth (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Grogan & Crow, 2004; Searby & Tripses). Mentors also benefit from the relationship by reflecting on their own leadership practices through discussions with their protégés (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Reflection has become an important benefit to and outcome of mentoring (Daresh, 2004; Grogan & Crow, 2004). In at least one study, reflection was rated as the second highest outcome for coach/mentors (Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent, 2004).

### **Literature Review**

Three literature sources provide the framework for this paper including (a) constraints on principals' time, (b) emotional and social learning and (c) reflective practice. These three literatures informed the results of a yearlong program where coaches were prepared to support practicing principals.

### **Time Constraints**

A strong thematic recommendation in literature on both school leadership preparation and practice as well as for other professions concerns the use of time to reflect on practice in order to refine and adjust one's responses, judgments, and future actions (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Day, 1993, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009; Schön, 1983; Wright, 2009). Principals' reports of fragmented and disruptive moments in their practice emerged as early as Wolcott's study of a single elementary principal in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century (Wolcott, 1973). Demands on principals' time have not abated in the intervening years (Camburn et al, 2010; Horng, Klaski, & Loeb, 2009, 2010). For example, it has been reported that the majority of school principals work 60 hours a week or more (Archer, 2002). A growing host of school improvement initiatives and accountability structures has added to challenges dealing with time (Camburn et al., 2010; von Frank, 2012; Wright, 2009). Archer (2002) attributed many of the issues with principal's lack of time to outside school factors, such as dysfunctional families, students with severe emotional problems, and rules (p.1). For example, a participant in Archer's (2002) study commented, "over time, schools have shouldered more of the responsibilities once borne by families, social-service agencies, and even churches" (p. 2). Despite these overwhelming concerns, many principals felt as though they did not have the support to address these growing challenges (Archer, 2002). This leads to other research that attributes many of the challenges to time due to principals working in isolation. Increased pressure to improve schools has created situations wherein principals look for immediate answers or rely on experience and intuition to guide their work (Day, 2000; Sparks, 2002). These perfunctory approaches prevent principals from involving others in a shared or collective leadership approach (Hill, 2003), or engaging in reflexive techniques that are known to enhance decision-making (Daresh, 2004; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Schön, 1983).

Several researchers have also attributed pervasive challenges to time to surmounting leadership roles and functions of principals. For example, Wright (2009) noted that principals served multiple and often competing roles including that of an instructional leader, manager, political activist, moral steward, humanitarian, and community builder, to name a few. Camburn and colleagues (2010) noted similar functions of principals, but added roles dealing with student affairs, financial and building operations, human resource needs, and some functions dedicated towards personal and professional growth. Research by Horng and others (2010) found that many of these roles coincide with how principals spend their time on a daily basis. In their study of how 65 school principals in Miami-Dade County spent their time over the course of one day across six task categories, the researchers found that 30% of the principals' day went towards administrative functions such as managing student discipline and fulfilling compliance requirements. Another 20% of their day went to organization management activities such as managing staff, budgets, and hiring staff. Principals spent a little over 10% of their time on instruction-related tasks such as observing teachers and developing professional development. While Camburn and colleagues (2010), found similar results to those in terms of the majority of principals' time being dedicated to student affairs type concerns, they found that nearly 19% of principals' time went to instructional leadership practices. This was the second highest way that principals spent their time across six leadership functions. These findings were based on daily logs kept by 48 principals in a midsized urban district.

Albeit percentages of time spent on instructional practices were relatively low across studies conducted by Camburn and colleagues (2010), and Horng and others (2009), time spent on professional development and personal growth was among the lowest. Nevertheless, a strong thematic recommendation in literature on both school leadership preparation and practice as well as for other professions concerns the use of time to reflect on practice in

order to refine and adjust one's responses, judgments, and future actions (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Day, 1993, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009; Schön, 1983; Wright, 2009). One reason is that poor or disruptive time management can interfere with school improvement efforts (Day, 2000; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). Several principals participating in a study by Archer (2002) commented that there is an "expectation of doing more and more with less and less" (p.2). Nevertheless, research has shown that principals can manage their time effectively and improve schooling outcomes (Camburn et al, 2010; Horng et al., 2009, 2010; Rice, 2010; Wright, 2009). This involves principals' having support and engaging in continued dialogues as part of a trusting relationship (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) and collective experience (Leithwood et al., 2010) that a coach/mentor can provide. Still, competing pressures for principals' time can be emotionally charged.

### **Emotional and Social Dynamics**

An emerging literature also suggests that the emotional and social dynamics of teaching and learning requires school leaders who are competent in their reflective responses and their strategic leadership for school improvement (Horng, Klasik & Loeb, 2009, 2010; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010; O'Brien, Weissberg & Shriver, 2003; Schmidt, 2010). The persisting challenge to these requirements for emotional and social awareness as well as reflective practice are the demands and pressures on principals' time (Archer, 2002; Camburn, Spillane & Sebastian, 2010; Horng, et al., 2009, 2010; Rice, 2010; Wright, 2009).

Despite a tendency for principal preparation programs to focus on organizational tasks and functions associated with teaching and learning, emerging literature on school leadership effectiveness demonstrates a complex dynamic of social and collaborative support (Day, 2000; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010; O'Brien et al., 2003; Schmidt, 2010; Wright, 2009). Frequently, the interwoven nexus of teacher development and

organizational learning have been interpreted as leadership tasks, but the continuing work on school leadership effectiveness shows a dynamic web of social interactions that support school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2010; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Social interactions inherently carry emotional experiences (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Schmidt, 2010). As pressures for school accountability continue unabated, school personnel report an emotional response (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Schmidt, 2010).

### **Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice typically provides both time and space for a review of one's actions and the consequences of those actions (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Day, 1993, 2000). The more effective means of reflection involve opportunities to pursue an analysis of incidents and processes in a systematic fashion, often, but not always, with the aid of a coach or mentor (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Craig, 2009; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Schön, 1983; Wright, 2009). Scholarship on mentoring is clear that reflective practice is a significant benefit to the mentorship dyad (Daresh, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Grogan & Crow, 2004), because it provides opportunities for coach/mentors and protégés to reflect individually and collectively on their practice (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Nevertheless, challenges to reflective practice have also been documented, including the busyness of schools that prevent leaders from having adequate time to reflect (Day, 1993; Day, 2000). Consequently, leaders must also be a part of a system that supports reflective practice that can develop with the support of a mentor (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Lester, Hannah, Harms, Vogelgesang, & Avolio, 2011).

The aim of these reflection sessions is to refine practice and judgments as well as to plot next steps (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Schön, 1983; Wright, 2009). Often these reflective moments lead to insights on how some tacit, professionally embedded habits

obstruct one's optimal professional performance and run counter to espoused goals (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009). Organizations and the people within them benefit from a leader who values reflection because those leaders are open to and invite in new ideas. They are willing to confront difficult conversations, and regularly give and take critical feedback (Grogan & Crow, 2004). Reflective practice provides a continual means of understanding that translates into renewed action for the individual and the organization alike (Wright, 2009). In essence, by engaging in a cycle of questioning, leaders move towards a developmental, nonlinear view of leadership that is necessary for a collective sense of direction, purpose, and meaning making (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006).

### **Methodology**

The pilot program was evaluated using a multi-method approach based on Guskey's model for evaluating professional development (Guskey, 2000; Teddlie & Takkashori, 2009). Guskey's (2000) model consists of five parts: (a) participants' reactions, (b) participants' learning, (c) organizational support and change, (d) participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and (e) student learning outcomes. This paper reports on Levels 1-3 to discern the principals' readiness to lead school improvement efforts and the degree to which the mentoring program supported principal protégés in this effort. Findings for Level 4 and 5 will be analyzed and reported during a separate phase of the program.

### **Data Collection**

For Level 1 and 2 of Guskey's model, the measurement of satisfaction, each session ended with an exit slip based on six principles of adult learning (Appendix A). Reflections on videos of their work, self-reports in logs, and results from a coaching perceptions survey rounded out these levels. The aspects of the model dealing with changes in practices (Level 3) came from the survey and the principal-protégés' school improvement and professional learning goals.

The reflections on videos employed a photo-elicitation method, which uses visual media as the focus of semi-structured interviews and reflections about the images and the activities in the images (Novak, 2010 ; Pink, 2007; Rose, 2012; Rowley & Hart, 1996).

Sixteen of the 17 pilot programs participants initiated the coaching perceptions survey. Three surveys were eliminated from the analysis due to failure to complete nearly all the items. The remaining 13 surveys could be identified as seven Leadership 2.0 principal-protégés, five Leadership 3.0 coach/mentors, plus one unidentified respondent. The survey employed a 5-point likert scale (strongly agree, agree, agree/disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) where five was strongly agree.

### **Research Participants**

This study focused on the experiences of eight coaches from seven of the nine participating school districts. The eight coaches experienced a yearlong program focused on cognitive coaching for improving the instructional leadership of experienced principals. They participated in sessions as a group of coaches and in sessions combined with their assigned protégé-principals. Both groups kept logs of their outside of session interactions with each other. Periodically, coaches reflected on evidence of leadership in videos of activities involving the protégé-principals' choices of settings, such as post-observation conferences with teachers, faculty or department meetings. They also engaged in interviews and observations alongside of the research team members.

### **Data Analysis**

The variety of data sources provided an opportunity for methodological triangulation of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie & Takkashori, 2009). The exit slips included both quantitative ratings and open-ended responses, as did the surveys. The self-report logs, interview, and observational data provided a balance to the anonymous self-reports from the exit slips and online surveys (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Kvale &

Brinkman, 2009). The comparison of qualitative responses from the video-elicited reflections and from the semi-structured interviews along with the ratings provided insights into the intensity of the professional learning as well as the multiple interpretations that participants gave to their experiences (Saldaña, 2009). Interview data were transcribed from digital to written format and then submitted to several cycles of coding, including open-coding for themes and then axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2009). Data from the exit slips and surveys were analyzed in SPSS.

### **Findings**

This paper offers some insights into how reflection may balance the ongoing emotional dynamics and time constraints of schooling, and the degree to which the mentoring program supported principal protégés in this effort. The paper provides several data tables from the ratings at Guskey's model Levels 1 through 3 about the participants' reactions to their learning experiences and their sustained understanding of what they learned. The paper also includes quotes from the interviews and video-reflection sessions that highlight the difficulties and emotions reported under the ongoing time constraint of the job.

#### **Level 1: Participants' Reactions**

Findings from Level 1 were primarily analyzed through (a) exit slips completed at the conclusion of each session, (b) logs kept by coach/mentors and their respective principal-protégés that captured the method by which dyads spent time outside of sessions, and (c) reactions from coach/mentors and protégé-principals regarding the amount of reflection and time it took to record and analyze videos.

##### **Exit slips.**

To evaluate the participants' level of satisfaction, exit slips were provided at the conclusion of each of the eight sessions. Questions on the exit slips were based on principles of adult learning as represented by the following domains: (a) knowledge, (b) cognitive

demand, (c) context, (d) pacing, (e) feedback, and (f) technology. Participants' reactions to all six domains can be found in Appendix B. The pacing domain most relevant to this study's research question. Table 1 presents the cumulative average scores for each question related to pacing. For all three questions, the average scores appear to be near the maximum possible range, suggesting that the participants had positive emotions towards how the professional learning program valued and made use of their time.

Table 1

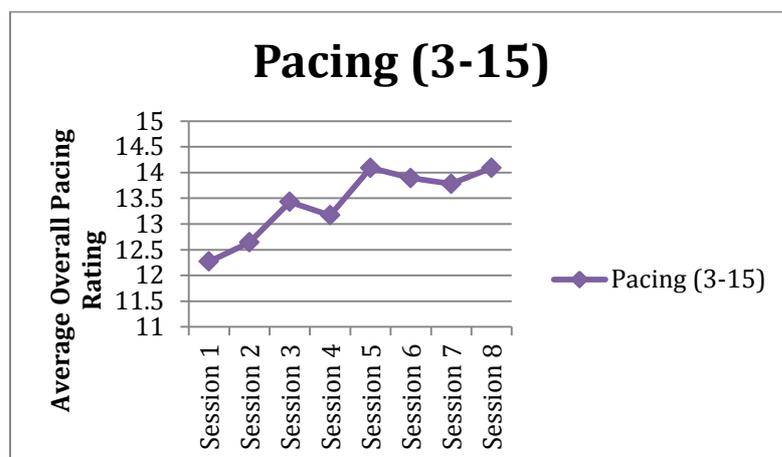
## Overall Reactions to Pacing

Questions	Average N	Average Score (possible range) <sup>a</sup>
Sessions considered all participants' professional and personal obligations	11	4.43 (1-5)
Sessions considered my professional and personal obligations	11	4.44 (1-5)
Adjustments were made to sessions as professional or personal issues arose	11	4.50 (1-5)
Average Overall Reactions to Pacing	11	13.37 (3-15)

Note: <sup>a</sup> The anchors for this scale ranged from 1 to 5.

Over time, the principals' reactions to pacing appear to have slightly increased as the sessions continued throughout the year (See Figure 1). The increase in attitudes towards pacing may be understood by the combination of two possibilities: the participants became more accepting of the time involved in program sessions over the duration of the program and/or the Leadership 2.0/3.0 organizers adapted the content and delivery of the program around participants' schedules.

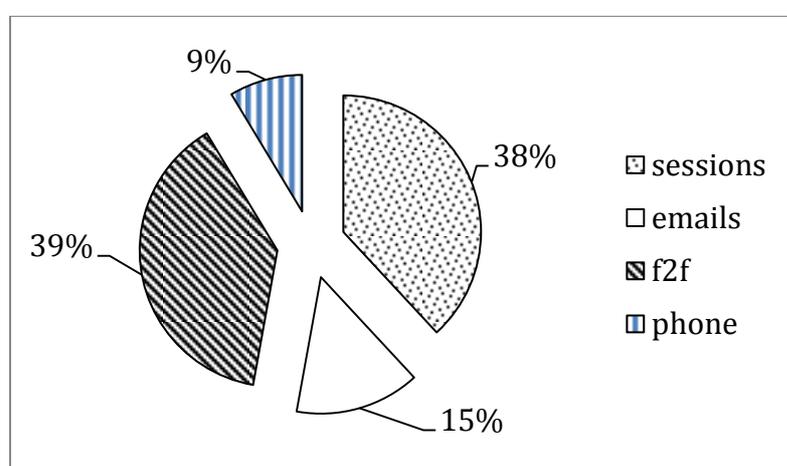
Figure 1. Principals' reactions to Pacing over the course of the first year



### Logs.

Logs completed by coach/mentors and their protégé-principals captured their individual interactions beyond the professional learning sessions. Logs were kept for a five-month period and were collected in December of 2012 by the university team. In order to be sensitive about the six principles (knowledge, cognitive demand, context, pacing, feedback, technology) established for the program, the researchers did not make any specific demands for a set number of meeting days or target hours. Nevertheless, the university team suggested that the dyads meet for two hours a week, but ultimately left the decision up to the pairs to decide the frequency of contact. Figure 2 shows the reports of which modalities were used to hold individual meetings as captured by the logs.

Figure 2. Reported modalities of individual Principal and Coach/Mentor sessions



The majority of contact between the coach/mentors and principal-protégés occurred during professional learning sessions and face-to-face meetings. The large use of face-to-face meetings was an interesting finding given the rural setting and distance between schools. The participants also used email to communicate with one another, and phones to a much lesser extent. These results support the participants' responses to the exit slip, especially the responses to those items about adequate pacing of the program and available time for reflection as seen in reflections about videos.

### **Coaching perceptions survey.**

Results from the coaching perceptions survey given mid-way through the program tell a different story than the exit slips and logs. Overall, coach/mentors and protégés agreed that the pilot programs met their expectations (Leadership 2.0, Mean=4.01; Leadership 3.0, Mean= 4.18). However, the majority of principal-protégés felt that they did not have enough time to devote to the program and felt it was a burden to them (see Table 2). While coach/mentors shared these sentiments, more of them were devoted to the mentoring relationship than their protégés. Despite the constraints of time, both groups indicated making the mentoring relationship a priority.

Table 2

Mentor Commitment by Participant Group

Please indicate the program for which you belong		Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:		
		I feel that I do not have enough time to devote to the mentoring relationship.	I feel like the mentoring program is a burden to me.	I made the development of our mentorship relationship a priority.
Leadership 2.0 (protégé)	Mean	3.50	3.67	3.33
	N	2	3	3
Leadership 3.0 (coach/mentor)	Mean	3.57	4.00	3.71
	N	7	7	7
Total	Mean	2.60	3.75	4.00
	N	5	4	5
Total	Mean	3.21	3.86	3.73
	N	14	14	15

**Video reflections.**

Video reflection findings mirror the survey results. Early in the coach/mentor program, the university team asked principals to videotape situations related to their own leadership behaviors that could be analyzed with the help of a coach/mentor. In addition to promoting reflection, the videos provided an opportunity to stimulate conversation and lead bonding experiences between the coach-protégé pairs. Following the videotaped sessions and conversations with coach/mentors, the pairs participated in interviews with the university team about the experience and their learning. Coinciding with findings from the coaching perceptions survey, several principal-protégés mentioned having challenges with finding time to video, commenting, “it’s really hard thinking about finding the time to analyze what you recorded, because of schedules.” Another principal-protégé echoed those sentiments sharing that “my days are busy, so I did the best I could with the video in the time available.” Despite these time constraints, each participating pair spent an hour or more analyzing their videos. Their reactions to the videos provided some initial clues into the participants’ learning and the effectiveness of the coach/mentor program that fed into Level 2 of Guskey’s model. In other words, although participants wanted to engage in the coach-protégé relationship, they saw it as one more item on their to-do-list.

**Level 2: Participants’ Learning**

Findings from Level 2 that were indicative of the participants’ learning were primarily gathered from (a) reflections from the videos analyzed by the coach-protégé pairs and reiterated to researchers during interviews, (b) a coaching perceptions survey taken by coach-protégé participants, and (c) the exit slips completed at the conclusion of each professional learning session.

**Video reflections.**

Following the conclusion of pairs reflecting on the videos, the coach-protégé pairs indicated creatively thinking about how they could link their learning to school improvement efforts and enhancements to professional practices. To that end, one principal-protégé commented that she planned to “use videos to improve teaching in the form of peer observations.” Another imagined “department chairs filming their teachers to identify best practices.” Others realized the need to be more reflective in their work with teachers and other stakeholder groups. One principal-protégé commented: “I just keep thinking, was I talking too much and not giving the teacher time to talk. Looking back, probably not. I can definitely be more reflective.” Coach/mentors also indicated that analyzing videos alongside their principal-protégés was a learning experience remarking, “the videos provided an opportunity for me to see for myself what my protégé was doing, versus just hearing about it from her.”

**Coaching perceptions survey and exit slips.**

Despite these qualitative findings, survey results were mixed. For example, although both groups indicated that the program was relatively effective and provided support, there were different perceptions about the learning. While 98% of coach/mentors and principal protégés on the exit slips indicated being introduced to new knowledge in the sessions, principal-protégés assessed their growth as leaders on the survey higher than their coach/mentors (see Table 3).

Table 3

## Program Effectiveness and Learning by Program Participant

Please indicate the program for which you belong		Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:		
		Leadership 3.0 is effective.	Leadership 3.0 provides support for practicing administrators.	The protégé grew as a leader during the mentoring process.
<b>Leadership 2.0 (protégé)</b>	Mean	3.86	4.29	4.00
	N	7	7	7
<b>Leadership 3.0 (coach/mentor)</b>	Mean	3.40	3.80	3.40
	N	5	5	5
Total	Mean	3.62	4.00	3.69
	N	13	13	13

**Level 3: Organization Support and Change**

Results from the coaching perceptions survey served as one form of evidence for Guskey's Level 3: Organization support and change. The survey revealed some emotional dynamics and the level of support provided to the principal-protégés by the coach/mentors. School improvement goals developed by the principal-protégés rounded out the findings from this level.

**Coaching perceptions survey.**

Emotions surfaced in the form of challenges faced by principal-protégés in their everyday work (see Appendix C). Both groups rated implementing the common core as the easiest of the tasks to work on. Among the most challenging of tasks were those associated with evaluating teacher effectiveness and asking for feedback about their ability to implement school improvement goals. Although coach/mentors struggled with these emotional demands as well, they were not as challenged by them as their respective protégés. A surprising twist in the survey revealed that although principal-protégés found it difficult to ask for feedback, they felt coach/mentors were relatively effective in providing support (see Table 4).

Table 4

## Expectations of the Coach/Mentor Relationship

Please indicate the program for which you belong	Assisting the protégé in planning for change	Assessing mentor's competence in acquiescing to the barriers that the protégé faces in school improvement	Reflecting on my ability to be an effective partner in the mentoring relationship	Assessing mentor's competence in asking protégé uncomfortable questions that encourage him/her to reflect on his/her practice	Assessing mentor's competence in empowering the protégé to take risks that disrupts the status quo in his/her school	
	Mean	5.00	2.67	4.00	2.67	2.67
	N	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Leadership 2.0 (protégé)</b>	Mean	3.86	4.14	4.29	3.86	4.00
	N	7	7	7	7	7
<b>Leadership 3.0 (coach/mentor)</b>	Mean	4.80	4.40	4.60	4.20	4.20
	N	5	5	5	5	5
Total	Mean	4.40	3.93	4.33	3.73	3.80
	N	15	15	15	15	15

**School improvement goals.**

Perhaps the coach/mentors provided the necessary encouragement and time for reflection for principals to engage in ongoing discussions about their personal and school improvement goals. Both goals centered on improving teaching and learning in their schools and required supports (see Appendix D). A few of these approaches included integrating technology into the classroom, closing achievement gaps between student groups, using data to inform instruction, and improving relationships and school culture. Approaches related to enhancing professional practices of protégés were often in direct connection with the school improvement goal. To provide assistance and to introduce a level of accountability, four-way meetings were established between the principals, coach/mentors, district superintendents, and university research team members. In-between four-way meetings, coach/mentors and principal-protégés spent time reflecting on these efforts. They also identified strategies to deal with the emotional dynamics and time limitations that threatened to hinder their ability to engage effectively in school improvement efforts.

### **Discussion**

This paper presents findings that add to the knowledge base for the on-going learning of experienced school leader. The multiple data sources provided evidence of an ongoing tension over the demands of the learning and reflection coupled with the high time demands of participants' day jobs at the district level. An underlying issue for the coaches was the difficulties in connecting through some modalities with their equally busy protégé-principals. In some cases, the coaches interpreted the scheduling issues as a subtle resistance on the protégé-principal's part to the need for coaching and/or the discomfort that mutual reflection and cognitive coaching could elicit.

Furthermore, participants' reactions indicated that the coach/mentoring program was effective and met their expectations—although they indicated initially that the program was a burden to them because of time constraints. Nevertheless, coach-protégés spent the majority of time in face-to-face meetings, and both groups indicated that pacing improved as the program continued.

In addition, both groups felt as they though learned new knowledge as a result of their participation in the program. Principal-protégés assessed their growth as leaders higher than coach/mentors did, however. Nevertheless, protégés leveraged opportunities to reflect with their coach/mentors in order to create school improvement goals and enhance their own professional practices and ways of being. As a result, principal-protégés are taking more ownership of their learning—and with the help of coach/mentors—are managing more effectively time constraints and emotional upheavals of the job.

### **Significance**

The results from this study offer insight into the processes of professional learning on-the-job, an unremitting recommendation in leadership preparation and other professional literature (Grogan, Bredeson, Sherman & Beaty, 2009). Among the more important questions

posed by the results of this study is how to make reflective practice a means of alleviating the emotions and tensions produced by time constraints, rather than yet another task on the already-too-long-to-accomplish daily checklist faced by most school leaders. The lessons from this pilot program serve as reminders of the time it takes to create change and the cognitive shifts that are a critical part of the process. They also substantiate the need to address explicitly the tensions among the time demands of school leadership roles, associated emotions, and professional learning requirements.

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## Appendix A

Figure 1: Principles of Adult Learning for Principal-Protégés and Coach/Mentors

Research-Based Concepts for Principles	Principles Practicing principals and their mentors are ...
<b>Types of Knowledge</b>	Principle #1: ... experienced professionals with experiential knowledge and tacit knowledge as background germane to research-based knowledge.
<b>Cognitive Demand</b>	Principle #2: ... mature learners whose ability to take abstract knowledge and apply it concretely varies individually.
<b>Pacing</b>	Principle #3: ... busy adults with multiple responsibilities and obligations that may interrupt or intervene in learning sessions.
<b>Context</b>	Principle #4: ... shaped by the nature of their professional roles which research has demonstrated includes high-pacing, multi-tasking, and few opportunities for sustained attention to a single issue.
<b>Feedback</b>	Principle #5: ... highly visible and subject to spontaneous judgments as well as formative and summative evaluations of their every action.
<b>Technology</b>	<i>Principle #6</i> ... immersed in an information-based job, with high-levels of information demand, and constantly emerging information technologies, each with an individual learning curve.

## Appendix B

## Overall Reactions to Sessions from Session Exit Slips

Principles	Average N	Average Score (possible range) <sup>a</sup>
Knowledge	11	25.04 (6-30)
Cognitive Demand	11	12.9 (3-15)
Context	11	21.94 (5-25)
Pacing	11	13.37 (3-15)
Feedback	11	24.45 (6-30)
Technology	11	11.91 (3-15)

Note: <sup>a</sup> The anchors for this scale ranged from 1 to 5.



## Appendix D

Principal-Protégés' School Improvement and Professional Learning Goals  
and Required Support\*

<b>PRINCIPAL **</b>	<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FOCUS</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EMPHASIS</b>	<b>SUPPORT REQUIRED</b>
Michael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get out of Focus School status</li> <li>• Identify instructional strategies which improve scores for students with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to become better at doing walkthroughs and giving teachers feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Anthony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help teachers analyze data to create better assessments and improve instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to analyze data myself and work with teachers to improve instruction based on data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District: Provide necessary support for my improvement efforts</li> </ul>
James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve student achievement across the school with an emphasis on African American males</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to conduct walkthroughs and give feedback in relation to implementing Common Core State Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Assist with helping me improve my classroom observations</li> <li>• District: Provide observation conferences and a book study</li> </ul>
Marcus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement data systems and help faculty use it to change instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to support teachers to strengthen assessment writing</li> <li>• Develop protocols for Professional Learning Communities to collaboratively design assessment and revise instruction based on data</li> <li>• Providing feedback on the use of assessment data to guide instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Help me better analyze assessment data</li> <li>• District: Support me in attending relevant meetings, workshops, and conferences</li> <li>• University: Connect me with the National Dropout Prevention Center to help me analyze school data</li> </ul>
Danielle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the use of technology in the school by increasing the integration of technology in classroom instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to support teachers in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards</li> <li>• Learn how to devise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Provide support related to the Common Core State Standards, integration of technology, and</li> </ul>

		<p>a walkthrough rubric to improve instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to develop a teacher leader (use as model to other teachers)</li> </ul>	<p>developing teacher leaders.</p>
Brittany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to increase teacher analysis of data and focus on African American male and Hispanic student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to improve classroom observational feedback to teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Periodically meet to monitor classrooms together, receive feedback, and identify conferences to support me</li> <li>• District: Provide feedback on performance and identify resource books to support me</li> </ul>
Molly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase parental involvement and draw upon community resources to increase student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to build capacity by growing/training teachers to be teacher leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Frequently engage in contact about training teachers to be teacher leaders</li> </ul>
Kathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use School Improvement federal Grant (SIG School using transformation model; \$3 million over 3 years) to improve the school culture, build expectations, and enhance instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase knowledge of Common Core State Standards (the more I know, the more I can lead my staff)</li> <li>• Learn more about how to improve relationship building between teachers and students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Receive support about improving teacher-students relationships</li> <li>• University: Will be connected with the National Dropout Prevention Center</li> </ul>
Janet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify what content is not being sufficiently addressed in the classroom to hold data conferences with teachers and students to improve student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how to analyze data to build teacher capacity to change the instructional culture of school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor: Observe how teachers and I analyze and use data and provide feedback</li> <li>• District: Provide resources to support my school improvement efforts</li> </ul>

\*This includes support from the mentors, district superintendents, and university research team members.

\*\*Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the Principal-Protégé participants.