LEARNING TO LEAD WITH AN EQUITY LENS: A CASE STUDY OF A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

LEARNING TO LEAD WITH AN EQUITY LENS: A CASE STUDY OF A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM

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Northern Illinois University, 2024
Patrick Roberts, Director

School districts throughout the United States are challenged with the plague of educator turnover. In particular, building principals are exiting school buildings causing gaps in system consistencies leading to negative perceptions of school culture and decreases in student achievement. Universities are working to assess and redevelop principal preparation programs (PPPs) to support principals and the skill sets needed to be successful within schools today. By increasing the skill of a building principal to lead using an equity lens and developing theories of action to address the frustration initiated by urban school working conditions, principals may develop a greater sense of self-efficacy and remain in their positions. This study explores research on principal preparation programs and equity-based theories of action through a case study centered on a Principal Residency Program. Finally, the study draws from research on effective principal preparation programs and the case study to develop a rubric for use by universities to measure the level at which PPPs are developing leaders that have the ability to lead with an equity lens.
LEARNING TO LEAD WITH AN EQUITY LENS: A CASE STUDY OF A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM

BY
MAURICE DAVIS

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FOUNDATIONS

Doctoral Director:
Patrick Roberts
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am still trying to wrap my head around making it to this point. As surprised as I am to have this moment, I am certain it does not happen without God being with me. I am thankful for every blessing He has bestowed upon me, and I realize that all of my strength, knowledge, and understanding comes from Him. Of all the things He has blessed me with, the greatest blessing provided to me is my wife Jeneva. She is my nudge, my pat on the back, and most importantly the rock of my family. To my wonderful children Alexis, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Aaron, this would not have happened without each of you giving me inspiration to show what can be done within our family! I do wonder which one of you will be next. To all four of my amazing parents (Morris, Janine, Ronald, and Rose), I’ve always desired to make you proud and hope that this accomplishment is one you find joy in. I am also blessed to have the best grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins that ever lived!

A gracious thank you to Dr. Patrick Roberts for your guidance and challenge to make this the best reflection of work that I have ever completed. Your steady hand assisted me in ways you’ll never know. Many thanks to Dr. Creed, Dr. Tonks, Dr. Gibson, and the rest of the NIU Principal Residency Program instructors for your support and efforts in assisting me over the past five years. There are so many others I could thank, but it would take the remaining pages of this dissertation to do so.
DEDICATION

To Thomas Davis Jr., Jonas and Emma Bobo, and Charlie McDuffie: I think about you often, wondering which qualities I garnered from each of you to make me the person I am today. Whichever you provided, I am eternally grateful.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The principal of a school is one of the most important positions in education. As identified by the Illinois Principals Association (IPA; 2023), “The impact of an effective principal has likely been understated, with the impacts being both greater and broader than previously believed” (p.5). Everything from student achievement to whether a teacher decides to remain at a school is often dependent on the school leader. Knowing the impact of the principal, it is essential to consider the value of retaining school leaders in their positions. Given the current trends of what it takes to lead schools effectively and successfully such as managing a budget, moving student achievement, and establishing a healthy organizational culture, schools are struggling with school principal turnover at alarming rates. Most recent data identifies 1 in 4 principals remaining in their current school leadership position longer than 5 years (IPA, 2023).

The issue is exacerbated when you are unable to replace them once they leave. Historical statistical data collected by the IPA identify a significant decrease, approximately 75%, of principal candidates completing a preparation program from 2,637 in SY2011 to 598 for SY2021. Further study shows the decrease in principal candidates often affecting urban schools at a rate higher than that to their rural and suburban counterparts (Beckett, 2021; Boyce & Bowers, 2016). Statistics such as this show the importance of developing an effective and sustainable principal pipeline in the state of Illinois that will serve as a proactive approach to addressing principal turnover. Furthermore, these programs must provide specific and explicit
skills around the development of an equity mindset to assist principals in navigating the challenges presented in urban schools.

The Principal Residency Program: A Case Study

For several years administrators in a school district serving a large city in the upper Midwest contemplated the results of continued turnover while problem solving possible solutions. During the 2019 school year the school district launched an opportunity designed to combat the results of principal turnover. The Principal Residency Program aims to develop a pipeline of principals dedicated to serving as an administrator within the district’s schools for a minimum of three school years. The residency program provides paid dean residencies in the district’s schools while candidates complete coursework through a partner university name withheld to preserve anonymity). According to the dean of the partner university’s College of Education,

By growing their own principals who are already committed to the district and who receive targeted coaching to make sure they are ready for the challenges and opportunities that will face as principals, [the district] will be able to have a strong pipeline of school and district leaders.

During the 2021-2022 school year another district joined the partnership, committing six educators to the residency program in hopes of increasing their internal administrative pool. Leadership in the second district saw the program as an opportunity to invest in current educators to specifically address gaps in school leadership’s ability to lead from an equity-based mindset. According to a district administrator within the second district, the Principal Residency Program assists in, “preparing them to guide our equity-focused continuous improvement work” (p. 4).
This statement highlights the value of equity-based skill acquisition guiding school improvement for future school leaders of this urban school district.

Although this principal preparation program (PPP) has the potential to address the continued cycle of principal turnover by offering the ability to have a feeder program of principal candidates, it will not effectively provide longevity without equipping candidates with the ability to lead with an equity lens, thereby providing clarity to leaders around the assumptions or variables that exist in urban education. If building leaders are provided the skills necessary to understand how an equity mindset supports urban leadership, they will be able to develop robust theories of action that shift the assist in alleviating challenges posed within the conditions that cause principal turnover specifically in urban schools which serve students most marginalized.

There are a series of considerations that would assist principal preparation programs in aligning curriculum and instruction to leadership of urban schools and students of color. First, without consciously identifying and addressing inequitable systems and structures within a school, leaders will continue to lead in a system that oppresses and conditions students of color to maintain their status quo. Second, a significant component of equitable practices involves ensuring that standards and curriculum provided to students allow for cultural access and context that students of color may have the most efficient and effective path to learning as possible. Strategies and practices that implicitly lift some cultures and social constructs over others have the potential to lead to the incorporation of racism within the system which we educate. Finally, just as with the Investing in Diversity program research by Johnson & Campbell-Stephens (2010) and founded in London, England, principal candidates in principal preparation programs should be assessed to determine the shifts in thinking that occurred during their program. This serves as the most accurate measure of immediate feedback on the connections being made
between learning about equity and social justice and the ability to lead and facilitate using those learned skills. Through hope and quality reflection, principal preparation programs have the ability to not only meet the needs of future leaders who are able to retain their status as leaders for extended tenures, but also have the ability through their learning to increase student achievement for America’s most marginalized populations.

Structure of the Dissertation

Holistically, this study serves as an opportunity to explore principal turnover and the conditions that impact a principal’s decision to leave a school, focusing particularly on schools in urban regions. Understanding the conditions that drive principal turnover allows for consideration of how the challenge can be addressed by increasing a principal’s ability to see their working conditions through a lens of equity. The study considers the development of principals in PPPs and their ability to develop theories of action that drive their leadership and decision making through a lens of the equitable practices of social justice and antiracism as a skill set used to counteract the effects of the conditions related to principal turnover. Lastly, the study utilized a Principal Residency Program as a case of focus to learn about the skills that may be learned and applied by program graduates to lead with an equity mindset.

This dissertation is divided into three distinct papers. Each phase of the study addresses an aspect of principal turnover and the nature of principal preparation programs as a solution to providing school leaders the tools to lead equitably through impactful theories of action.

Paper 1 (Chapter 2) begins by reviewing the current research that exists on the topic of principal turnover. The conditions of turnover are discussed with an intentional focus on the working conditions that drive administrators away from the work, in particular those who lead
urban schools. The literature review also considers the importance of principal preparation programs as a key strategy being used by school districts to address the attrition of school leaders. Finally, the literature review analyzes the importance of leaders developing action plans, or theories of action, that allow them to address challenges specific to urban schools through the incorporation of equitable practices.

Paper 2 looks to address the three research questions which best support the purpose of this study. The three research questions guiding this particular study are:

1) What practices or programming within a Principal Residency Program exist that expose students to equity-based theories of action?

2) Do program graduates prioritize an equity mindset during their first years of school administration and if so how?

3) How equipped and prepared do candidates feel to lead with an equity lens in River City School District, considering the curriculum, experiences, and assessment of the PPP through a local university?

Paper 2 (Chapter 3) responds to these questions by identifying patterns and themes collected from qualitative data captured through a Principal Residency Program currently being utilized by what is identified in this study as the River City School District. Interview data retrieved from program graduates and program instructors assists in gaining understanding as to how if at all the Principal Residency Program equips graduates to lead as measured by the Culturally Relevant Teaching and Leading Standards developed by the Illinois State Board of Education. Additional data analysis was conducted using the current program curriculum used for program development and support. Program curriculum was assessed through a rubric produced from the National Educational Leadership Preparation Standards. Principal
“proficiency” was determined through the use of benchmarks developed in Standard 3 of the NELP Standards. These various data points were triangulated to identify patterns and themes which could lead to greater discussion regarding the impact of equitable practices such as social justice and antiracism in current PPP program development.

Paper 3 (Chapter 4) presents a rubric to PPPs that assists in aligning the development of program benchmarks to equitable practices. Through the utilization of the developed rubric, universities and colleges in the state of Illinois have a resource that assists them in measuring to the extent in which their PPP reinforces skills needed to lead schools with an equity lens. This rubric establishes proficiency for PPPs to effectively benchmark program participants readiness in the application of knowledge and skills within school buildings.

Problem of Practice

Principal turnover is a concern to school districts across the United States. Turnover of building leadership, specifically in urban schools, continues to impact student achievement, school culture, and teacher retention. Addressing the problem challenges school districts to develop sustainable, systemic, and viable opportunities to develop principals to lead with the consideration of specific urban conditions in mind. Developing an equity mindset that ensures effective leadership happens during the preparation of a principal candidate. It is essential that these preparatory programs are assessed to determine the quality in which PPPs establish an equity mindset that may lead to a principal’s increased sense of self-efficacy that they can create theories of action that increase student achievement, change building culture, and increase teacher retention, thus addressing the problem of principal turnover.
Intended Audience

School districts across the United States are faced with the challenge of increasing principal self-efficacy. This study highlights the essential nature of preparation as a key lever to establishing self-efficacy within principal candidates. The intent of this study is to support universities as they develop principal preparation programs that equip principal candidates with the appropriate skills and capacity to lead schools that have positive school culture and ultimately increased student achievement for all students. The research and strategies presented, although applicable to any university program, are more explicitly driven to address those universities most likely to prepare principal candidates for urban schools. Higher education organizations should be aware of the components of PPPs that lead to school principals having an equity mindset and supporting the culture of a building becoming one of social justice and antiracism. This study supports higher education institutions in the state of Illinois as they consider whether their PPPs support equity-based leadership in the school setting.

Positionality of Researcher

Four years ago, as a building principal, I was tired. I was tired of having to explain to adults why students didn’t “act” as students of the past. I was tired of not having the autonomy to make the best decisions I could for student growth and achievement. All these barriers led me to consider walking away from something I had been so passionate about for so long. Without the care and compassion of my supervisor at the time, I would have walked away from educational administration dazed by the impact it had on my life for 12 years. Principal turnover is a significant issue within today’s schools. The importance of solid school leadership that is
retained over time has been linked to increases in both academic achievement and growth. The turnover of building administrators has been exacerbated by various cultural and societal challenges which continue to impact the effectiveness of school leadership.

As a former building principal who was on the verge of walking away from the profession of school leadership, I was curious not only how I had gotten to where I was in my thinking, but also how I could have stopped these things from happening. I am hoping through the exploration of principal turnover, as well as, the preparation that occurs for future candidates, oncoming generations of school principals will be better positioned and equipped to lead schools in an equitable manner.
CHAPTER 2

INCREASING SELF-EFFICACY THROUGH PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

To best reflect upon the most effective use of principal preparation programs, there must be clear definition around the type of principal turnover in which PPPs can be leveraged. To accomplish this, the types of principal turnover were analyzed to best understand the impact of PPPs. Additionally, research was explored on the implication of effective PPPs on a principal’s self-efficacy to successfully lead schools upon the completion of their program. Literature on the development of equity-based mindsets and theories of action and their impact on school leadership provided context around the necessity of these specific components on the success of principal leadership within the urban setting.

In a blog posted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2020), poll results confirmed that a high percentage of principals identified the pandemic as an accelerant to their thoughts and ideas of leaving the profession of school administration. In an already strained professional pool, current administrators have been pushed to the brink by various policies and expectations. According to the NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti, “Our schools are already strained by principal turnover, and the school conditions policymakers have created will only intensify that turnover” (NASSP, 2020, para. 3). Principal turnover is a deterrent to student growth and achievement for school districts across the country. In urban, suburban, and rural school districts alike, principals are walking away from the profession at alarming rates. According to a study completed in 2018, “An average of 22% to 30% of principals leave their
schools each year in urban areas, compared with an average 20% of principals who leave their schools each year nationally” (Beckett, 2021, p. 1696). Comparatively, a study out of Texas determined that rural schools in Texas had a higher turnover rate compared to the average across the state (Pendola & Fuller, 2022).

Whether serving as an urban or rural school leader, several variables have been studied in relation to principal turnover to better understand why principals choose to leave (Beckett, 2021; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Yan, 2020). Despite the negative impact leadership transitions may have on any school and student body, we find urban schools struggling with this event more often. Primary to the causes identified for urban principals are the working conditions in urban schools. In particular, the level of school discipline is identified as a direct correlation to higher levels of principal turnover (Yan, 2020). Further analysis identifies minority students as the largest percentage of urban school communities. As urban schools take the brunt of principal turnover, students fall farther behind with their levels of achievement. Without solving the problem of principal turnover, student outcomes will continue to reflect the imbalanced impact principal turnover has on urban America.

Because of the severity of principal turnover and the loss it causes to local school districts, many superintendents and school boards are attempting to develop policies and programs to address the deficit. Partnering school districts to the Principal Residency Program are no different, as the program was developed during the 2019-2020 school year to build capacity in teacher leaders to become school administrators. The initial school district partner is
located in an urban city of approximately 155,000 citizens.\textsuperscript{1} Its school district includes 27,700 pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students. The student demographic data identify black and brown populations attributing roughly 70% of the total student population. The district includes approximately 45 schools that include a building principal and minimum of one assistant principal. The partner school district has an average principal turnover rate within school buildings of two principals every six years. Historical trends of principal turnover in the partner district show that shifts in leadership were problematic for stakeholders of the community. In an article written in 2011, a local reporter shared, “Last year, the district began the 2010-2011 with 16 new principals in its 54 buildings, and this year, the district will add at least 15 new principals in August, with the school board expected to approve more” (name withheld to preserve anonymity). As the partner school district has struggled to maintain consistency in building leadership, academic scores have suffered as inexperienced leadership leads to struggling school cultures, as well as poor teaching and learning. Schools have an inability to gain the necessary traction in student growth and achievement as new leadership often brings new philosophy, expectations, and initiatives. A study conducted in 2012 shed light on the impact of principal turnover. An analysis completed by Samuels (2012) determined approximately 20% of newly placed principals will leave that position within one or two years, negatively impacting cohorts of students and their academic achievement and growth.

As principal turnover continues to serve as a challenge for schools throughout the United States, districts are considering several solutions to retain building leadership. This study

\textsuperscript{1} The specifics in the following description of the city profile have been slightly altered from the actual data in order to help mask the city – this includes rounding of specific numbers to nearest 5/10, or 100 and tweaking other descriptives which do not alter conceptual definitions or understanding.
analyzes the degree to which a Principal Residency Program prepares principal candidates to use theories of action that focus school improvement on equity-based strategies and practices. When learning on the value and application of an equity mindset are addressed through an effective PPP, a principal’s belief that they can do the job, or self-efficacy, will increase thus identifying one option to the current issue that is principal turnover in urban schools. Educational researchers have considered the use of theories of action to solve quandaries related to curriculum development, data-informed decision making, parental communication, and leadership structure within a school. Montecinos et al. (2022) argue for the value of using a theory of action with decision making for school leaders. A theory of action is key to driving any plan developed for the purpose of solving a problem. Montecinos et al. (2022) support this premise through their suggestion of a school leader's beliefs of what should be done to improve teaching and learning reflected in an effective theory of action.

Principal turnover leads to a variety of challenges within a school building including low levels of student growth and achievement (Bartanen et al., 2019; Kearney et al., 2018). By identifying barriers to principal longevity, school districts are most certainly able to explore solutions and strategies to develop high quality options for the principal pipeline. The “options” established by collegiate programs must provide a skill set to principal candidates that ensures their ability to effectively navigate the struggles of urban education. A Principal Residency Program could serve as a potential lever to ensure principals can develop sound theories of action, serving as evidence to the value of a principal’s self-efficacy and its effect on their longevity within River City School District. Although this study is driven by the implications of principal turnover, its primary objective and function is to investigate the impact the development of principals can have on the working conditions that cause it. This literature
review explores the various causes of principal turnover in urban schools. It also examines the implications of principal pipeline programs as a theory of action utilized by local school districts to greatly reduce the amount of principal turnover, given the unique characteristics of urban school districts that hinder student growth and achievement.

**Principal Turnover Defined**

To truly understand the determinants of principal turnover, we must first develop a working definition of principal turnover. At its most foundational level, turnover is defined as a principal who chooses not to return to a school from one fiscal year to the next regardless of the cause or condition in which they leave (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Often, principal turnover occurs when a principal transfers from one school to another within the same school district (Béteille et al., 2012). Although this definition provides a common understanding of principal turnover, it lacks the depth to assist in connecting principal turnover to solutions that lead to retention. Seeing turnover as a more multifaceted effect of various causes will lead to a more effective approach to addressing the issue. Snodgrass Rangel (2018) argued the necessity of asking why the turnover occurred to develop the appropriate level of context for addressing a principal’s decision to leave. Each incident of a principal leaving their position is the result of a specific and individualized series of events that shift the reasons surrounding the turnover. Yan (2020) identified the context of turnover given five distinct possibilities that included: mover, demoted, promoted, leaver, retiring. *Movers* are considered to be principals who make lateral moves from one school to another. These administrators have seemingly made a choice to intentionally leave a school. Their reasons for leaving could range from leaving sub-par conditions to being attracted to the conditions provided by another school. These are
administrators that can be retained if the conditions are right. A principal that takes a role in a non-principal position in the same or different school is identified as being *demoted*. In most cases, demotions are based on employee performance. A principal underperforming as defined by the context of a school district is unable to influence the decision to remain in their position and therefore the conditions for turnover have minimal effect on the decision. *Promotion* occurs when a principal is hired into a central office position. A principal who leaves the profession of education altogether is considered a *leaver*. The final distinction is made for principals who *retire* from the profession of education. Although Boyce and Bowers (2016) concluded that there was not a single, clear method to determining a type of principal that leaves their post, they did identify urban school principals to be more likely to be dissatisfied with their positions relative to suburban school principals. Understanding the variants identified by Snodgrass Rangel (2018) and Yan (2020) help to develop a specific response given the turnover being addressed. It is essential for school districts to define the type of turnover being identified within leadership to best prescribe a solution that is targeted, strategic, and most effective. For this study we defined principal turnover to be those candidates that moved and those who left their assignments for other positions or professions as these two scenarios have the potential to be proactively addressed through the utilization of principal preparation programs.

**The Conditions of Principal Turnover**

In recent years, principal turnover has shown to be a struggle for urban and rural school districts working to improve the development of students throughout the United States. The instability driven by continuous leadership shifts in a school hinders progress for students, staff, parents, and the community as a whole. With the constant replacement of building leaders, urban
schools are often plagued with numerous negative outcomes that affect a community’s ability to thrive. Urban school districts are impacted at a rate higher than that of schools in rural and suburban areas. According to Beckett (2021), “Colorado urban schools experience a change in leadership every 2.5 years and only 23.70% of principals stay at the same school for 5 years” (p. 1695). Beckett argued that a significant connection could be made between the low levels of student achievement, high school dropout rates, and high levels of student truancy related to urban schools throughout America. Leaders of urban schools have been found to report lower rates of job satisfaction and inability to affect change in schools. A study completed by Boyce and Bowers (2016) showed a higher dissatisfaction rate with principals leading urban schools relative to building principals leading suburban schools.

Four distinct conditions are identified as the causes of principals leaving their positions (Yan, 2020, p. 96). The first condition is often aligned to the job benefits a principal receives for the work completed. Some principals struggle with the responsibilities identified for the role not equating to the salary provided. Principals also leave their positions due to heavy or increased workload. As responsibilities and requirements of the job increase, principals are required to put in more time and longer hours. The lack of principal autonomy to make decisions is a third condition considered when individuals are considering whether to serve or leave a school building. When principals merely “check boxes” and work from a place of compliance, the work becomes meaningless. Levin and Bradley (2019) supported this premise in a study that explored why principals leave their posts besides through retirement or dismissal. Excessive bureaucracy and policies do not allow for flexibility of leadership and the decisions that are sometimes necessary for various reasons. The final and seemingly most impactful condition to principal turnover is a school’s disciplinary environment. Several studies identify this concern as a
significant factor to principal retention (Beckett, 2021; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Yan, 2020). Although each of these conditions serves as a barrier to principal tenure and longevity, principal preparation programs are uniquely situated to significantly impact one condition in particular.

**Salary and Principal Turnover**

As discussed in the research conducted by Yan (2020), “Empirical evidence shows that higher salary is associated with lower principal turnover rates” (p. 96). Thirty-six empirical studies researched by Snodgrass Rangel (2018) determined there was correlation between principal salary and principal retention. In many cases, principals receive increases in salary when moving from one school district to another. Principals have also leveraged school transfers as a method to increase their salaries, thus promoting turnover as a method to increase compensation despite the potential for negative impact to student growth and achievement. Additionally, challenges have been identified in the incentive of taking on the role of principal when salaries are disproportionate to that of teacher salaries. A report developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2018) stated, “Dissatisfaction with salary further exacerbated by the fact that, in some contexts, principals’ salaries can be lower than salaries of experienced teachers, despite principals’ additional responsibilities and time commitment” (p. 13). This condition of turnover is unique as some research suggests salary can serve as a “pull” factor, attracting principals from one position to another, thereby serving as a condition in which principals leave a school (Tekleselassie & Choi, 2021). Essentially, principal preparation programs are unable to impact the conditions created by the salary provided by a school district for their building leaders.
Work/Life Balance and Principal Turnover

The complexity of the role that is building principal has increased over time. In most school buildings the position that is school administrator now includes the responsibility for leading student growth and achievement efforts, maintaining an organizational climate and culture that supports teacher retention, and managing significant school budgets through resource allocation and school improvement planning. Tekleselassie and Villarreal (2011) investigated the argument that the increased level of responsibilities causes vagueness or “ambiguity” in the role of principal. This vagueness leads to frustration, dissatisfaction with the position, and eventual burnout. Further analysis also showed that increased levels of work hours correlated to those principals considered *movers*, laterally shifting from one school to the next. Yan (2020) summarized the imbalance of professional and personal time as a disincentive to principal retention. Although principal preparation programs could implement instruction and strategies on coping and stress, there is no method to determine the balance required for a building leader to feel stability in their professional and personal life. Due to the unique triggers related to this condition, it is challenging at best to improve this condition through principal preparation programs.

Principal Autonomy and Principal Turnover

As local districts continue to struggle with influencing literacy and numeracy skills for students, the federal government has found reason to become more involved. Through federal accountability measures such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top, principals are expected to function within the scope of the expectations and guidelines formalized through
the legislation. Because of the structures, systems, and parameters accountability places on principals, they essentially lose the autonomy to make the decisions that they determine to be best for the students they represent and serve. Levin and Bradley (2019) identified principal autonomy as one of five factors to principal turnover. They found principals were less likely to leave a position when they were able to have decision making authority over things such as selecting or removing staff members, making budgetary decisions, and restructuring policies and procedures to more effectively impact students. In two studies completed by Mitani (2018, 2019), the accountability structure of NCLB was analyzed to determine its impact on the principal position. The study completed in 2018 found a correlation between the NCLB sanctions imposed on schools and an increase in principal turnover rates particularly in Title I schools in 45 states. Although the intent of these accountability measures was to change the behavior of school leaders to become more focused on academic improvements, the NCLB sanctions instead caused increased levels of job stress for principals, as they were required to maintain many of the practices of compliance for schools with additional adjustments based on imposed sanctions. This condition of accountability affected Title I schools, low performing schools that typically have increased levels of diversity and low socioeconomic status, at higher rates than non-Title I schools. Mitani finds in both studies related to accountability systems and principal turnover, that retention rates could increase based on a better quality of learning and development for inexperienced principals who are leading schools that are considered low-performing, high diversity, and high low-income populations.
Working Conditions and Principal Turnover

When researching the causes of principal turnover, the working conditions of the building leader prove to be a leading factor in the decision to vacate a position. The working conditions for principals are often studied within the context of a school. According to Yan (2020):

A major reason for this conflation in research is that many principals prefer to work in schools with fewer low-income, low-performing students, and/or students of color, and these schools often have better working conditions and easier-to-manage school environments, including more affluent resources and parental involvement, fewer disciplinary problems, fewer teacher vacancies, and lower teacher turnover rates, we well as less pressures from the federal and state accountability policies on standardized testing. (p. 94)

As a school’s referral, suspension, and expulsion rates increase, the likelihood of high principal retention becomes lower. Typically, these behavioral rates are higher in urban schools versus their suburban and rural counterparts. As identified by Yan (2020), “student disciplinary problems are often prevalent in predominantly African American schools” (p. 97). The study conducted by Beckett (2021) found the most significant predictor to principal turnover was the percentage of students of color enrolled in a building. A study authored by Béteille et al. (2012) also concluded that as principals show greater preferences for schools that are more easily staffed, turnover becomes more problematic at schools servicing more disadvantaged students. The final result is instability for poorer and lower achieving students.

The Consequences of Principal Turnover

The consequences of principal turnover have proven to be problematic for urban communities and their ability to produce successful students. Studies have proven the direct correlation student achievement has to principal turnover. According to one study, “student test
scores fall and teacher turnover increases in the years following a principal transition” (Bartanen et al., 2019, p. 351). Disruptive effects are those which negatively and directly impact general school outcomes, including student achievement. According to Béteille et al. (2012), “We find that principal turnover has negative effects on average achievement and particularly negative effects on the achievement of students attending high poverty schools” (p. 906). Shifting from one principal to another causes changes in the school as an organization. Changes in school climate and culture affect the instructor’s ability to facilitate a culture of learning for students attending school. In cases where a teacher’s ability to facilitate learning is reduced, a student’s ability to grow and achieve decreases greatly. Bartanen et al. (2019) also argued, “As another example, principals can drive student outcomes via effective human capital management, including strategic hiring and retention of effective teachers” (p. 352). The impact a principal has on an urban school’s achievement can and will most often be long lasting. Transitioning from one principal to another will not simply affect one year of student growth and achievement. Whether the turnover is due to promotion or demotion, there will most certainly be negative levels of student achievement. Bartanen et al. concluded, “For all types of principal turnover, achievement returns to “normal” (i.e. the school’s average achievement in the years not surrounding a principal transition) by the fifth year after a principal turnover event, on average” (p. 358). Principal turnover in urban schools must be addressed if students being served by said schools are to learn at higher levels.

Principal Preparation Programs and Principal Self-Efficacy

Resolving the issue of principal turnover is a necessity to increase student outcomes. PPPs can be leveraged to address a candidate’s ability to organize and adjust the working
conditions within a school to the benefit of an increase in retention rate through a shift in principal belief that they can be successful. According to Corcoran (2017), “The increasing interest in principal effectiveness has led to a focus on the quality of principal preparation programs (PPPs) with calls for adoption of PPP accountability systems similar to those of teacher preparation programs” (p. 770). Due to the unique needs of schools in urban cities, principal preparation programs must address the specific needs of principals today. A survey completed in 2017 communicated the unpreparedness of two-thirds of surveyed principals in their ability to best meet the needs of all students given their participation in a PPP (Corcoran, 2017). Taking the preparation of principal candidates into consideration is an option for school districts working to address the issue of principal turnover.

When a principal has the belief that they have the tools, resources, and skills necessary to be effective, they will work as problem solvers leading schools despite the challenges related to its management. Zimmerman (2005) argues the value of belief in someone’s capacity is key to their ability to act to the purpose of controlling circumstances. Bandura (1993) defines self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (p. 118). Principals with high self-efficacy may be more apt and willing to see the obstacles presented in urban schools as barriers to be overcome as opposed to those with low self-efficacy who see similar obstacles as impossible challenges that should be avoided, thus resulting in turnover. Yada and Savolainen (2023) highlighted the essential roles of principal self-efficacy and school climate on the efficacy of a school faculty. Their findings showed a positive correlation between high principal self-efficacy and developing collective teacher efficacy within a school. In other words, as principals believe they have the skills to be successful and are willing to take on challenges, they serve as examples
for the faculty who are then able to take on the obstacles presented by urban schools in a collective manner. Kelleher (2016) stressed the importance principal thoughts and beliefs have on the culture of a school, including both faculty and students. Because of this, principals must have a high level of self-efficacy to reinforce the behavior and attitudes of all other stakeholders connected to their schools.

Several studies identify the importance of providing principal candidates with targeted skills explicitly related to equity, to help address any deficits that would drive them from the profession of school leadership (Gooden et al., 2018; Johnson & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Jones & Ringler, 2021; Leggett et al., 2023; Miller & Martin, 2015; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). Developing principal self-efficacy in urban settings will most certainly depend on the ability to prepare candidates for success with diverse student populations. Jones and Ringler (2021) defined the success of a PPP equating to principal candidates becoming self-aware of their implicit and explicit bias for the purpose of creating more inclusive schools that have the best interest of all students in mind. Their study, which analyzed a PPP that intentionally supported candidates in content and skill capacity to have crucial conversations about diversity and social justice topics, found that principals were better equipped to challenge their beliefs that may potentially stifle the success of a diverse student population. Although the study showed growth in a candidate’s ability to improve their skill set within the span of their education, it did not track impacted candidates into their first positions to monitor progress with capacity within the context of a school building. The need to address the ability for principals to provide equitable outcomes in a climate promoting social justice has become a focus in principal preparation research. Without a shift in mindset regarding the current state of urban schools and the system through which they are educated, it is likely that no change will occur with the current state of
principal turnover. A study conducted by Stone-Johnson et al. (2021) found, “approximately 30% (of study participants) felt neutrally or disagreed that systems are inequitable; and about 16% neither agreed nor disagreed and 36% agreed to some extent that working hard is the key to success” (p. 46). Having the mindset that the system in which students learn and operate is functioning effectively or that there is nothing possible to change a system is counterproductive to making the necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of urban students and to principals believing the system can in fact be changed. As reported in the Stone-Johnson et al. study, “School leaders who operate under the deficit beliefs feel that students themselves are responsible for their lack of success rather than the structures and systems around them” (p. 46).

From the perspective of the students being served in urban schools, which are predominantly identified as African American, their experience identifies the importance of changing the deficit mindset of school leaders. A study authored by Roegman et al. (2021) identified that black and brown students experienced school cultures and climates not conducive to positive learning experiences. Furthermore, these same students are often found to be underserved and impacted disproportionately through “colorblind” policies and practices which mask systemic racism driving decision making. Parents of color living in urban settings are challenged with sending their children to schools where barriers such as principal turnover reinforce the negative perception that leads to poor culture, climate, and achievement levels.

Principal preparation programs must first determine a candidate’s ability to serve students of color in an effective manner. Stone-Johnson et al. (2021) highlighted the value of knowing the initial thoughts and perceptions of candidates on the topics of equity and social justice prior to entering a PPP. In lieu of focusing on a candidate’s ability to lead based on traditional methods such as applications and resume experience, the Stone-Johnson et al. study measured a
candidate’s readiness for equity-focused leadership. This type of benchmark requires candidates to reflect “critical consciousness coupled with the will and skill to contest oppressive internal and external challenges within the context of the K-12 US educational system” (p. 41). If a candidate does in fact demonstrate a propensity to successfully reflect a readiness for equity-focused leadership, they are more likely to complete a PPP and become an effective leader with the capacity to systematically provide equitable opportunities for students of color.

Once the appropriate candidates are selected, utilizing the appropriate curriculum to ensure equity and social justice should occur. University-based PPPs should work to develop curriculum that support increased levels of antiracism and methods for promoting equitable student outcomes. The Stone-Johnson et al. (2021) study supports the necessity for an improved PPP curriculum to provide increased learning on leading with an equity lens as well as increasing social justice in urban schools. An additional study conducted by Jones and Ringler (2021) measured the change of a candidate’s belief system when implementing the appropriate curriculum. According to Jones and Ringler, “the findings of this study demonstrated that social justice and equity embedded in a PPP internship shifted the candidates’ common beliefs that help or hinder the success of racially and ethnically diverse students” (p. 236). Through the use of the inside-out approach to learning, most candidates participating in the study were able to internalize their own misconceptions and implicit bias. In turn, these candidates reflect the school leaders necessary to guide teachers in their own journey of discovery which would improve teaching and learning for students of color. Leggett et al. (2023) studied the revision of curriculum designed to prepare principal candidates at Western Kentucky University (WKU). Prior to curriculum revisions, they found learning based on equity-based concepts such as social justice and race were funneled to one course and were covered unintentionally, informally, and
without explicit purpose. Upon the conclusion of the revision process, curriculum was developed that provided a systemic process that included assessments, case studies, and rubrics as norms for all courses of study at WKU. According to Roegman et al. (2021), “Preparation programs must educate teachers and principals about race-as-racism. Candidates need to come to understand the role of systemic racism in society and in schooling, beyond understanding individual differences” (p. 1). Each of these studies support the importance of anchoring PPPs in the internalization and lens of equitable practices within the scope of teaching and learning. They serve as examples of the importance of leading with an equity lens to close the achievement gap between black and brown students and their counterparts, as well as, dismantling and disrupting systems which perpetuate poor experiences for students of color in urban schools.

A study out of London, England looked to shift school leader thinking in preparation programs from one of a colorblind approach to one that celebrates diversity in culture. According to Johnson and Campbell-Stephens (2010):

The Investing in Diversity program was conceived and developed by Rosemary Campbell-Stephens (co-author of this article) to recruit more Black and Global Majority educators into leadership positions in Britain as well as to infuse new leadership approaches that consider the importance of culture and context. (p. 842)

Although the Investing in Diversity program added an additional layer of targeting Black and Global Majority candidates to its PPP, the purpose remained focused toward reinforcing cultural pride in students of color and pushing leaders to develop teachers to be culturally responsive. Through a survey completed by Investing in Diversity participants, program developers were able to identify an increased ability on the part of participants to “challenge the status quo in their schools around issues like the achievement gap; and felt empowered to ‘make a stand to be taken seriously’” (p. 852).
Principal Retention and Equity-based Theories of Action

Ultimately, school principals hypothesize solutions to problems they have identified in their respective schools. These hypotheses are developed given the principals level of skill acquisition and understanding of their environment. At its core the hypothesis, or theory of action, allows a principal to build parameters around a problem of practice that they believe will positively impact the problem for a school and students. Hannah et al. (2022) noted that the structure of a theory of action “logically links the constraints people seek to satisfy, to the actions taken to satisfy them, to the consequences—both intended and unintended—of those actions” (p. 365). Additional studies identified three key components of a theory of action: the action taken by a leader, the reasoning behind the actions taken, and the potential consequences generated by said action (Hannah et al. 2019; Montecinos et al. 2022). As a theory of action gains clarity and specificity, building leaders are able to better identify deficits and strengths in the values, beliefs, and actions guiding their decisions (Montecinos et al. 2022). Conditional statements serve as explanations of the constraints on an incident, as well as the intended consequence given the constraint. Argyris and Schon (1974) pioneered the study of theories of action within the educational environment. According to these authors, theories of action describe the condition that, “in situation S, if you want to achieve consequence C, under assumptions a₁…aₙ, do A” (p. 6).

As previously stated, principal candidates’ values and beliefs are directly impacted by the learning that occurs during a principal preparation program. In a study completed in 2022, researchers analyzed how theories of action determined the decision making of school leaders in distributing leadership within their schools. Montecinos et al. (2022) explained the importance of
vision, values, and beliefs driving the decision making of school leaders in how to best accomplish progress in student growth and achievement. In establishing their study, the authors argued the conditional statement that, “if a school principal faces a particular situation, based on his or her core assumptions about this situation, then the principal will take a particular action to explain, predict, or control the situation or outcome” (p. 2). By targeting a specific problem, with a specific conditional solution, educational leaders are able to effectively analyze the impact of their theory and whether or not it is having the desired effect. When a school leader has the skills to develop a theory of action grounded in an equity mindset they are able to identify how schools reinforce marginalization and inequity for ethnicities outside of those belonging to the dominant culture. In turn, building leaders develop theories of action that look to purposely and consciously address social justice in schools for the growth and achievement of all students. This may include leading a building with the philosophy that instructional decisions should be made by including student agency in the form of student affinity groups. For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to explicitly define the assumptions that must be defined for clarity around what an effective theory of action would entail for a principal candidate for leading an urban school.

Upon researching the implications of principal preparation programs and equity-based curriculum, two essential components were highlighted. These two components serve as a focus in the empirical study described in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

**Understanding the Implications of Race**

Two studies considered the importance of anti-racist learning to the ability of principal candidates in leading urban schools (Gooden et al., 2018; Roegman et al., 2021). Understanding the privilege race provides to some in society serves as a catalyst to facilitating and driving
curricular and instructional strategies that ensure practices are utilized to reduce the impact privilege may have on marginalized students. Practices such as culturally relevant teaching serve as strategies program candidates should be provided to develop theories of action that appropriately support students of urban schools. Roegman et al. (2021) concluded that although inequities may not be eliminated, principal preparation programs have the potential to serve as catalysts in establishing leaders who consider the barriers race creates when leading within systems, structures, and programs that will support students. Findings of the principal preparation program studied by Gooden et al. (2018) determined that participants of the program which focused on an anti-racist curriculum were better equipped and prepared to challenge the perceptions and inequitable actions of colleagues in an effective manner. This serves as an example of the type of programming that would support a principal’s self-efficacy through increased skill and capacity building, thus decreasing the amount of turnover currently existing in urban schools. These are assumptions that can certainly be prevalent in urban schools across the United States.

Understanding the Implications of Social Justice

Researchers Miller and Martin (2015) argued that there can exist, “a significant disconnect between a leader’s perceived responsibility to close the achievement gap…and their lack of awareness and inability to identify the biases, assumptions, and inequities that may be perpetuating the very gap they are attempting to close” (p. 146). A leader having the appropriate skill set has the ability to disrupt and dismantle systems, structures, and programs that reinforce the plight of marginalized students in urban communities. Stone-Johnson et al. (2021) identify social justice leadership as the ability to center the work of building leaders on establishing
vision and advocating for marginalized populations to ensure equitable opportunities for all. An additional study completed by Jones and Ringler (2021) measured whether utilizing a curriculum that embedded topics of equity and diversity topics are able to influence a principal candidates’ understanding of their biases and how they may impact the educational setting. The study found that if a social justice curriculum was a component of the principal preparation program for candidates, their beliefs were shifted to better support a racially and ethnically diverse student population. Social justice beliefs allow for building leaders to lead teachers and staff members in challenging their own biases, thus developing a school wide equity lens.

Conclusion

Much work has been done on the impact of principal turnover, as well as on the positive effects of principal self-efficacy on school climate and culture. Researchers have also analyzed the value of principal preparation programs on principal performance. Further exploration found connections between principal preparation programs and equity-based learning around skill sets in social justice and anti-racism. When appropriately implemented these skills lead building principals to drive hypotheses or theories of action that lead to school improvement for all students. This study intends to fill the gap of qualitative study around PPP graduates and the implications of the application of learning that occurs within the first years of implementation. Additionally, this study looks to support the work of principal preparation programs as they determine whether the content and curriculum developed for program candidates establishes a benchmark of proficiency in leading and planning schoolwork with an equity lens. If PPPs can develop programs that establish proficient urban leaders with clear understanding as to how best
lead with an equity mindset, the self-efficacy of leaders will increase thus benefiting the culture, climate, and performance of urban schools.
CHAPTER 3
AN ANALYSIS OF A PRINCIPAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM AND ITS FOCUS ON DEVELOPING EQUITY BASED THEORIES OF ACTION

The Illinois Principals Association (IPA; 2022) shared a report that captured the current state of principal leadership in the state of Illinois. The report provided insight into the current state of the principal position, as well as conditions causing higher rates of turnover. To make matters worse, pipeline programs are struggling to maintain a rate of participants comparable to the need throughout the state. The IPA provided recommendations to not only increase principal retention, but also impact the quality of pipeline programs for candidate success. Among the recommendations toward more successful pipeline programs includes the adoption of the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards as the new benchmarks to “focus on what is most essential to prepare, support, and evaluate prospective educational leaders to effectively lead a learning organization that provides equitable learning opportunities for all students” (IPA, 2022, p. 12). Standard 3 of the NELP Standards specifically targets the value of equity, inclusiveness, and cultural responsiveness on the leadership of a school. Developers of the NELP Standards provide candidates with clarity around proficiency of the standards through a rubric which provides attributes related to each component. In December 2020, the Illinois State Board of Education approved the adoption and implementation of the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) Standards. These standards were adopted for the purpose of improving principal and teacher readiness by reevaluating what effective preparation
should entail for program graduates. There are eight distinct skills that are addressed within the CRTL Standards that post-secondary schools should address through curriculum, instruction, and clinicals so graduates are best equipped for educating in Illinois. Post-secondary schools must provide experience that allow for learning in the following areas: self-awareness and relationship to others, systems of oppression, students as individuals, students as co-creators, leveraging student activity, family and community collaboration, content selections in all curricula, and student representation in the learning environment. Both the NELP and CRTL Standards are resources that establish expectations and levels of proficiency in practice. Principal preparation programs work to fill skill deficits principal candidates may have so they are best able to lead and meet the challenges presented within urban schools across the United States. Two studies indicate a need to analyze what transpires for principal candidates following their PPP experience (Jones & Ringler, 2021; Stone-Johnson et al., 2021). Other studies reflect a need to analyze curriculum utilized within a PPP for content and skill building that reflect anti-racist knowledge and context (Gooden et al., 2018; Roegman et al., 2021).

This study looks to address how a Principal Residency Program impacts their participants and how they respond to the challenge of establishing a school improvement plan grounded in a theory of action that shows an ability to address inequitable outcomes within urban schools. The following research questions guide the work of this study:

1) What practices or programming within a Principal Residency Program exist that expose students to equity-based theories of action?

2) Do program graduates prioritize an equity mindset during their first years of school administration and if so, how?
3) How equipped and prepared do candidates feel to lead with an equity lens in River City School District, considering the curriculum, experiences, and assessment of the PPP through a local university?

Methodology

This qualitative case study considers the effects of a Principal Residency Program on program graduates learning to develop equity-based theories of action from the analysis of current curriculum utilized throughout the duration of the program as well as interviews conducted with both graduates of the program and current teaching staff. The two-year program is structured to allow candidates to serve as a school level dean of students while concurrently enrolled in university level coursework. Program candidates are selected by their host school districts through a process chosen by each district participating in the university-school district partnership. Selected candidates are provided with a host school where their two-year residency will occur through the mentorship of a host principal. Additionally, program candidates receive support from coaches provided by a state based professional organization. According to the Principal Residency Program Overview, “Coaches assist in the development, implementation, monitoring, and reflection of the resident’s goals as a [school district] leader and as an [university] degree candidate” (name withheld to preserve anonymity). Program candidates enroll in 10 courses and an internship period over the length of the PPP. The internship for program participants provides additional coaching and support from a faculty supervisor who facilitates the projects, activities, and completion of the three-semester period towards the end of the residency program. The structure, philosophy, and instructional approach allowed for exploration of both the inner workings of the current program and the abilities of program
graduates in their roles as administrators. Current program guidelines require graduates to work exclusively for River City School District for a minimum of three years. This allowed for focused analysis within River City.

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Figure 1. A principal residency program conceptual map.

Qualitative Case Study Research

Case study research was selected as the model of analysis for this study because of the alignment between the intended outcomes and the qualities of an effective case study. Case studies allow a researcher to analyze the qualitative aspects of a system, culture, or organization. Through a review of literature on the process of case studies, Brown (2008) identified this approach to analysis as a significant research strategy in the field of qualitative methodology. With a desire to analyze the system for leadership development identified as a Principal Residency Program, researching the program as a case study allowed for opportunity to understand its workings as what Brown acknowledges is a bounded system. This concept aligns to the work of case study theorist Merriam (1985), who identified case study research as a process that allows for understanding of a program at level unrealistic through conventional experimental research or quantitative survey designs. Based on the nature of this study’s problem of practice, the case study approach will allow for a general view of the effectiveness of the PPP through the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Through effective analysis, a case study
should result in a final product that, “examines the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of the phenomenon as possible” (p. 206). The final product or what researchers (Brown, 2008; Cousin, 2005; Merriam, 1985) refer to as a “thick description”, should highlight the complexities of a program while also providing multiple viewpoints and perspectives through various resources. This study provides a well-rounded “thick description” that highlights the themes and concepts of a Principal Residency Program that support school leaders having equity mindsets that support their theories of action.

Research Setting

The River City School District is a mid-sized urban school district located in the Midwest. The district currently identifies 27,700 pre-k through 12th grade students being served in five early childhood schools, 19 elementary schools, seven middle schools, three high schools, and a number of alternative educational opportunities. Current demographics identify black and brown students as the majority of students in River City School District as they make up approximately 70% of the student body. When disaggregated the current graduation rate of 70% shows significant disparity between white and black students. Grades 3-8 achievement data show substantial performance disparity between white and black students. Recent performance data identify approximately 30% of white students meeting/exceeding state standards and 5% of black students meeting/exceeding standards.

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2 The specifics in the following description of the case study setting have been slightly altered from the actual data in order to help mask the district – this includes rounding of specific numbers to nearest 5/10, or 100 and tweaking other descriptives that do not alter any empirical results.
The demographics of the River City School District staff have remained consistent for five years as white certified staff members make up the majority of faculty impacting student learning. The most recent state level data reported an average turnover rate of two principals within River City School District for the 2022 school year. Of the current school leadership 85% are identified as white while 15% of current administrators are considered black or brown.

In collaboration with River City School District, a Principal Residency Program allows program participants an opportunity to perform the job of school administrator while also enrolling in the coursework necessary to satisfy requirements to obtain licensure as a certified school administrator. The residency program which began in 2019, added an innovative approach to principal preparation by providing program participants the ability to put learning into practice during the two-year series of courses. Program participants begin their administrator journey as school level deans, who support building leadership through student management and other administrative duties. This position coincides with coursework that should allow them to put learning into practice through “real time” implementation. Each participant is also provided an administrative mentor for the purposes of coaching and problem-solving. These mentors further reinforce learning occurring during each participant’s coursework. Both coursework and professional experience serve as evidence to support the graduation of program participants at the end of the residency.

Data Collection Protocols and Participants

Merriam (1985) identified five distinct types of data that are produced from case studies. Of these five types, conversational interactions with the researcher and the analysis of artifacts and documents were utilized for the duration of this study. These data collection methods were
most relevant to the analysis of the study and led to the identification of patterns and themes that assisted in the development of a thick description. Research participants were interviewed through the method of a focus group or individual interview dependent upon their role in the study as either program instructor or program graduate. The interview questions for both a focus group and individual interview were developed to effectively capture the stories of the research participants in relation to program learning for the purpose of clear understanding of the implementation of curriculum and application of skills provided by programming.

In order to identify research participants for individual interview sessions, an email explaining the study and requesting a list of program graduates was sent to the superintendent of River City School District. In addition, a list of instructors was requested from the local university Educational Leadership Program Coordinator. Upon receipt of potential research candidates, a secondary email was sent to each potential candidate briefly describing the study and requesting participation in the research study.

Program Graduate Interviews

This study explored the experiences of graduates of a Principal Residency Program as one of three qualitative data points. The program graduate interviews assisted in capturing evidence in relation to the acquisition of skills that prepare leaders to facilitate school leadership from an equity lens.

Interview Protocol

The program graduate individual interviews assisted in capturing approximately 45 minutes of qualitative data related to the practices, strategies, and resources utilized to support
program participants. The interviews also provided insight into the practical effect the pedagogical choices had on program graduates as measured by the CRTL Standards. Interviews were conducted in individual sessions to provide each program graduate with an opportunity to actively and authentically respond to the questions provided by the facilitator.

Interview Participants

As a requirement of the program, all participants of a Principal Preparation Residency Program must remain with River City School District as an administrator for a minimum of three years following the two years of residency at a local school. This requirement allowed for potential access to a majority of program graduates for the purpose of interviewing. The study invited six current program graduates between the two residency cohorts to participate in the interview process, which provided an opportunity to collect data from a diverse pool of school and district leadership positions. Candidates for participation were sorted into categories identified as Central Office, Principals, Assistant Principals, and Teachers. As the goal of this study is to determine impact on the local university’s residency coursework on the initial years of building principals, emphasis and priority was given to the recruitment of Principals and Assistant Principals to participate in the graduate interviews. Of the six candidates invited to participate, five confirmed their involvement by scheduling time to be interviewed for the study.

Program Instructor Focus Group

To best capture the perspective of the current development of the program the study analyzed the perspectives of instructors of a Principal Residency Program as second of three qualitative data points. The program instructor focus group provided evidence related to the
development of curriculum as well as the products instructors expect program participants to present as proof of proficiency in skills identified by the state for the purpose of being culturally responsive teaching and learning leaders.

Focus Group Protocols

The program instructors that agreed to participate in this study shared feedback to the facilitator in a 90-minute focus group purposed to understand the intentional program decisions made in relation to the implementation of learning driven by the CRTL standards. The interview was recorded and then transcribed for the purpose of data collection. The interview was recorded with the intent to review dialog and data multiple times to support or clarify comments and decisions made on the part of the program candidates. According to Erickson (1986), “Because of the (theoretically) unlimited opportunity for revisiting the recorded instance by replaying it, the instance can be observed from a variety of attentional foci and analytic perspectives” (p. 145). This process assisted in having a complete analytical picture of the data and information being collected.

Focus Group Participants

Of six instructors invited to participate, four program instructors confirmed their involvement in the focus group interview for the purpose of understanding the teaching aspect of the residency program. The program instructor interview was scheduled following the completion of the program analysis to better focus the conversation on components of the NELP and CRTL Standards that needed more clarity or explanation. The interview also served as an additional opportunity to collect reflection and feedback on instructor perception on the
preparation of program graduates to develop theories of action for schools in an equitable manner. The program instructors agreeing to be interviewed in this study participated in a single 90-minute focus group with the goal of garnering sufficient feedback on the topic of study.

**Curriculum and Program Analysis**

Through a deep analysis of the current curriculum of a Principal Residency Program, the study gathered evidence that established the intentionality of content as the final qualitative data point to understanding the relationship of equity and principal preparation at the local university.

**Materials**

The core of the data collection came from the syllabi utilized for the ten courses that are required to receive licensure at the end of the residency program. The syllabi provided a general overview of content topics related to each course that align to equity centered standards that are required for principal candidates to show evidence of conceptual understanding or proficient learning. General readings and other resources were also analyzed to gain greater insight into the concepts presented within the school curriculum.

**Curriculum Analysis Protocol**

Syllabi for each course completed by program participants were analyzed for content, skills, and themes related to equitable practices in school leadership. Each course was assessed against Standard 3 of the NELP standards through the use of a rubric that was developed by the researcher. This rubric assisted in determining each course’s level of emphasis in providing program participants with the leadership skills identified within Standard 3. These skills, if
addressed through effective teaching strategies, are intended to develop leaders that understand the impact of race on current educational practices and the importance of social justice on identifying and dismantling educational practices that serve as barriers to the purpose of greater equity in student growth and achievement among all students in the urban education environment. Ideally, a principal preparation program that has developed leaders with an equity lens defined by Standard 3 of the NELP standards ensures that program graduates are able: 1) Utilize school data to establish a supportive and inclusive school culture; 2) Understand and execute the equitable allocation and distribution of resources in a manner that supports the needs of all students; and 3) Effectively develop school improvement plans that lead to equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive instruction and behavior support practices among teachers and staff. These three benchmarks served as the core of the rubric to be developed for the purpose of assessing the local university program materials.

Not only should curriculum develop skills through comprehension of content, but the curricular choices of each course taught should also provide ample opportunity for program participants to engage in learning through the application of skills taught.

Data Analysis

Interviews conducted with program instructors supported evidence of an effective course of study in which the necessary skill sets are developed in graduates that lead to principal retention within urban schools. Each program participant interview for this study was individually analyzed for themes and patterns prevalent during the 45-minute interview session. Upon completion of the individual analysis, common themes and patterns between all interviews were identified to best highlight targeted points of strengths in a Principal Residency Program.
Merriam (1998) identified this style of qualitative analysis as content analysis. Content analysis, as described by Merriam, assists a researcher in quantifying evidence collected through interviews and other forms of qualitative data collection. Content analysis requires a researcher to define units of measurement that assist in comparing data and evidence collected. A researcher utilizing this method of data analysis may measure the frequency of a data point being communicated during an interview or in the case of documented artifacts, the frequency at which certain terminology is utilized within various resources. This study identified the frequency at which certain terminology or strategies were communicated on the part of program graduates and program instructors to draw conclusion on common themes that should be highlighted as essential components of a Principal Residency Program. These common findings also aligned to the attributes of culturally responsive leaders identified within the Illinois State Board of Education’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (CRTL). Adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education in March 2021, the CRTL standards clearly define expectations of culturally responsive teachers and leaders. The purpose of the standards is not to measure current practitioners in their ability and school-based curriculum, but rather for preparation programs to self-assess their structures, pedagogy, and curriculum to determine strengths and opportunities for improvement. As the interview questions were developed from the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards, the study supported an analysis of the program’s alignment to the state mandated expectations of building administrators who lead with an equity lens. Providing analysis through the utilization of the CRTL Standards offered insight to the perception of candidates in regard to the readiness to lead as measured by the standards, as well as the practices, structures, and pedagogy they found most impactful. Likewise, analysis of the
perception of program instructors allowed for the consideration of the implementation of curriculum aligned to the CRTL Standards.

The program curriculum was assessed through the use of a rubric developed from the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards. The NELP Standards establish clarity about what building leaders have the skill and capacity to do at the completion of an effective principal preparation program. In particular, the NELP standards specify content knowledge and leadership skills principals should be able to apply when being considered proficient with the identified standard. As defined by the NELP Standards, at the end of an effective principal preparation program graduates should be able to, “evaluate root causes of inequity and bias” and “advocate for equitable practice among teachers and staff” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018, p. 17). The rubric defined proficiency utilizing the Educational Leadership Skills identified in Standard 3 of the NELP standards. The analysis of the program curriculum provided insight into the intentionality of addressing social justice and anti-racism during the two-year preparation of future school administrators.

Data Validity and Reliability

As discussed by a number of researchers (Cousin, 2005; Merriam, 1985; Yazan, 2015), successful validation of data collected through the case study method involves the triangulation of data. Merriam (1998) provided an additional five strategies to increase the validity of case study research, one of which was used to increase the validity of the data collected from program graduates and instructors. Adding to triangulation, Merriam identifies participant checks as essential to maintaining the validity of data collected. Throughout this study participants regularly and consistently had opportunities to review data collected to ensure the accuracy of
the evidence collected. Data collected for this study transpired through individual interview sessions of program graduates taking place over several weeks. Also, a focus group was conducted to gather data from program instructors. These interviews were analyzed in addition to the curriculum review as a subsequent opportunity to probe, clarify, and check for consistency in program expectations and implementation of standards addressed during the local university PPP. Merriam further recommends the clarification of researcher bias as an additional strategy to increase qualitative validity. It is essential that a researcher avoid aligning the collection of data to their perceptions and ideas instead of allowing patterns and themes to support analytical conclusions. To serve as a deterrent to this behavior data and evidence were shared regularly with the doctoral director to provide an opportunity for the researcher to regularly internalize data analysis and filter perception from data analysis prior to officially documenting results within the study. The utilization of various data sources allowed for the confirmation of patterns and themes as evidence is identified and confirmed in multiple ways. To ensure the validity of the qualitative data collected during this case study, patterns and themes were identified for each of the three data collection processes. Analysis from the program graduate interviews, instructor interviews, and current program curriculum provided a holistic view of the local university PPP. Through the use of rubrics aligned to the NELP standards as well as the Culturally Relevant Teaching and Leading Standards, the case study assessed the PPP’s ability to develop proficient leaders that have an equity lens in developing a theory of action that addresses equity-based concepts such as social justice and antiracism at the core of all school level work. The utilization of state and national level equity standards assisted in data validation by providing research-based benchmarks that allowed data to be analyzed with more than the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of the researcher.
Findings

Curriculum Analysis Findings

A Principal Residency Program requires candidates to complete 10 courses prior to participating in an internship (Figure 2). Each course had a distinct syllabus which identified standards and objectives to be addressed during the period of instruction. Each course syllabus, as well as the internship handbook, were analyzed against NELP sub standards 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 to determine if there was “Little to No Emphasis”, “Some Emphasis”, or “Heavy Emphasis” placed on the sub standards throughout the course. Courses that are identified as having “Heavy Emphasis” of a standard throughout a course show purposeful, direct, and intentional planning on the standard presented. The course also provided multiple opportunities for the program participant to develop capacity in the identified standard through various modes such as direct instruction, small group discussion, assignments, and projects. A course providing evidence of “Some Emphasis” provided instruction and content that supports skill acquisition. When addressing the standard, it is done in an unintentional and indirect manner. Evidence may have presented itself through an assignment or reading that was focused on a separate and distinct topic. Any course showing evidence aligning to “Little to No Emphasis” may have discussed a term or topic related to the NELP Standard 3, but only through learning, discussion, or work completed for another purpose. The standard may also had proved to be virtually unaddressed and there was no evidence to support a student’s capacity to apply skill through the completion of the course.
### Semester One
- PPP 1.1 Educational Organization and Administration
- PPP 1.2 School Leadership and Data-Based Decision Making

### Semester Two
- PPP 2.1 Education Finance and Facility Management
- PPP 2.2 Supervisory Behavior

### Semester Three
- PPP 3.1 Site-Based Curriculum Development
- PPP 3.2 Policy Analysis for School Administrators

### Semester Four
- PPP 4.1 Principalship
- PPP 4.2 Education Law
- PPP 4.3 Internship #1

### Semester Five
- PPP 5.1 Legal Requirements for Educating Diverse Learners
- PPP 5.2 Internship #2

### Semester Six
- PPP 6.1 Principal, Family, and Community
- PPP 6.2 Internship #3

Figure 2. Required coursework for a Principal Residency Preparation Program.

**NELP Sub-Standard 3.1**

The study’s analysis of each syllabus found that sub-standard 3.1 of the NELP standard was addressed with heavy emphasis in 18% of the courses in which principal candidates participate while 82% of the courses showed evidence of little to no focus on standard 3.1. The curriculum analysis provided evidence that program candidates have limited opportunity within the coursework to show their learning and demonstrate the capacity to use data to evaluate,
design, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture. Comparatively, PPP 3.2, Policy Analysis for School Administrators, is a course provided as part of the program pathway that affords participants an opportunity to explore sub-standard 3.1 in a significant manner. Participants are required to purchase a text entitled *Anti-racist Educational Leadership and Policy: Addressing Racism in Public Education*. Program participants must also show their learning related to equity-based concepts around educational policy through the completion of an approximately 20-page paper. The paper must show a candidate’s ability to: 1) utilize school and community demographic data to explain how diversity within a community impacts policy; 2) participate in dialog with family and community members from diverse backgrounds to communicate their perspective on policies as well as other issues that may impact their students education; 3) identify norms and values identified within the community; and 4) identify SES (socioeconomic status) trends within the community that impact families, children, and their learning, as well as, determining policies implemented to respond to the conditions identified. The assignment provided during the course offers opportunity for program participants to explore culture, resource allocation, and equitable instruction all within a semester.

**NELP Sub-Standard 3.2**

Thirty-six percent of the courses offered to program candidates showed evidence of heavy emphasis on content aligned to sub-standard 3.2 of the NELP standards. An additional 9% of courses provided content that showed some emphasis in skill acquisition of sub-standard 3.2. Fifty-five percent of the remaining courses had little to no evidence of learning addressing sub-standard 3.2. In comparison to sub-standard 3.1, curriculum analysis shows program participants have greater opportunity to experience and show learning in their ability to understand and
demonstrate the capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for equitable access to educational resources, technologies, and opportunities that support the educational success and well-being of each student. PPP 5.1, Legal Issues in the Education of Diverse Learners, provides heavy emphasis on content and skill acquisition related to NELP sub-standard 3.2. Students participating in the course are required to purchase a text entitled *Leadership for Increasingly Diverse Schools*. Of the 10 course objectives provided in syllabus, seven objectives address meeting the needs of diverse student populations (e.g. EL, gifted/talented, special education). Program participants taking PPP 5.1 participate in an equity audit during the course. Lastly, participants show evidence of their learning for the semester through the completion of a group project identifying an unresolved school-based issue or conflict related to an inequitable practice. Through this project, participants are able to show evidence of cultivating and advocating for opportunities that support the educational success and well-being of students.

**NELP Sub-Standard 3.3**

Sub-standard 3.3 ensures that principals have the ability to understand and demonstrate the capacity to evaluate, advocate, and cultivate equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive instruction and behavioral support practices among teachers and staff. Through analysis of the curriculum used for program instruction, 18% of courses showed heavy emphasis on sub-standard 3.3 while an additional 18% of courses showed evidence considered to support some emphasis of the same standard. Four of the 11 courses completed by program participants provide learning that equips students to facilitate the implementation of culturally responsive instruction to school faculties. PPP 3.2, Site-Based Curriculum Development, explores the processes and procedures related to the development and evaluation of curriculum and
instruction and serves as an example of heavy emphasis on NELP sub-standard 3.3. The course includes an objective that requires participants to explore the development of an instructional plan that addresses the needs of students based on gender, ethnicity, culture, and social class. Program participants complete a curriculum analysis to assess their skill acquisition in establishing a high-quality curriculum. Participants must also assess the curriculum to measure its ability to effectively meet the needs of all students at a high level.

NELP Standard 3 Summary

Further analysis of the program curriculum concluded that three of the 11 required courses have no components of study that provide any emphasis on sub standards 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 (Table 1). In contrast, only one course required for the program showed evidence of heavy emphasis of all three sub standards captured within the curriculum identified on its syllabus. PPP 3.2, Policy Analysis for School Administrators, supports leadership development in the creation, implementation, and assessment of policies at the school and district level. The course utilizes a text written by authors Diem and Welton (2020) entitled Anti-Racist Educational Leadership and Policy: Addressing Racism in Public Education. As communicated by the book’s authors, “Anti-Racist Educational Leadership and Policy helps educational leaders better comprehend the racial implications and challenges of the current educational policy landscape” (front matter, para.1). As a component of a policy analysis paper, program participants are challenged to analyze how a school and community demographics impact school policy. Participants must also gather feedback from stakeholders that represent various backgrounds on their perspectives of the implementation of policies as well as other issues impacting children and their learning
environments. The analysis paper must also incorporate evidence in the exploration of resource allocation, as well as, the ability to mobilize resources to a diverse student population over time.

Table 1

Quantitative Summary of NELP Standard 3 Curriculum Analysis (N=11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NELP Standard</th>
<th>Heavy Emphasis %</th>
<th>Some Emphasis %</th>
<th>Little to No Emphasis %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to use data to</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluate, design, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to evaluate,</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultivate, and advocate for equitable access to educational resources,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technologies, and opportunities that support the educational success and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well-being of each student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to evaluate,</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advocate, and cultivate equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>instruction and behavioral support practices among teachers and staff.</td>
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Focus Group Interview

Four program instructors were interviewed to address one of the three research questions within study. A focus group method was chosen as the forum to support the open-ended nature of questioning that allowed for dialog and interaction among the program instructors. Program instructors participated in a 90-minute focus group that included discussion around 12 questions purposed at identifying patterns and themes related to, “What practices or programming exist that expose students to equity-based theories of action?”
Patterns/Themes Related to Research Question #1

Research question #1 provided program instructors space to explore their thoughts on the explicit practices, curriculum, and other programming that may open access to equitable concepts, as well as, how they may be used in the development of school-based theories or action. Through interview transcript analysis, a series of patterns/themes were identified as common and impactful among the program instructors interviewed. Program instructors identified class-based discussion as an essential strategy to communicating the most important equity-based concepts while also assisting program instructors with assessing student skill acquisition. Program instructors identified specific courses within a Principal Residency Program that highlight equity-based concepts and skill reinforcement during the 90-minute group interview. A significant portion of the interview also highlighted the importance of the internship portion of principal preparation in the development of program graduates that effectively establish theories of action through an equity lens.

During the individual interviews conducted with program graduates, evidence related to research question #1 was provided that assists in gaining greater clarity as to programs and practices that most expose participants to equity-based theories of action. Although the graduate interview data is utilized within this section as an additional point of reference, more in depth exploration as to evidence provided by these research participants are explored with research questions #2 and #3.
Class Discussions as a Teaching Strategy

During the focus group interview, program instructors were asked to provide insight into the manner in which program candidates show skill acquisition and understanding of equity-based concepts such as marginalization, social justice, and antiracism. A central theme captured during the conversation highlighted the value class discussion brought to the development of program candidates. Program instructors mentioned specific examples of valuable discussion that led to students practicing the use of an equity lens to make decisions. Instructor C provided a narrative that gave insight into how program candidates must be able to clearly understand equity-based concepts such as disproportionality, bias, and cultural competence to effectively execute school discipline. They used a discussion example of students of two different backgrounds exhibiting aggressive behavior and the inequity that occurs without the appropriate skill set:

So it might be white students in the class doing little karate kicks, etcetera. But then you have a black student in the class, and they’re doing slap boxing. And they’re doing the same playful behavior but teachers, because of their bias and lack of cultural understanding, might not understand that the slap boxing is the same playful behavior that the students who didn’t get disciplined for karate kicking was.

Instructor C was also able to give specific examples related to other equity-based concepts. Instructor C stated, “We have a whole discussion on student voice during our student rights week for education law.” Instructor D also highlighted the importance that discussion and conversation bring to student learning in a course. Program participants are provided the opportunity to meet individually with Instructor D multiple times throughout a semester. Program participants are able to share progress toward implementing an equity lens within a theory of action. Instructor D stated, “It’s through our dialogue… ‘So tell me what’s going on in your buildings.’ We’ll talk
about what we would do about the situation. And so they have a chance to hear each other.”
Instructor D also identified the necessity of listening to program participants to best assess their
learning and the prioritization of equity-based concepts. According to Instructor D the
assessment of learning is “a natural outcome of our conversation.”

Program graduates identified the quality of class discussions as being essential to their
growth and development. During reflection on class discussion, Graduate D explained aspects of
the instructional practice that assisted them in serving as a dean of students. When asked about
instructors that supported their skill set to have challenging discourse, they stated, “[Program
Instructor], because she really did a lot of thought-provoking during her course. You know, she
often asked where is the bias?” Graduate A further expounded on the nature of discussion
introduced in courses facilitated by the same program instructor. During their interview Graduate
A explained, “[Program Instructor] kept creating that safe space and talking about some really
delicate issues sometimes. But in a very raw way, like, yeah. I think it made me more
comfortable to talk about difficult things.” Ensuring a level of engagement that challenged
decision making and school practices appeared to serve as an aspect of class discussions that was
valued by program graduates.

Specific Residency Courses that Address Equity Concepts

Throughout the focus group session, the program instructors referenced specific courses
that addressed equity-based concepts throughout the two-year program. Although some courses
were mentioned by title, program instructors provided explicit and specific examples of equity-
based concepts being addressed in seven of ten courses. Instructor C discussed the influence of
the curriculum provided in PPP 3.2- Policy Analysis for School Administration, PPP 4.2-
Education Law I, and PPP 5.1- Legal Issues in the Education of Diverse Learners. Instructor C provided explicit examples of discussion topics that align to equity-based concepts and how they impact decision making. In providing context around how this is addressed, Instructor C stated:

So these things come up in conversation, but when it comes to specific law, we’ll talk about the law. But the law really doesn’t talk about implicit bias. So, you have to bring those topics into the discussion when you’re talking about that area of law.

Instructor C also mentioned a specific assignment program participants are required to complete that intentionally addresses the implications of equity in relation to policies and decision making. During PPP 3.2 students provide a narrative about a policy currently being implemented within the school district they serve. Their narrative should include how the policy aligns to the district practices and procedures executed at the district and building level. An additional component of the assignment requires program participants to discuss the implications of equity within the policy. Participants must also explain how cultural and ethnic diversity within school buildings affected the policy highlighted.

Instructors A and D highlighted PPP 1.1- School Organization and Administration: Programs and Practices as a course addressing equity-based concepts. Additionally, Instructor A identified PPP 6.1- Principal, Family, and Community: Relationships and Resources as a course requiring program participants to develop their equity lens in preparation for building leadership. While providing an example of how the curriculum addresses equity in PPP 1.1, Instructor A stated,

Equity is intrinsic to the model of MTSS…it kind of piggybacks on what Instructor C was saying, the importance of making sure that students of color are not over identified in special education programs, which we know has been the history of special education.

Instructor A also referenced a project that program participants are required to complete during their enrollment in PPP 6.1. The assignment provides an opportunity to garner understanding of
the importance of diversity among families and communities by developing a parent engagement plan for a school. This assignment serves as an opportunity to explore the equity concept of inclusion and the impact it has on school-based decision making.

Instructor B emphasized the value of PPP 4.1- The Principalship as an additional course that works to enhance a future school leader’s ability to establish theories of action that come to life as school improvement plans. The course, which is typically led by a practicing school administrator, provides opportunity for program participants to acquire skills in a practical manner. As stated by Instructor B, “We’re having it taught by people who are in the trenches currently and who are doing work and can provide, you know, real-time, real-life examples of how it’s done and answer the questions that students have.” During PPP 4.1 program participants have the opportunity to experience school improvement planning under the guidance of a practitioner that can assist in shaping the thoughts and skills needed to be successful.

Instructor D introduced PPP 2.1- School Finance and Facility Management as a course supporting program participant development in making budgetary decisions through an equity lens. Instructor D highlighted the essential nature of budgets identifying the values, beliefs, and priorities of a school district or individual school. The instructor also identified specific practices reinforced during the course that develop a participant’s equity lens. “We have the equity efficiency modules. No one gets out alive without those.” The instructor communicated the importance of school leaders being able to filter school finance through an equity lens.

Although program instructors shared examples of equity concepts and skill acquisition as a part of a Principal Residency Program, program graduates shared experiences related mostly to three specific courses from the eleven-course program. When communicating which courses most exposed program graduates to learning related to equity, each of them referenced PPP 3.2,
PPP 4.2, and PPP 5.1. While the program graduates participating in this research study were enrolled in a Principal Residency Program, the three courses identified were all taught by the same program instructor. Each program graduate discussed examples of intentional classroom discussion facilitated by the instructor of PPP 3.2, PPP 4.2, and PPP 5.1 that occurred during the three courses, exposing participants to content related to equity centered leadership.

The Internship Reinforces Equity Concepts

The practices and projects offered during the internship were a reoccurring theme in the focus group discussion on developing equity lenses in the program participants. During the group discussion, instructors were asked how program participants were best able to show their learning around equity and school improvement. Instructors referenced the value of the program internship through a number of examples. Instructor B communicated the importance of the internship in teaching program participants to effectively analyze school systems for inequitable practices and procedures. Program participants are encouraged to analyze systems for concepts such as cultural proficiency, trust, and high expectations for all students. Instructor A spoke on the impact of the initial project that program participants complete during the internship. Program participants are required to develop a school improvement plan that begins by identifying marginalized students and their specific needs. Instructor D emphasized the need to include additional learning during the internship to specifically address diversity, equity, and inclusion. The instructor expressed hope that including equity-based modules within the internship period reinforces the prioritization of leaders having an equity lens in school leadership.
Program graduate interviews did not provide evidence to support the internship having impact on their capacity to lead with an equity mindset. No specific assignments or projects were highlighted or identified related to the internship component of a Principal Residency Program. The internship serves as a disconnect between program instructors and graduates as to the perception on its impact on learning.

**Practical Experience and Reflection**

Program instructors discussed the value add that practical experience brings to a Principal Residency Program. The practical experience provided to program participants comes from the day-to-day opportunities they have to take on the role of school level administrator. When asked about the differences between traditional and residency based principal preparation, Instructor A emphasized the demographics of River City School District and opportunity for program participants to exercise their learning on a day-to-day basis. Instructor A completed their statement by saying, “I think there’s a more practical experience built into the program.” Instructor A continued their comments by identifying the cycle in which program participants complete their work and receive feedback on their practice. Three of four program instructors communicated the value of the state professional organization coaches and school-based mentor principals as essential to ensuring self-reflection and adjustments to practices to become effective school administrators. Instructor A provided an example of how appropriate reflection leads to better practice of equity concepts, stating, “So part of the feedback participants are getting is how they’re going through the process. Are they giving voice to the student and to the families? And that’s part of the discussion that takes place.” A Principal Residency Program was highlighted as authentic and unique by program instructors for the amount of time program participants spend
with state professional organization coaches and mentor principals. Instructor B articulated an example of how this time produces more effective school leaders:

The nice thing about those coaches is that those discussions are oftentimes held in confidence. So if they’re really struggling with something, they may not want to go to their principal because that may be a person that they feel is evaluating them or they may not want to come to us as their intern supervisor. They can go to them in confidence and say ‘I really screwed that up, what should I have done differently?’

Instructor B reinforced their comments by offering qualitative survey data to support the importance of IPA coaches establishing safe environments for program participants. When asked where the teaching of equity-based concepts most occurs, Instructor D reinforced the impact the state professional organization coach and mentor principal have on the instruction of program participant’s skill development, stating, “I hope it lives everywhere. I hope it lives with their mentor principal. I hope it lives with their [state professional organization] coach.”

Program graduates validated the evidence provided by program instructors by highlighting the value provided by opportunities for practical application. When providing examples of practical application and learning, program graduates shared situational evidence directed towards their work as dean of students in various buildings across River City School District. Both program instructors and graduates identified practical application as an essential practice to exposing program participants to skill development in leading through equity-based theories of action. Confirming the value of this practice for program participants allows for intentional planning on the part of a Principal Residency Program to maintain practical application as a pillar to program development.
Program Graduate Interviews

Five program graduates were interviewed to address two research questions this study intended to explore. Program graduates were asked 10 questions purposed at identifying patterns and themes related to, “Do program graduates prioritize an equity mindset during their first years of school administration and if so how?” and “How equipped and prepared do candidates feel to lead with an equity lens in River City School District, considering the curriculum, experiences, and assessment of the PPP through the local university?” Each program graduate participated in a 45-60-minute virtual interview that allowed them time and space to reflect on their tenure in the local university PPP.

Each of the five program graduates interviewed are currently River City School District administrators in elementary and secondary buildings. 80% of the graduates interviewed are currently employed in River City School District as building level principals. The remaining 20% currently serve as assistant principals in River City School District. 40% of the graduates interviewed are currently serving as principals and assistant principals in buildings they were assigned to as deans during the residency program.

Patterns/Themes Related to Research Question #2

A portion of this study looks to determine if first or second year school administrators developed by a Principal Residency Program prioritize the use of an equity lens when serving as a building level principal within River City School District. Each program graduate that was interviewed provided a narrative that offered an opportunity to analyze the impact program curriculum and instruction had on the equity focused decisions school leaders make today.
Evidence collected from the five interviews shows emphasis placed on the prioritization of an equity mindset during the first years of school administration.

**Listening to Students**

Three of five program graduates communicated the value and importance of listening to students as an essential lever to effectively prioritizing an equity mindset within leadership. One graduate communicated the importance of listening to students as a key to their leadership. Graduate D was advised to, “have those conversations with small groups of students and go specifically to those questions…Is there an adult who cares about you?” The graduate communicated the importance of student listening as a tool of growth that should be considered within a school leadership team. Graduate D mentioned that the current school leadership team model used where they currently serve as an administrator includes students as members of their school improvement team. When discussing the student Graduate D nominated for the school improvement team, they stated, “You know, she has leadership potential…you can’t just, you know, be on the team without, you know, saying something; she’s a very intelligent young lady…very vocal.” Graduate D identified listening to students as a value of other building administrators within their school. Including students on the school improvement team is seen as a strategy to guarantee the voice of marginalized students in the most essential decision-making mechanism within a school. Graduate C discussed the value of listening to students and families within the context of removing barriers that hinder a leader from understanding the needs of their stakeholders:

We have to go back to what type of leader do you want to be? And looking at what you prioritize and how you approach it, because if you are not open, and if you’re not truly
listening and checking your ego at the door, you’re not going to be even able to address your own implicit bias.

Listening to students and families provides opportunities for a school leader to confirm stakeholders agree with decisions being made to best support the specific needs of marginalized student populations. Graduate A discussed data from listening sessions with students being incorporated into the work of the school leadership team. This qualitative data puts student thought at the forefront of decision making of the school team. Graduate A acknowledged the use of student listening sessions at all grade levels within their building.

Student Sense of Belonging

During the individual graduate interviews, three of the five program graduates identified a student’s sense of belonging as a school priority within their improvement plans. A student’s sense of belonging is inclusive to four student centered practices identified by Ramirez et al. (2021): promoting a caring and just climate and culture, developing both student agency and voice, cultivating respect for cultural differences, and stressing an asset-based approach to student skill development. A fourth program graduate communicated that their school improvement plan was inherited and desired to include student sense of belonging as a key goal in future school improvement planning. The importance of student sense of belonging caused Graduate A to develop a subcommittee within the school improvement team. During the interview, Graduate A stated, “And now there’s two leadership teams. There’s an instructional leadership team and a sense of belonging leadership team, because it’s a really big job for one set of people to do.” Graduate B identified student sense of belonging as the most important goal currently being addressed at their school. Graduate B reported, “Our number one goal is actually,
this year, especially in light of what last years’ experience was, a social emotional goal. We want that sense of belonging percentage to increase from fall to spring.” Graduate B went on to state, “We want our kids…a higher percentage of our kids to feel they belong at [school name] by the end than from the beginning.” Graduate B emphasized the value and prioritization of equity concepts within their building showing up through the focus placed on a sense of belonging within the school improvement plan. Graduate C also chose to prioritize student sense of belonging within their school improvement work. Graduate C stated, “The sense of belonging is the number one thing that I’ve talked about. And I actually reworded it this year to environment of belonging, because I want it built and cultivated and fostered.” Graduate C also discussed the incorporation of students’ background and culture into the development of a school’s theory of action and the planning for school improvement. They argued, “Our students need to see pictures of family members and of people from their cultures…you have to think about classroom materials that reflect their cultures.” Each of these program graduates showed their prioritization of equity concepts through the work of school improvement.

Graduate E mentioned the value of student sense of belonging during their interview for this study as well. Graduate E communicated concern with school improvement goals identified prior to their administration at their school. During the interview, they communicated a need to adjust school improvement goals to better align with the needs of students, in particular those who were marginalized. Graduate E stated, “In goal 3, which is self-regulation to me. If I were to change it, I would do sense of belonging because I would use self-determination theory and say, if I don’t belong, then I’m not going to be motivated. So then why would I perform, right?” Graduate E also expressed the importance of connecting equitable concepts such as a sense of belonging to school improvement indicators identified by the state of Illinois, and they
communicated the impact equity concepts such as a sense of belonging can have on a school’s chronic absenteeism percentage. By leaning into a student’s sense of belonging, “Then we can tie in more attendance, the improvement in attendance, and things like that. Yes, the reading improvement and improvement in math, but really it’s a student’s sense of belonging.” This comment reflects Grossman and Portilla’s (2022) conclusions on the importance of adopting systems and structures that support a student’s sense of belonging that leads to key shifts such as an increased level of trust among students and adults in schools as well as improvement in school climate and culture.

Patterns/Themes Related to Research Question #3

The third research question addressed within this study required program graduates to reflect on their preparedness to lead their schools with a lens grounded in equity. Program graduates were asked to evaluate their readiness to lead with an equity lens considering the curriculum, programming, experiences, and assessments utilized within a Principal Residency Program. Based on the analysis of evidence collected from the five program graduates, candidates felt equipped and prepared to lead with an equity lens. Further analysis showed that program graduates highlighted their learning in PPP 3.2 “Policy Analysis for School Administration”, PPP 4.2 “Education Law I”, and PPP 5.1 “Legal Issues in the Education of Diverse Learners” as the courses that most equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively lead schools with an equity lens. Program graduates also identified the value of the practical application through the dean residency component of a Principal Residency Program.
A Principal Residency Program Coursework

Program graduates participate in eleven courses developed to address standards required by the state of Illinois. Proficiency of each standard requires program graduates to perform various tasks. These tasks are assessed within each course to serve as evidence of proficiency for each program candidate. When program graduates participating in this study communicated which courses best prepared them to proficiently address tasks related to the CRTL standards, each of the program graduates referenced PPP 3.2, PPP 4.2, and PPP 5.1. While the program graduates were enrolled in a Principal Residency Program the three courses were all taught by the same program instructor. When probed as to how these courses worked to equip the graduates with the skill to lead with an equity lens, they all identified the value of the challenging discussions that occurred in PPP 3.2, PPP 4.2, and PPP 5.1 as being important levers for developing an ability to lead their schools with an equity lens. Each graduate provided examples of targeted discussion that occurred during those courses that led to productive equity centered leadership. During their interview Graduate A communicated how having an environment and culture of trust established by the instructor led to regular and rigorous conversation. The culture allowed for truthful conversation without judgment as good intention was assumed within class discussion. Graduate A stated, “If I’m saying something that would ever be offensive, they knew I wasn’t meaning for it to be offensive. And so that’s a really cool, safe space.” Having an environment that welcomed discussion for the purpose of new learning assisted Graduate A in understanding and maintaining those concepts as part of their practice in leadership.

Graduate B explicitly identified equity-based concepts taught through the discussion that transpired during classes. According to Graduate B, “[Instructor] did a great job through
education law, special ed. law and different things that really go to social justice topics that come up.” Graduate E also commented on the value the identified courses had on their capacity to maintain equitable concepts such as social justice at the forefront of their work today through class discussion with the instructor. Graduate E shared, “I fell in love with the educational law classes. I’m very careful to make sure that the families have the legal literacy that they need when they’re sitting at these tables, and they’re making big decisions about their student’s future.” Each program graduate felt that class discussion explicitly identified and interrogated equity centered concepts to the extent that they were able to apply those concepts in their leadership regularly.

Graduate C also communicated the necessity of honest space to effectively discuss barriers and challenges to policy that negatively impact marginalized populations. Graduate C stated, “[Instructor] really let us have the forum to be able to discuss and say, Hey, we know this isn’t right. This is the policy. This is not okay, what are we going to do, at least within our buildings, to address it?” Graduate D emphasized the level of depth discussions provided as program candidates learned together. During their interview Graduate D added, “The instructor really did a lot of thought provoking. A little bit of anger came out of it because you know, everything was wrong. But then it was like okay, you know, where is the bias in it?” Establishing a brave, safe space encourages honest conversation which allows program participants to challenge their thinking of equity concepts and their value in leadership.

Practical Application

Much of the interview content provided by all five candidates focused on the implication of the residency portion of a Principal Preparation Program rather than the internship. Candidates
identified serving as a dean of students while participating in coursework as a significant component to their readiness to successfully lead schools within River City School District. Four of the five program graduates interviewed saw the residency component of the preparation program as an opportunity to practice the utilization of an equity lens to make decisions that best support students and their families given their needs.” Graduate E shared the value of serving as a dean of students in learning how to cultivate understanding and respect for cultural differences through listening and conversing with families. Graduate E stated, “But like I was forced early on as a dean, and you got to learn how to do it…I definitely watched how [principal] dealt with parents.” They went on to argue, “And like, I would have to learn like, okay, so…this is kind of how you have those hard conversations in a way that honors people’s humanity…they are still a human sitting across from you, so you can be respectful.” Graduate C discussed the impact the residency component of the program had on their decision making. During their interview session Graduate C stated, “Experiencing the job, having the experience while you’re doing it was so beneficial, and in some instances, it was what not to do…You also learn what not to do as well, and there’s value in that as I think as well.” The practical nature inherent in serving as a resident ensures observation of effective equity centered work, as well as ineffective practices that may hinder its progress. Graduate A communicated how the residency component of the program assisted their equity lens by being able to measure their decision making against colleagues having similar experiences through collaborative discussion. According to Graduate A:

So yeah, I would say, mainly because I was able to do the job and take the coursework with the job. So, if I’m taking the course that’s about getting feedback and eliciting student voice, then obviously being placed within the district is also important. That marriage, you know, working on the same type of thing, like, completely prepared me.
Graduate B shared an example of the assignments provided through the coursework offering opportunity to put learning of concepts such as marginalization into practice. Showing their ability to practice the identification of marginalization, Graduate B stated, “That is a significant population of people without cars, and they’re not sending their kindergarteners across Rockton Avenue and across those train tracks to get over to [school name].” Graduate B acknowledged the value of learning academic concepts and then applying that learning during the residency component of the preparation program.

Graduate D evaluated their time in the Principal Residency program and determined more emphasis should be given to applying the academic learning taking place through the coursework. They stated, “I think more work needs to happen in real buildings. You know what I mean? Theoretical and all these books from these authors is great, but education is changing constantly. Why aren’t we in these schools?” Graduate B provided other examples of the value practical application of equity centered concepts provided them during their residency.

Discussion of the Results

Through data analysis and data triangulation of the course syllabi/curriculum analysis, individual program graduate interviews, and program instructor focus groups, there were essential learnings that provide insight into the most valuable components of a Principal Residency Program. These insights assist us in understanding how program participants learned to develop equity-based theories of action as well as what best prepared them to lead from this perspective. Likewise, there are discrepancies that were discovered through analysis that should also be considered as the program continues to accept incoming student cohorts.
Leaders Developing Equity Based Theories of Action

This study sought to determine the emphasis placed on equity concepts during a Principal Residency Program so that program participants are equipped and prepared to develop theories of action that address the needs of urban schools today. Through aligning study findings to essential concepts of equity and theory of action, essential discussion points were identified as key learnings.

Values and Beliefs Driving a Theory of Action

Montecinos et al. (2022) connected a leader’s theory of action to the values and beliefs they hold as most important. The authors further argued that theories of action drive the professional actions taken by people within an organization given specific conditions; they also communicate intended or unintended consequences of the professional actions. In relation to the case study of a Principal Residency Program, it was important to understand how coursework assisted program participants in developing skills that would directly reflect their values and beliefs. As program graduates discussed the equity-based learning received through a Principal Residency Program, they identified specific courses that equipped them with the appropriate skills. They were able to clearly discuss how those courses challenged their initial thoughts, values, and beliefs to articulate theories of action that identify adult professional actions necessary to ensure environments that promote student sense of belonging and social justice. Program instructors validated the interviews of the program graduates by discussing similar key courses during the focus group in which they participated. The instructor responsible for those courses was able to provide direct examples of assignments and discussions that were part of
coursework that pushed program graduates to evaluate their ideas and beliefs. Additionally, curriculum analysis completed as a part of this study identified PPP 3.2 as a common course discussed by graduates and instructors as heavily emphasizing learning that assisted graduates in shaping the beliefs and values that are communicated through the theories of action they have established for their buildings.

The triangulation of data serves as evidence to support consistent prioritization of equity-based concepts for the instructor responsible for the courses identified through interviews as well as the focus group. This prioritization of equity-based concepts led to acknowledgement of learning on the part of program graduates when asked how they learned of the essential nature of the identified concepts. Triangulated evidence suggests program graduates were able to significantly impact their ability to develop theories of action that reflect the beliefs of an equity-based mindset through intentional and focused learning.

Theories of Action Addressing Inequity

In practical terms, school improvement planning has become the avenue in which schools develop plans of action for the purpose of continuous improvement. Within these plans schools: identify deficits, write goals, develop plans of action, monitor progress, and adjust their plans given their results. School improvement planning reflects the very nature of a theory of action and can serve as an example of a theory of action through practice. Educators and school leaders alike must have contextual understanding behind the implications of inequitable practices. As urban schools are often hubs of learning for historically marginalized students, schools must be able to develop plans that include equitable strategies and practices to ensure learning for all.
For example, Mason (2022) found that defining the role of the literacy coach through a lens of equity helped to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum and effective instruction for all learners. If building leaders utilize roles such as literacy coaches to challenge teachers in reflecting on their implicit bias or to utilize culturally relevant practices, they work toward the accomplishment of an equity-based theory of action. According to Mason, “All learners should benefit from changes in literacy pedagogy, and the reduction of learning gaps should be the goal of enacting the theory of action” (p. 14). The value of developing equity-based theories of action come from the ability of a school leader to consider the outcomes of all students provided the leader defines the conditions and actions necessary for those intended consequences.

During the interviews conducted for my study, program graduates were able to clearly articulate current school improvement plans and theories of action that are developed with an intent to acknowledge and address the needs of all learners through reconsideration of traditional systems and structures that caused certain students to have minimal voice and sense of belonging. Program graduates made connections to improving these systems through an equity lens that would ultimately address the achievement and growth deficits for marginalized students. Although program graduates were able to articulate these concrete concepts related to equity and theories of action, they did not mention specific courses which assisted them in their understanding of using equity-based concepts to formulate theories that convert to school improvement plans. Utilizing course syllabi, program instructors were able to communicate specific examples of opportunities for program participants to practice their skills in developing a theory of action that leads to impactful school improvement planning. Based on these conflicting views, there is evidence to support a difference in the impact of coursework highlighting theory of action and school improvement planning between program graduates and
instructors. Program graduates were often challenged in their responses to connect readings and assignments provided within various courses to the application of practical application within the profession such as developing theories of action for school improvement planning. In “Improving University Principal Preparation Programs: Five Themes from the Field.” Mendels (2016) interrogated the connection of course study to the practical aspects of the actual day to day job as principal. According to the study, “research confirms the significance of relevant, experimental coursework and indicates that a number of principal preparation programs have not updated their curricula to match the responsibilities of school leaders today” (p. 10). Mendels ultimately determined that current principal preparation programs struggled with limited opportunities for participants to build skills addressed in the curriculum, as well as a pattern of disconnect between the topics that were presented within the curriculum and the actual job of principal. The Mendels study assists in providing clarity to the disconnect of responses provided by graduates and instructors which ultimately supports conflicting perceptions of what is defined as impactful practices of a Principal Residency Program.

Putting Theory into Action

This study established that a theory of action is a hypothesis about how to best achieve targets and goals given the constraints of a particular situation. Hannah et al. (2022) define the constraints of a situation as “conditions that specify what counts as more or less acceptable actions” (p. 365). Effective implementation of a Principal Residency Program curriculum provides program graduates the skills needed to set the appropriate conditions as building leaders so that certain and specific actions might occur. As a result of setting specific conditions that drive targeted actions, building leaders can anticipate intended consequences thereby completing
the process of a theory of action. During the graduate interviews and instructor focus group, the importance of practical application of skills, although seen differently by each group, was highlighted as a key component of a Principal Residency Program. Each session communicated the value added to the program because of the ability of graduates to use the skill sets provided through courses in both theory and action. Seemingly the opportunities for practical application provided program graduates a chance to develop theories of action and test them throughout a two-year period.

**Practical experience defined.** Both program graduates and program instructors stressed the value of practical experience and application of learning as a major component of a Principal Residency Program. Offering an opportunity for program participants to explore the use of skills developed throughout coursework allowed them to learn how to best implement their learning to produce effective leadership for students and staff alike. In her study of principal preparation programs, Mendels (2016) quotes the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education’s definition of clinical experience as “fully integrating a school-based experience throughout every facet of the program, providing candidates with adequate time and opportunity to engage in authentic adult leadership work and reflective practice experiences” (p. 11). Although both graduates and instructors highlighted the value of practical experience, the manner in which this concept was perceived served as a point of difference. Throughout the individual program graduate interviews, graduates defined the practical aspect of the program to be their specific work as school level deans. They communicated the importance of working daily in the position of administrator as a key lever to providing direct on the job training that resulted in greater skill acquisition. Program graduates shared examples of challenging implicit bias, developing school plans through the identification of marginalized students, and practicing active listening with
families. These examples helped to encourage program graduates to practice the use of an equity lens within their daily practice.

Program instructors also identified practical experience and application of skill sets in a real world setting as being an essential component to a Principal Residency Program. However, although there appears to be agreement on the value of practical application, program instructors highlighted the impact of the internship course as being most important in the skill development of program participants. During the focus group discussion with program instructors, they discussed assignments related to equity and theory of action (school improvement planning) that were requirements for program participants to complete. The development of a school improvement plan and identifying opportunities for the parent engagement and activation were communicated as opportunities for program participants to practice tools that are essential to having an equity lens and growing as a school administrator. Additionally, program instructors targeted the state professional organization coaches and building level principal mentors as those primarily responsible to program participants to ensure they reflect on their practice and the implementation of strategies to make adjustments that better meet the needs of faculty and the student body. It is important to note that all program participants of any Illinois based principal preparation program are required to participate in a traditional clinical internship for administrative licensure. This means that program participants of a Principal Residency Program not only serve as residents but are also required to complete the traditional internship hours required for state licensure.

The difference in perception of practical experience and application of skill between program graduates and instructors serves as a point of disagreement as to which component of the program may be most impactful. The Mendels (2016) study found that partnerships with
school districts that are driven by the clinical experience, having high-quality mentors for each program participant, and removing financial barriers for candidates so there is not a need to balance the responsibilities of a job and an internship simultaneously were adjustments PPPs could implement to be most impactful for future program candidates. The model developed through a Principal Residency Program essentially addresses each of the assets identified within the Mendels study. By hiring program participants as deans within school buildings, program graduates became members of school administration for a two-year period. During the two-year period program graduates developed theories of action, experienced intentional and unintentional consequences, and adjusted their theories as needed. This uninterrupted period of administrative time afforded to program participants allows the opportunity to explore theory as it relates to interaction with community stakeholders, meeting the needs of families, and challenging the beliefs of staff and faculty. During this period participants are challenged to adjust their theories as unintended consequences may arise that support the need to reconsider an initial hypothesis. This chance to operate within the scope of a practical laboratory where philosophies and ideas can be explored and adjusted occurs at a heightened level due to the full-time administrative status of the program participants.

Furthermore, program graduates were provided multiple opportunities for mentorships as they received support from program instructors, state professional organization coaches, and building principals of their assigned schools who also served as mentors. Lastly, as program participants are hired as school deans, the residency comes to life as the program is more than an internship as participants are compensated as school administrators thus eliminating the need to juggle employment and an internship experience. From the perspective of program graduates, serving as a resident administrator essentially provided them with an experience that superseded
that of a traditional internship. While program instructors highlight components of the traditional internship as being important to program participant skill acquisition, program graduate responses are aligned to the essential components identified by the Mendels (2016) study. Although speculation, one could make connections to the essential nature of the internship communicated by program instructors during the focus group and the necessity of addressing state requirements that are placed on internships as to the difference in responses from graduates and instructors. When communicating about a Principal Residency Program, program graduates discussed and addressed how they learned best and what was most impactful, while program instructors highlighted internship projects and expectations per state requirements that are connected to the skills necessary to lead through a lens of equity.

Limitations of the Study

Throughout the research and data collection process there were considerations taken due to the nature, feasibility, and reach of the study. These limitations, although necessary and intended, reduced the range of influence this study has on the development of future principal preparation programs. In order to expand the scope and nature of the study a number of limitations should be addressed. This study focused explicitly on the impact of a Principal Residency Program on River City School District. The program is currently implemented within River City School District and an additional school district partner which will be identified as Bridges City Public Schools. By narrowly focusing research on an individual school district, the study did not collect data that would have analyzed differences in implementation of the PPP in various school districts and learning environments.
The study also included a sample size of five program graduates and four program instructors. The sample of participants helped to establish a reflection of the program experience; however, a larger sample size would have allowed for a more valid confirmation of the data collected and analyzed. If including the Bridges City Public Schools as an additional aspect of the study, the sample size should increase to enhance data validity and reliability. Each program graduate and instructor participating in the study was a part of either one individual interview or a one-time focus group. Additional interviews with each participant would assist in confirming with greater validity the experience communicated through the initial conversations provided. Each of the limitations identified would assist in furthering the opportunity for learning and reach this study could have on the future of principal preparation programs.

Opportunities for Future Research

The problem of practice motivating this study was centered on the principal turnover particularly within urban schools. By better equipping principal candidates with an equity-based mindset, they may be more prepared to address the needs of the families and students in their schools, thus reducing the current impact negative working conditions are having on building leaders. This specific study explored how principal preparation programs support the development of equity-based concepts, specifically in regard to program candidates enrolled in a Principal Residency Program. First and second year administrators were interviewed on their perception of their preparation to develop equity-based theories of action. The study has not, however, measured whether this preparation has led to an increase in principal retention. Future studies can further support this work by determining whether there is correlation between the ability to formulate equity-based theories of action and principal retention answering the
question, does the development of equity-based mindsets for program participants lead to less turnover? The completion of this study only addressed a fraction of the challenge that is principal turnover.

During the individual program graduate interviews, multiple narratives expressed the value of serving as a school administrator while simultaneously participating in coursework that supported learning of specific skills. Program graduates were able to accelerate their development as they regularly practiced the use of content introduced during courses. Concurrently, program instructors communicated the essential nature of the internship component of a Principal Residency Program. They communicated the importance of completing projects that align to standards the internship aims to address. Program instructors also discussed the practical nature of the various projects that are meant to provide situational, real-world experience for program participants. This dichotomous perception of which component of a Principal Residency Program truly provides real-world application identifies a gap that future research and study can fill. Future study of this problem of practice could assist in measuring or identifying not only inefficiency within the internship and residency portion of programming but could also consider inefficiencies within other aspects of the program.

Conclusion

Data triangulation of the course syllabi, program graduate interviews, and a focus group of program instructors showed a connection to program graduate learning through the opportunity to apply concepts and skills acquired in specific program courses. Program graduates attribute their most significant learning to the time spent in real-world, situational learning that occurs for two years as a resident within a Principal Residency Program. This residency happens
concurrently with coursework provided by the local university faculty. Serving as a resident provided program graduates an opportunity to practice equity-based skill acquisition through theory and action. Through experiencing both intended and unintended consequences, graduates were able to reflect and redevelop their theories as they participated in course discussion that challenged their thinking and theories. Program graduates were able to show evidence of their ability to develop equity-based theories of action by providing examples of their current work and practices being used to drive decision making in their schools today. Program instructors, however, highlighted the impact of the internship, state professional organization coaches, and mentor principals as essential to transferring coursework to application-based opportunities for practice. Despite the difference in the identification of what matters most in the preparation of principals, the essential nature of practical, real-world application of learning is a common strategy highlighted on the part of graduate and instructor that must be maintained for future program participants. In particular, having the opportunity to apply skills related to equitable concepts will support the belief program participants have in their ability to execute practices effectively. Ensuring consistency in the alignment of practical, situational learning between instructors, coaches, and mentors will create a more robust program, which meets the needs of incoming program cohorts. Through aligning communication and programming between stakeholders, concepts such as anti-racism and social justice can be reinforced so the things that matter most for program participants to become effective leaders are common expectations of all learning. There will certainly be another principal who chooses to resign from their position leading a school. Within their resignation letter they will discuss the reason for walking away. They may identify poor salary or working conditions as their rationale for leaving. Although principal preparation programs are limited in their ability to impact all types of principal
turnover, if programs such as a Principal Residency Program equip program participants with the ability to develop equity-based theories of action, they can help increase principals’ self-efficacy and empower them in ways that may lead them to stay.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTION AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS ALIGNMENT
## Research Question and Data Collection Methods Alignment

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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
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<td>What practices or programming exist that expose students to equity-based theories of action?</td>
<td>Curriculum and Syllabi Audit</td>
<td>Rubric developed from the NELP Standards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interviews with a Principal Residency Program Instructors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do program graduates prioritize an equity mindset during their first years of school administration and if so how?</td>
<td>Interviews with program graduates in River City School District</td>
<td>Interview questions developed in part from the CRTL Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>How equipped and prepared do candidates feel to lead with an equity lens in River City School District, considering the curriculum, experiences, and assessment of the PPP through a local university?</td>
<td>Interviews with program graduates in River City School District</td>
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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM GRADUATES AS ALIGNED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS
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<th>RQ2 Do program graduates prioritize an equity mindset during their first years of school administration and if so how?</th>
<th>RQ3 How equipped and prepared do candidates feel to lead with an equity lens in River City School District, considering the curriculum, experiences, and assessment of the PPP through a local university?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tell me about yourself and your background. Did you like school growing up, why or why not? When did you decide you wanted to get into education, be a leader?</td>
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<td>How important is your lived experience in the relationship you have with students? How would we know that it is important?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are your beliefs/values/philosophy reflected in your current school improvement plan? Provide examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you learn during the local university PPP about identifying marginalized populations in your school community? How does that inform your decision making?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are students’ backgrounds and lived experiences considered in your decision making/action planning (i.e. school improvement, personnel decisions, goal setting)? How do ensure students are represented in the work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel your coursework prepare you to elicit student feedback and value student voice? How would we know this is important to your leadership?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there currently students on your improvement action planning committee? Talk to me about why you made that decision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upon your completion of the local university PPP how prepared were you to work with parents collaboratively in the process of teaching and learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upon your completion of the local university PPP how prepared were you to provide learning to your staff on equity-based topics such as social justice and anti-racism?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you describe a time in which you addressed a situation in your building considering an equity concept (i.e. implicit bias, social justice, anti-racism)? Do you think the program prepared you to address that situation?</td>
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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM INSTRUCTORS AS ALIGNED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS
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<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>RQ1 What practices or programming exist that expose students to equity-based theories of action?</th>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think are the most essential skills administrators should have today in order to be successful in their initial leadership roles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the coursework you are responsible for assist with building the skills you mentioned?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do participants learn about concepts such as bias, privilege, and racism within the local university PPP? How do they show evidence of understanding how those concepts can inform their action planning (decision making)?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do participants learn about concepts such as social justice, marginalization, and inequity within the local university PPP? How do they show evidence of understanding how those concepts can inform their action planning (decision making)?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>How would a program participant show evidence of developing a philosophy and mindset that a student’s background and lived experience should be considered in their learning?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does current local university coursework address the incorporation of student voice in action planning? How would a program participant show evidence of valuing student advocacy in the local university PPP?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do program participants show evidence of learning on how to partner with families and the communities for the good of student achievement?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where within current programming and curriculum do participants learn the value of ensuring students feel seen, heard, and affirmed? How would a participant show evidence of internalizing those pieces?</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>What skills do you believe aren’t highlighted or reinforced enough within a Principal Preparation Residency Program?</td>
<td>●</td>
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CHAPTER 4
MEASURING THE EMPHASIS: A RUBRIC FOR UNIVERSITIES
SUPPORTING THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE
TEACHING AND LEADING STANDARDS OF ILLINOIS
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References
This chapter serves as a culmination of the findings supported in the empirical section of this dissertation. The product presented in this section seeks to address the need for greater emphasis on equity-based content throughout the 11 courses taken by program participants. Findings of my study showed heavy emphasis of equity-based content in just one of the 11 courses presented in a Principal Residency Program. Additionally, this study found that practical application of an equity lens was identified as the most effective strategy in reinforcing learning for program graduates.

This study developed a scoring rubric that defines criteria for a PPP against which to self-assess itself around leading with an equity lens. The finalized rubric created in this section was developed utilizing the findings collected from the completion of a curriculum analysis as well as interviews of program graduates and instructors. The findings provided insight to the experience of program participants as it relates to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) Standards. Additionally, components of the finalized rubric were created from analysis of the program curriculum as it aligns to the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Standards. To ensure fidelity in the implementation of the finalized rubric for program review, guidelines for effective implementation accompany the finalized rubric. Colleges and universities have the ability to determine levels of proficiency while also identifying components of curriculum and programming that may need adjustment to best meet the needs of program participants.
Identifying success criteria has become an essential component of assessment. In order to improve a practice, program, or curriculum, practitioners must exercise reflection. To reflect with an unbiased approach, rubrics can be considered as a tool for self-assessment. Andrade (2005) identified a rubric as, “an assessment tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or what counts and articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor” (p. 27). Bharuthram (2015) highlighted the value of rubrics being used in higher education as students wanted a higher level of transparency on how they were being assessed and how what they were being asked to do in class related to becoming proficient in standard based criteria. Although PPPs have the ability to survey and assess program participants throughout their duration at a college or university, there remains a gap in the qualitative self-assessment of curricular and program decisions.

The Value of Rubrics

Bharuthram (2015) examined the perception of instructors around the value of rubrics in assessing the curriculum and programming provided in courses. The researcher found that all instructors participating in the study found rubrics to be beneficial to their work in establishing expectations for students. This supported the premise that rubrics were no more than grading tools for the purpose of student growth and achievement. Surprisingly, a mere 35% felt that rubrics explicitly assisted in reflection around their teaching practice. Even fewer instructors felt that rubrics could assist in curriculum review and development. The study concluded by suggesting further study and research around the utilization of rubrics in informing teaching practice, curriculum review and development, self-assessment, and evaluation. This study aims to provide a resource that addresses each of those components. Leggett et al. (2023) discussed
the necessity for rubrics in the redevelopment of curriculum for the principal preparation program at Western Kentucky University. The rubrics developed in the proposed revisions to curriculum, “considers critical roles in the program framework: learning leader, equity engineer, relationship builder, effective communicator, and reflective practitioner” (p. 418). Researchers found the development of this rubric would assist program instructors in assessing student internalization of learning occurring during the PPP.

Four Components of Effective Rubrics

The final rubric developed for utilization by colleges and universities would meet the components of a high-quality rubric. Chan and Ho (2019) identified four practices that support the development of effective rubrics. First, rubrics assist in providing consistency in the methods used for evaluation. The product developed from this study would support colleges and universities with a common method for evaluating their program for the appropriate incorporation of skill acquisition in leading schools with an equity-based mindset. The utilization of a common rubric would bring PPPs into common curriculum and practice to support the development of building principals in a consistent manner. Secondly, rubrics ensure appropriate practice by providing clarity and objectiveness in the evaluation of program decisions. Through research, Chan and Ho (2019) determined that educators found that rubrics ensured instructors were not subjective with their decisions regarding student products. Rubrics provided common expectations for all instructors which served as a deterrent to making evaluative decisions from personal thought or perception. Through the use of a rubric developed from this study, PPPs would be provided an avenue to objectively evaluate their curriculum and programming against common benchmarks of various skills needed to develop school-based theories of action that are
created with an equity mindset. Well-developed and effective rubrics provide clear direction and a framework of what a product should include. The clarity provided by an effective rubric should help to not only support instructors as they consider when curriculum should include for program participants, but program participants are also given clarity on what they can expect from their PPP as well as what they should be able to do by completing a course or overall program. It is expected that program participants of the PPPs would regularly have an opportunity to review the rubric developed from this study to be aware of expectations that may be placed on them; they would also have clear understanding about how they could expect the PPP to ensure their proficiency in leading schools. Lastly, well-structured rubrics provide transparency within the evaluative practices of the user. The use of rubrics ensures there is no secrecy or uncertainty surrounding what it means to proficiently meet standards. Well written rubrics not only communicate proficiency, but also identifies other qualitative levels of addressing a standard. This allows the user to also identify exactly where they are on the spectrum of addressing a standard for the purpose of action planning on how to best meet an expectation that has not yet been met. Organizations utilizing the rubric developed from this study will have an opportunity to not only be able to identify the quality that is expected from their program, but also be able to clearly plan around what future steps should be made to effectively and efficiently develop curriculum and programming that best meets the expectation.
Section 2

An Overview of the CRTL Standards

Adopted in March 2021, the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) Standards were developed in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the WestEd organization. As communicated by ISBE (2023) the partnership was driven by the goal of closing the achievement gap by the statewide implementation of standards that align to research-based practices identified by the WestEd organization. By providing standards that address the value of relationships and culture, both educator preparation programs and principal preparation programs within the state of Illinois can ensure these values are identified and addressed in university coursework and curriculum. The WestEd organization determined the most effective strategies and practices in which standards should be aligned by reviewing research developed within the past 15 years. According to the research brief written for ISBE by Sandoval et al., “from the research and materials, the WestEd team surfaced tools that are likely to be useful for education preparation programs (EPPs) in developing culturally responsive teachers and leaders” (2023, p. 1). Standards are aligned to the following key topics: self-awareness and relationship to others, systems of oppression, students as individuals, students as co-creators, leveraging student advocacy, family and community collaboration, content selections in all curricula, and student representation in the learning environment.

Rubric Performance Levels Aligned to the CRTL Standards

Four performance levels were identified for the development of the PPP based rubric aligned to the CRTL standards. Qualitative responses from both program graduates and program instructors identified essential components of the current Principal Residency Program that
prepared graduates to lead their schools with an equity lens. Program graduates coalesced much of the most impactful learning around the value of serving as administrators while completing coursework. This experience allowed them the opportunity to explore skill sets taught during courses in a practical environment that reinforced situational learning and development. Program also communicated the value of ongoing class discussion on the internal development of equity-based skill acquisition. Program instructors aligned with the importance of in class conversation on the skill development of program participants. They also highlighted the importance of providing class assignments and projects that reinforce equity standards. Additionally, program syllabus analysis found the course providing the most emphasis on NELP Standard 3 addressed learning through readings, projects, and class discussion. This analysis assisted in developing the performance levels for the rubric.

- **Exemplary Programs**- Program attributes provide participants opportunities to experience learning through practical, application based, situational learning.

- **Proficient Programs**- Program attributes require participants to show understanding of learning through proficiency with coursework. This may include questions and discussion, various class projects/assessments, etc.

- **Developing Programs**- Program attributes provide minimal exposure to program candidates through low level practices (i.e. readings, articles, videos).

- **Deficient Programs**- Program attributes are non-existent. Program does not address the standard through coursework or programming.

Principal preparation programs should utilize evidence from course syllabi and opportunities participants are given to implement course learning to determine their performance level on the Performance Rubric Aligned to the CRTL Standards.
Application and Use of the CRTL Rubric

The CRTL rubric was designed for use by university level education departments to reflect and assess their curriculum and programming for its ability to prepare principal candidates to lead schools with an equity lens through collaboration and open dialog. To properly assess program and curricular implementation, departments should consider the topics and content addressed within the course syllabi, course textbooks and other readings, and course-based assessments. Departments should weigh the program resources, instructional practices, and assessments against the CRTL rubric to best determine current levels of proficiency. To ensure focused conversation and reflection, departments are provided optional questions within each standard to guide departments using the pieces of evidence that will lead to accurate determination of the incorporation of equitable content and skills into the curriculum used for principal preparation programs.

Guiding Questions to Support PPP Analysis

The Performance Rubric Aligned to the CRTL Standards provides programs further support through guiding questions that are developed and aligned to each specific standard component. The guiding questions support programs in determining what participant actions may be included within a course that align to certain program levels of proficiency. The guiding questions also assist programs in avoiding subjective decision making around the performance levels and challenge programs to analyze the frequency and application involved with each standard. Each standard component has a series of questions developed exclusively for the
identified component. After using the guiding questions to align evidence, program developers are able to establish a standard rating and then provide a narrative that supports the rating.
Performance Rubric for Principal Preparation Programs Aligned to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards of Illinois

Guidelines to Consider:

- Evidence to be considered may include but is not limited to: job responsibilities, practical interactions (e.g. resident-teacher, resident-parent, resident-student), course readings and discussion, course assignments, and peer observation and reflection.

- This rubric serves as an opportunity to identify both areas of strength and challenge for your program. Consider what can be learned from the courses providing evidence of an exemplary program.

- The guiding questions provided for each standard serve as an additional resource to assist in a PPP’s efforts in program reflection. Teams should not feel obligated to complete each guiding question.
Standard A. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders are reflective and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and how they impact others, leading to more cohesive and productive student development as it relates to academic and social-emotional development for all students.

Program shows little to no evidence supporting the concepts of bias and lived experience, nor the influence on educational decision making.

Program shows evidence of one or two readings or assignments throughout the span of courses that addresses the impact of lived experience and bias on decision-making.

Program provides opportunity for candidates to reflect on how their decisions are impacted by bias and perceptions through course readings and assignments.

Program regularly provides opportunity for candidates to practice decision making (e.g., issuing discipline), taking into consideration their place in society and bias that may exist.

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- How does our program teach the value of lived experience in a leader’s decision making?
- Does our program reinforce asset-based mindset to affirm student background and identity?
- How do program participants explore their bias and how it impacts decision making?
- How do we require program participants to show they value the concept of “dismantle, destroy, and deconstruct” when it comes to inequitable systems?

Program Rating: Exemplary Proficient Developing Deficient

Evidence to support the rating:
**Standard B. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders understand that there are systems in our society especially, but not limited to, our school system, that create and reinforce inequities, thereby creating oppressive conditions. Educators work actively against these systems in their everyday roles in educational institutions.**

**Program Rating:**
- Exemplary
- Proficient
- Developing
- Deficient

**Evidence to support the rating:**

Program does not cover topics related to inequity, marginalization, or oppressive practices.

Program inadvertently supports knowledge around inequitable systems and structures during coursework and class discussion.

Program reinforces participants understanding of marginalization and systemic causes through coursework and various assessments or projects. This learning occurs across courses for the span of the PPP.

Program provides participants consistent opportunities to identify educational systems that marginalize students and actively work to disrupt the inequity for the benefit of those impacted.

**Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…**

- When do program participants learn about concepts such as prejudice, racism, and discrimination and how they affect the school system?
- How often are program participants exposed to concepts such as privilege and how to use concepts such as social justice to combat it within a school system?
- How do program participants explore the marginalization of students of color and how to develop plans to address those students?
Standard C. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders view and value their students as individuals within the context of their families and communities.

| Program does not show evidence of supporting learning of the value students bring to the learning environment. Concepts related to valuing student feedback and student connection to learning are not included within course syllabi or assigned readings. | Program provides an isolated or individual learning experience for participants on the value students bring to the learning environment; learning occurs through a single reading or assignment during one course; participants are exposed to learning of equity-based concept through a topic unrelated to equity or equity-based concept. | Program supports learning on strategies to support student’s ability to set goals and the value of a student’s lived experience in understanding their current place in education; participants are exposed to this learning through multiple courses; participants show their learning of identified concepts through discussion, assignments, and other class-based strategies. | Program ensures participants are given practical opportunities to develop positive strength-based partnerships with students; Participants regularly learn about the student body and solicit student opinion, especially with students marginalized in the past. |

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- When are program participants able to learn how to build strength-based partnerships with students and families through strategies such as active listening?
- How often are program participants required to reinforce the value of goal setting by working with faculty and students to develop individual student growth goals?

Program Rating:  Exemplary  Proficient  Developing  Deficient

Evidence to support the rating:
**Standard D. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders who fundamentally believe all students are capable center learning around students’ experiences and position them as co-creators, with emphasis on prioritizing historically marginalized students.**

Program does not address co-creation intentionally or unintentionally. Concepts related to co-creation are not included within course syllabi or assigned readings. | Program addresses concepts of co-creation through learning unrelated to equitable practices. Learning around concepts occurs “accidently” through assignments and other course activities. | Program provides opportunities for participants to learn about co-creation through readings, discussion, and assignments that reinforce authentic connection, collective commitments, soliciting student feedback, and student leadership. | Program reinforces participants’ ability to incorporate student voice into the decision-making process through opportunities to lead school committees that include students as members and participants. |

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- How do program participants practice leading staff to make authentic connections between academic learning and students lived experience, knowledge, and culture?
- When do participants show evidence of their ability to co-create with students, as well as, provide opportunities for students to lead?

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### Standard E. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will support and create opportunities for student advocacy and representation in the content and classroom.

| Program does not address in any form the concept of student advocacy. Program syllabi does not mention the concept in any manner. | Program addresses student advocacy in one course or reading. Program participants have an opportunity through an individual assignment to the equity concept. Course learning inadvertently addresses the value of student advocacy through other learning. | Program emphasizes the value of student advocacy and teaching students to problem-solve, negotiate their needs, and present their perspectives throughout coursework provided to participants by readings, assignments, and course discussion. | Program consistently equips participants with the skill set to lead schools that develop students as independent thinkers through the practice of shifts in systems such as grading practices and disciplinary measures. |

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- How do program participants show evidence of coaching and facilitating students in becoming problem solvers, advocating for themselves, and presenting the perspectives?
- How often must program participants show evidence or ability to guide students into self-advocacy to assist in decision making?
- Which program strategies require participants to show value in communicating high expectations to a school so all are held to the same standard or graduate/learner profile?

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Evidence to support the rating:
Standard F. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will partner with families and communities to build rapport, form collaborative and mutual relationships, and engage in effective cross-cultural communication.

| Program does not show evidence of supporting learning on the topic of family and community collaboration. Participants are not exposed to best practices that are culturally responsive and communicate value to building relationships with families and community outside of the classroom setting. | Program addresses the value of regular interaction with family and community through assignments or discussion related to other topics. Participants are allowed an individual opportunity to explore family and community collaboration on one occasion as identified on a course syllabus. | Program explores the value of family engagement and collaboration through course throughout the length of the program. This exploration occurs during various courses and through readings, assignments, or class discussion. | Program ensures candidates are regularly and actively involved in opportunities to engage parents and community organizations through school-based committee work and other school-based community strategies that reflect practical application of equity-based skills acquired during their courses. |

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- How does the program reinforce the importance of participants regularly communicating with students, families, and communities in preferred methods and language?
- How do program participants show evidence of developing relationships with families and the community outside of the classroom?
- Which program strategies require participants to seek multiple perspectives and contribution from families to best impact a school community?

Program Rating:  Exemplary  Proficient  Developing  Deficient

Evidence to support the rating:
Standard G. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders intentionally embrace student identities and prioritize representation in the curriculum. In turn, students are not only given a chance to identify with the curriculum, they become exposed to other cultures within their schools and both their local and global communities.

| Program does not support opportunities for participants to learn how to assess curriculum, technology, or student-based assessment for equity-based concepts such as bias, social justice, and anti-racism. | Program only exposes participants to resources and strategies for assessing student curriculum for equity-based concepts through isolated readings and individual journal entries. Participants participate in discussion or activities that inadvertently address the equity-based concept. | Program supports learning on how to assess curriculum and instruction considering equity-based concepts; participants are exposed to this learning through multiple courses; participants show their learning of identified concepts through discussion, assignments, and other class-based strategies. | Program offers regular opportunities for participants to assess student curriculum for a wide spectrum of identities that reflect the school population, biases, and other equity-based concepts. Participants are offered opportunities to discuss findings during professional meetings (e.g. faculty meetings, PLC, SIP days). |

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

- How do program participants learn to assess curriculum to ensure marginalized communities are represented appropriately?
- When do program participants learn to assess curriculum to assure it addresses a variety of identities to be inclusive to all?

Program Rating:  Exemplary  Proficient  Developing  Deficient

Evidence to support the rating:
Standard H. Culturally responsive teachers and leaders ensure the diversity of their student population is equally represented within the learning environment. In turn, all members of the student population feel seen, heard, and affirmed. Exceptionally well-versed culturally responsive teachers and leaders provide exposure to underrepresented or misrepresented minority groups, even when they are not present within the population of their school and community at large.

Program does not support opportunities for participants to learn how diversity and inclusivity are essential to school culture or students are exposed to learning through the study of other topics unrelated to equity or equity-based concepts.

Program provides isolated and individual experiences for participants to learn how diversity and inclusivity are essential to school culture or students are exposed to learning through the study of other topics unrelated to equity or equity-based concepts.

Program offers opportunities through multiple courses for participants to learn of the value diversity and inclusivity bring to a school culture. Participants are given readings, assignments, and discussion topics as supporting resources to learning about equity-based concepts.

Program ensures participants are provided an opportunity to practice and reinforce inclusivity within a school building; participants are provided regular opportunities to ensure a school celebrates linguistic and cultural differences are highlighted during a school year.

Guiding questions to support PPP reflection…

● How do program participants show evidence of knowing how to establish an inclusive environment for all students?
● When does the program promote systems of support and strategies that help participants know how to sustain welcoming and inclusive environments in schools?

Program Rating: Exemplary  Proficient  Developing  Deficient

Evidence to support the rating:
Conclusion

Rubrics serve as a resource for universities and colleges to internalize the impact of current processes and structures related to principal preparation program development. The development of the rubric to support reflection on the CRTL standards provides universities and colleges a tool to begin conversation on the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction used to address equity-based learning. In turn, adjustments may be made to principal preparation programs to better equip their program candidates to be equity minded in their future leadership and decision making.
REFERENCES


