Supporting Novice Department Leaders

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SUPPORTING NOVICE DEPARTMENT LEADERS

presented by

Bryan Sarandrea

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of the Requirements for the Degree of
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DEDICATION

Jen, your support and encouragement from the moment I mentioned pursuing this degree gave me the confidence to make it to this point. Thank you for understanding the time commitment needed to make this dream a reality.

Anthony, you have been the greatest teacher I have ever had, and have inspired me to journey outside my comfort zone to see that anything is truly possible. Thank you for tolerating “Daddy’s work time.” Now that the work is over, we’re going to Disney World!

To my grandfather, Peter. When I was in elementary school, you wrote to me to work hard in everything I do. This has been the hardest work I’ve ever done, and your words have been in my head throughout the journey. I know you’re celebrating up there today.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the extent to which novice department leaders believe they have been supported in their roles. Previous research has suggested that department leaders have unique needs due to the lack of clarity in their roles and responsibilities. The literature further reflected the inconsistent support provided to novice administrators, and focused primarily on principals. To examine novice department leaders’ perception of informal and formal supports, The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders questionnaire was distributed to K-12 department leaders and building department chairpersons on Long Island (N = 83), with no more than 4 years of leadership experience. Results show that the perceived availability and effectiveness of support is affected by variables such as gender, teaching responsibilities, the number of teachers under one’s supervision, and mentoring. Furthermore, there is a need for greater availability professional development specifically for department leaders, well-designed mentoring programs, and greater role definition for department leaders. The results of this study can be used to inform the efforts of school districts to support novice department leaders, and coursework in leadership preparation programs. Furthermore, the study provides a framework for future research related to the experiences and novice department leaders and the transition of educators into leadership positions.

Keywords: department leaders, novice, support, professional development, mentoring school administration
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SUPPORTING NOVICE DEPARTMENT LEADERS

CHAPTER ONE:
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Supporting new department leaders is important to the field of education. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1948) explained that the role of department leaders in instructional planning had been studied between 1925 and 1935 yet a lack of clarity persisted. While many districts employ department leaders, the responsibilities of this position have been somewhat undefined (Leithwood, 2016; Peacock & Melville, 2018; Worner & Brown, 1993). The scope of leadership responsibilities varies between district-wide and building-specific. In many cases, the school principal determines the department leader’s responsibilities (Brent et al., 2014; Klar, 2012). Moreover, much of the literature related to department leadership fails to examine the extent to which department leaders have support to carry out their roles.

Purpose of the Study

The topic of this study was novice department leaders’ perceived value of formal and informal professional learning experiences. The type and frequency of support provided to new department leaders may affect the individuals’ perceived value of such support.

Support for aspiring and new administrators includes but is not limited to leadership preparation programs, coaching, and formal and informal mentoring. Often, new leaders are looking for an empathetic mentor who listens well and helps to facilitate reflection. Studies indicated that new administrators benefited from structured, formal mentoring that provides preparation for social and managerial leadership tasks (Augustine-Shaw & Funk, 2013; Connery & Frick, 2021). Following the lessons learned from programs throughout the country, states and
school districts can enact programs to ensure that new department leaders receive appropriate assistance.

**Statement of the Problem**

New educational leaders face many challenges as they transition to management positions. Schmidt et al. (1998) found that the mean diastolic pressure for both new building-based and central office administrators increased significantly. Moreover, there has been a high level of attrition associated with leadership positions. According to a study by National Center for Education Statistics, “Among all public school principals in 2015–16, approximately 82 percent remained at the same school during the following school year (“stayes”), 6 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), and 10 percent left the principalship (“leavers”)” (Goldring & Taie, 2018, p. 3). There was no data available on department leaders’ attrition. Moreover, given the lack of clarity on the responsibilities of the position, and the increase in stress experienced by new administrators, it was essential to ascertain the level of support received by those in department leadership roles.

New York has strict requirements for new administrators to meet in order to complete leadership preparation programs and obtain certification. These requirements are aligned with national leadership standards that emphasize authentic learning opportunities and collaboration. Additionally, new building leaders are required to receive mentoring during their first year in the position; however, district-level leaders, including district-wide department leaders, are not subject to this requirement (New York State Mentoring Standards: An Overview). The mentoring experience is also locally determined. Therefore, there is a lack of uniformity in the level of support afforded to new department leaders.
Overview of the Topic

New administrators typically follow a similar career trajectory: experience as a teacher, guidance counselor, school psychologist, etc., participation in building and district committees and important initiatives, informal leadership roles, educational leadership program, administrative internship, and then the first leadership position. With regards to leadership preparation programs, Bottoms et al. (2003, as cited in Orr, 2011) explained, “…[programs] select experienced teachers with some prior leadership experience, which experts suggest is a critical foundation for developing school leaders” (p. 154). Educational leadership preparation programs typically train aspiring administrators for building administrator roles. Moreover, Orr’s (2011) survey of leadership program graduates from 13 leadership institutions found the perceived effectiveness of the internship to vary. Therefore, school districts often take on the responsibility of supporting teachers in transitioning from the classroom to department leadership roles. However, this is not a phenomenon unique to the twenty-first century.

School administration has evolved over American history. As Rousmaniere (2019) explained, teachers were assigned many administrative roles prior to the emergence of state-supported education systems. Furthermore, the term “administrator” had traditionally been generalized to include school leaders, district-level leaders, and local and state elected officials. Rousmaniere noted, “…more systemic organization of schooling emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as part of the development of centralized, cohesive state governments” (p. 479). With the centralization of schools came the development of an administrative hierarchy with the principal serving as a middle manager and district level leaders managing state educational policies, curriculum, and guidelines.
Historically, department leadership received little attention in publications and studies related to educational administration. In 1930, Koch (1930) described heads of department, who were tasked with teaching and supervisory responsibilities, as “administratively impotent” in decisions related to curriculum, budget, and staff (p. 339). Hipps (1965) discussed the different approaches to departmental supervision, including teachers with supervisory responsibilities, supervisors with subject specialization, and general supervisors. Moreover, he questioned the selection of and responsibilities given to those in department leadership roles, and asserted

Too often they are chosen on the basis of seniority alone, and more capable individuals are passed over….The departmental chairman should be chosen because of his broad understanding of the educative process and because of his grasp of the methods and content of his subject. If he is expected to supervise, he should be trained as a supervisor. (pp. 490-491)

Given the historical ambiguity of the department leader role, this study sought to understand the extent to which school districts provide support to define department leaders’ responsibilities. The questionnaire considered how department leaders’ experiences have changed over the last century. The subject specialization currently expected of department leaders suggested that instructional leadership will be a priority of the role. Therefore, it was anticipated that participants’ responses would reflect a desire to support the expectations for department leaders to serve as instructional leaders and would reflect the department leaders’ perceived potency with respect to curriculum and supervision of staff.
Research Questions

This study sought to understand the extent to which novice department leaders feel supported in their roles and ascertain department leaders’ perceptions of informal and formal district supports. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent were novice department leaders supported with mentoring and professional learning experiences in their first four years?
2. How did novice department leaders perceive the support they received during their first four years?
3. To what extent did this support define the roles and responsibilities of department leaders?

Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypotheses:

\(H_01\): Novice department leaders did not experience support in their first four years in their positions.

\(H_02\): Novice department leaders did not perceive the support they received during their first four years to be beneficial.

\(H_03\): Supports experienced by novice department leaders did not define their roles and responsibilities.

Conceptual Framework

The ability of novice department leaders to find success in their first four years is rooted in adult learning theories. Although there was an absence of research directly linking adult learning to new department leaders’ experiences, there was a correlation between the topics. Specifically, social learning theory, constructivism, and experiential learning were shown to
influence the support provided to and success of novice department leaders (Bandura, 1971; Kegan, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Tyler, 1966).

Bandura’s (1971) social learning theory suggested that much of what humans learn is acquired by observing the actions of others. However, simple exposure to those modeling behaviors does not lead to learning; the level of interpersonal connection will affect what is learned and what is ignored. Bandura explained, “Models who possess interesting and winsome qualities are sought out, whereas those who lack pleasing characteristics tend to be ignored or rejected…” (p. 7). Consequently, one can hypothesize that the effectiveness of mentoring relationships will be dependent on the strength of the relationship between mentor and mentee.

The idea that new ideas are formed and reformed through experience is the central premise of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984, p. 26). Therefore, learning is continuous, and as ideas are integrated one develops his or her understanding of the world. Kolb (1984) describes four essential abilities required for effective learning:

…concrete experience abilities (CE), reflective observation abilities (RO), abstract conceptualization abilities (AC), and active experimentation (AE) abilities. That is, they must be able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE). They must be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives (RO). They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC), and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE). (p. 30)

To learn in this manner, one moves from active involvement to reflective detachment (Kolh, 1984).

Tyler (1966), explaining curriculum development, asserted, “A learning
situation in which the learner can exercise no control in terms of his purposes teaches him to conform or to rebel, but not to master” (p. 26). This objectives-centered model of instruction provides opportunities for the learner to possess intrinsic motivation, receive guidance from an instructor, have opportunities for sequential practice of the behavior, set attainable standards, and have a means to self-assess. Additionally, since students tend to model the behavior of the teacher, Tyler suggested that the effectiveness of teacher modeling is dependent on the usefulness of the demonstrated action.

The constructivist approach of Kegan (2009) focused on developing a capacity for abstract thought. Building on the work of Piaget, whose work focused on child development through adolescence, Kegan suggested that, throughout their lifespan, learners first form meaning and then change their epistemology. Moreover, educators should consider where learners come from, not just where they need to go. Similarly, Knowles’s (1996) theory of andragogy identified self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, and application of knowledge as crucial components of adult learning. Furthermore, andragogy theory suggests that learning is self-directed with the teacher providing opportunities for learners to discover questions and answers for themselves.

**Definition of Terms**

*Building leader:* Principal or Assistant Principal; this position may also include department leadership responsibilities

*Department leader:* an individual who supervises and evaluates instruction for academic departments in a K-12 or building-specific setting

*Formal:* official and/or contractual (Merriam-Webster, n.d.); aligned with state or district policies
Informal: naturally occurring; not official or required (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Mentee: the less experienced employee receiving support from a more experienced person (Joshi & Sikdar, 2015)

Mentor: a senior and more experienced person in the organizational hierarchy (Joshi & Sikdar, 2015)

Novice: an individual who is not experienced in a job or situation (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.); a department leader in the first four years in a department leadership role

Supervisor: an individual who oversees and evaluates a group

Support(s): assistance provided by school districts or outside organizations that contribute to professional growth (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five sections. Chapter I introduced the topic and purpose of the study, and an overview of seminal works related to adult learning. A brief history of the role of department leaders in American schools provided context for the stated research questions. Chapter II included a review of literature on the roles and responsibilities of the department leader, challenges faced by novice leaders, support provided to new leaders, and the relationship between adult learning theory and leadership development. Chapter III reviewed the methodology employed in the study and Chapter IV presented the results. Chapter V will present a discussion of limitations and conclusions related to the study, suggest areas for future research, and present recommendations for school districts to support novice department leaders as they transition to leadership roles.
CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of literature related to the preparation and support of new school administrators. The literature is divided into four sections: standards and requirements for administrators, the needs of new administrators, supports for new administrators, and the roles and responsibilities of department leaders. Studies included in the literature review include those that focus on building and department leaders to provide a comprehensive overview of factors that support the success of new administrators. However, this study focuses on the experiences of department leaders in New York.

National and State Guidance

All educators in New York are held to certification requirements that include experiences at the university level and fieldwork. National and state leadership standards guide the design of administrator preparation and induction. This section will identify components that contribute to the experiences of new administrators. Although there are many examples, only those relevant to related literature and sections will be examined.

Standards

National leadership standards

The Council of Chief State School Officers published the first standards for educational leaders in 1996 and updated them in 2008. Both versions provided frameworks for policy on education leadership in 45 states and the District of Columbia. In 2015, The National Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA) published the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, building on the previous work (Professional standards for educational leaders, n.d.). Using surveys and feedback from focus groups including researchers and more
than 1,000 school and district leaders, the NPBEA identified gaps in the 2008 Standards and designed a framework to guide the day-to-day work of education leaders, and leadership demands of the future, stating, “The Standards focus on accomplished leadership practice to inspire educational leaders to stretch themselves and reach a level of excellence in their practice, no matter where they are in their careers” (p. 3).

These standards allowed school districts to support the development of new leaders and include indicators that emphasized collaboration, reflection and growth:

- **Standard 2B**: Act according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.
- **Standard 2E**: Lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students’ and staff members’ backgrounds and cultures.
- **Standard 4**: Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
- **Standard 6**: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Overall, the standards provide leadership preparation programs and central office leaders the ability to support the careers of administrators from initial preparation, recruitment and hiring, to induction and mentoring, to evaluation and career-long professional learning.

_Leadership preparation standards_
To obtain certification, all administrators in New York State are required to complete coursework in an accredited leadership preparation program. To support institutions in the accreditation process, the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Specialized Professional Association (SPA), sponsored by the NPBEA, designed building and district level program standards. The standards identify three dimensions of leadership preparation (National educational leadership preparation (NELP) program recognition standards - district level):

- Awareness—acquiring concepts, information, definitions, and procedures
- Understanding—interpreting, integrating, and using knowledge and skills
- Application—applying knowledge and skills to new or specific opportunities or problems

In alignment with these dimensions, the standards included suggestions for various activities to prepare aspiring administrators for the responsibilities of the position, such as the completion of a portfolio, evaluation of data and collaboration with colleagues. Furthermore, recommendations in the standards included the completion of a six-month internship under the supervision of a mentor, through which candidates participate in 10 to 15 hours of “coherent, authentic, and sustained opportunities to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills identified in NELP standards 1–7 in ways that approximate the full range of responsibilities required of district-level leaders” (p. 8).

**New York Department of Education Requirements**

For one to become an administrator in New York, one must have completed a leadership preparation program and demonstrated proficiency on examinations. All approved leadership programs in the state are required to design a curriculum aligned to characteristics of effective leadership, such as having a vision for schools that they constantly share and promote, communicating clearly and effectively, collaborating and cooperating with others, and
supporting, developing and nurturing staff (Registration of curricula in teacher education, 2021). Additionally, aspiring administrators must have received experiential opportunities culminating in a minimum 15-week internship period that allows for a variety of meaningful leadership experiences.

In New York, all school building leaders in a public school district with initial certification must receive mentoring in their first year in order to support the transition to the role and to qualify for the Professional certificate (New York State Department of Education, 2022a). The standards utilized to guide the practice emphasized providing a continuum of support and development in the selection of mentors to meet individuals’ and districts’ needs, ensuring that mentors have the skills and knowledge to support the mentees and a process for program evaluation (New York State Department of Education, 2022b).

For administrators, the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS) has established a Mentor Coaching Service that pairs a trained SAANYS Mentor Coach with an individual school leader over a period of ten months. As stated on the SAANYS website, “By sharing successes and challenges with colleagues and a trained mentor coach, mentees build leadership capacity by identifying strengths and delving into concrete day-to-day situations” (School Administrator Association of New York State, 2022). Mentor coaches have been trained to use impactful questioning, active listening, and reflection to support their mentees’ growth. Additionally, school districts have the option to form a coaching circle with a mentor coach acting as a facilitator to three to six mentees to help meet their needs.

Needs of New Administrators

When one obtains his or her first administrative position, one cannot adequately predict the challenges of the job. New leaders must learn their craft and shape their leadership styles
while navigating numerous challenges. In numerous studies, new leaders have voiced concerns about time management (Allen & Weaver, 2013; Arrieta & Ancho, 2020; Barnett et al., 2012; Beam et al. 2016; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Furthermore, many faced difficulties with interpersonal interactions with various stakeholders (Allen & Weaver, 2012; Barnett et al., 2012; Boerema, 2011; Daresh & Playko, 1992). Challenges related to instructional leadership emerged as concerns faced by department leaders and principals alike (Arrieta & Ancho, 2020; Barnett et al., 2012; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Many were unsure of their abilities and sought feedback to validate their efforts and work.

**The Transition to a Leadership Role**

Boerema (2011) examined the needs of new leaders to identify elements of support felt when completing new tasks, ways in which they felt supported in their role as a new principal, and ways in which they believe they would help a new principal during his or her first year of service. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews and appreciative inquiry, Boerema collected the stories of eight new school leaders. The participants spoke about the importance of interpersonal relationships, affective forms of listening, expressing concern for the leaders’ well-being, giving encouragement, affirming their work, and recognizing the uniqueness of each one. Two principals noted the importance of having a mentor who understood the specific needs of the position and organization. Furthermore, Boerema found that new leaders benefited from informal support systems as well. Attending conferences and workshops, and interacting with a network of school administrators contributed to new leaders feeling supported in their first year.

The experiences of new leaders in this study reflect a need for various systems of support for new administrators. Boerema stated:
Leadership development doesn’t end with the conclusion of the licensure or degree program. While programs provide a set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions based on course and internship experiences, the reality of being thrust into a leadership position requires personal support to face the difficult decisions. (p. 564)

Thus, it was suggested it is important for leadership preparation programs to embed opportunities to become familiar with professional organizations that will support the transition to leadership roles.

Similarly, Beam et al. (2016) studied the challenges faced by practicing school administrators during their first three years in a school leadership position. In the study, participants were asked to complete the survey of multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions about their perceptions of administrative challenges faced during the first three years in the position. Additionally, a subgroup of eight volunteers participated in the one-hour focus group. 53 of the 159 participants were presently novice school leaders in their first three years of service while the remaining were beyond three years of service. The stated purposes of the investigation were (1) to increase understanding of role challenges and expectations of novice school leaders and (2) to compare whether the realities or the perceptions of those realities changed over time with longevity.

Overall, new administrators identified time management and the balance of work and personal responsibilities as the second most challenging aspect of their transition to leadership roles, with student discipline being the greatest difficulty. Furthermore, one out of every five novice administrators expressed the belief that support was lacking from superiors, explaining that asking for help would indicate weakness and reflect negatively on their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Credibility with staff, parents and students, and the completion of paperwork
were also cited as issues of particular concern to the novice respondents. In the focus groups, respondents spoke about the importance of informal mentors and their belief that over time the time management challenges improved as they learned to prioritize tasks better. As stated in the study, most respondents felt that leadership programs help to prepare future leaders, but that cannot replicate the experiences one has once on the job.

Comparing novice and experienced leaders’ needs

Differences between the needs of aspiring and veteran leaders were compared by Daresh and Playko (1992), who mailed a questionnaire to 420 aspiring school principals in five universities in three states and to 100 practicing elementary, middle, and secondary principals in five states. The 24 question "Beginning Principals' Critical Skills Survey" asked participants to rate tasks seen as essential to succeeding in the principalship as "Extremely Critical" to "Irrelevant." Overall, aspiring principals placed a priority on technical, managerial skills while practicing principals valued socialization skills. This was consistent with previous literature in which novice administrators suggested they needed special assistance aligned with specific outcomes.

Daresh and Playko’s (1992) data analysis allowed for the identification of most and least critical skills. For aspiring principals, the most critical skills were awareness of issues related to local school law, and how to develop and monitor a building budget. The lowest rated skills were portraying a sense of self-confidence on the job and demonstrating an awareness of what it means to possess organizational power and authority. Conversely, practicing principals’ most critical skills for novice principals were how to determine who is what in a school setting and establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other administrators in the district. The least important skills were management of food service, custodial, secretarial staff, and
establishing a master schedule program for students and staff. Interestingly, Daresh and Playko pointed out that the responses of aspiring and practicing principals differed from the views of superintendents who expressed that they prioritized self-awareness skills when making decisions regarding the continued employment of novice administrators.

For novice administrators, the first three years in the position are a period of constant learning. Barnett et al. (2012) compared the experiences of new leaders in Texas to experiences of those with more time in an administrative role. The study focused on the challenges experienced by beginning and experienced assistant principals, areas of the assistant principalship beginning and experienced principals feel best and least prepared to deal with, and the perceptions of beginning and experienced principals regarding the characteristics needed to be successful on the job. Using semi-structured interviews, they compared the responses of 37 administrators who had been in the job for up to three years and 66 who had served in the role for more than three years.

Analysis of responses identified the four greatest challenges of novice assistant principals to be management of time and tasks (57%), conflicts with teachers and staff (30%), discipline and attendance (24%), and working with dissatisfied parents (24%). Although experienced assistant principals also spoke to these challenges, new administrators acknowledged these issues at a significantly higher percentage. When speaking about difficulties in dealing with conflict, one respondent stated:

I was least prepared to deal with the type of experienced teachers who are the least receptive to new thoughts, research, strategies, or just anything that comes from other individuals and how quick they are to create dissent and go up the ladder and don’t mind skipping a few rungs to get to someone who agrees with them. (Barnett et al., p. 110)
When speaking about skills needed for success, 62% of novice respondents identified leadership skills as the most critical skill needed for success, with communication following as second most at 32%. Moreover, one third of novices (32%) felt least prepared to perform their curricular and instructional duties, and one in five experienced administrators (21%) expressed reservations about fulfilling this role. Given the importance of these skills and responsibilities, it is unsurprising that novice administrators would share concerns in relation to their more experienced peers since they have had fewer opportunities to develop these skills. Consequently, Barnett et al. suggested leadership preparation programs should incorporate opportunities for aspiring school leaders to improve their ability to manage their time and organize priorities, resolve conflicts, and practice instructional leadership.

Professional development needs

Allen and Weaver (2014) studied the professional development needs of assistant principals in Northern Kentucky. Using the 31 functions from ISLLC 2008, the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, they developed a 5-point Likert-scale survey instrument for which they received completed responses from 66 assistant principals, including 20 assistant principals with 1-3 years of service, 25 with 4-6 years of service, 11 with 7-9 years of service, and 10 with 10 or more years of service. Respondents rated the “importance” of each of the 31 functions and their “actual performance or proficiency” on each item. The researchers used the gap or difference between importance and proficiency to identify “professional development needs” (p. 19). As shown in Figure 2.1, Table two of their study indicated that respondents highly valued the “importance” of each of the 31 survey elements related to educational leadership but rated their “actual performance” significantly lower on each item. Consequently, all elements are areas of need for professional growth.
Figure 2.1

Rating of Importance of 31 Administrative Functions and Actual Proficiency (Allen & Weaver, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Element</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Create and implement plans to achieve goals</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Supervise instruction</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Maximize time spent on quality instruction</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Promote understanding, appreciation, &amp; use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, &amp; intellectual resources</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the survey, respondents had the opportunity to “list any knowledge, skills, or topics that you need to further develop before assuming the role of principal” (p. 23). Of 44 responses, the assistant principals identified 13 areas of need:

- School finance/budget (32%)
- Time management/work-life balance (11%)
- Creating a culture of collaboration (11%)
- Instructional leadership and supervision (9%)
- Special education (7%)
- Curriculum (4%)
- Facilities management (4%)
- Data analysis (4%)
- Discipline (4%)
- Technology leadership (2%)
- Scheduling (2%)
- Anticipating emerging trends (2%)
- Community involvement (2%)

In response to these findings, Allen and Weaver (2014) worked with administrators to develop the Northern Kentucky Assistant Principals’ Network (APN) to support local school leaders through a variety of professional development opportunities as they prepare to become principals. They contended that leadership preparation programs and professional organizations could similarly use this data to develop their professional development offerings.
Instructional Leadership Needs

As the above studies suggested, instructional leadership is a challenge for many novice administrators. Wieczorek and Manard (2018) also examined the difficulties faced by novice rural school leaders with regard to instructional leadership. Through semi-structured interviews of six novice principals, they addressed the following research questions: (1) What educational leadership challenges do rural novice public school principals identify as they transition to the principal position and (2) how do rural novice public school principals interpret these challenges to their leadership practices as emerging instructional leaders?

For novice rural principals, time management and balancing professional and personal roles emerged as the greatest challenges. Given the small size of the communities, the principals felt obligated to be present at many school events and were often afraid to say “no.” As a result, they tried to find time for reflection and self-care. Additionally, they maintained that building rapport and trusting relationships with teachers and staff was necessary before the advancement of instructional initiatives. Wieczorek and Manard concluded that leadership development programs need to acknowledge the unique needs of rural principals. Authentic fieldwork centered on these needs would expose and better prepare novice school leaders for the instructional and community needs of the role.

Arrieta and Ancho (2020) analyzed the instructional leadership challenges and struggles of new academic heads in the Philippines. In this school system, most academic heads are promoted based on seniority. Over the course of six months, they observed and interviewed seven new “learning area heads” with less than two years of experience from a private sectarian school in the National Capital Region. They focused on challenges encountered in leading the
teachers, ways in which the leaders handle the leadership challenges and responsibilities and the need for leadership preparation and training.

Overall, the researchers found that the primary challenges were paperwork, culture, processes and procedures, expectations of superiors, and supervision of teachers. Of the seven subjects in the study, not one said that he/she was ready for the new educational role, with five stating that they were reluctant to accept the appointment because they were not prepared for such a role. Furthermore, they reported a lack of orientation to the position and were not prepared for the amount of paperwork. Regarding instructional leadership, the novice leaders shared the different mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors of teachers contributed to challenges of staff management. Moreover, they felt that this would continue to be a challenge as they tried different approaches to effectively deal with staff.

Each of the participants in this study explained that they seek guidance from a mentor, either a former academic head or their immediate supervisor. However, they contend that mentoring should be provided to them before and during the first year in the position. Furthermore, Arrieta and Ancho (2020) recommended a formal orientation process to make the academic heads aware of their duties and responsibilities including the policies and procedures.

It was evident that the transition from teacher to administrator presents multiple challenges. One of the primary difficulties was finding a balance between personal and professional life and effectively managing time at the workplace. During the beginning years as an administrator, instructional leadership and relationships with stakeholders were areas that emerged as areas in need of greater support. Furthermore, the studies reflected novice administrators’ belief that there are gaps in leadership preparation and mentoring that contribute to these challenges.
Department Leaders

The role of the department leader was a topic for which there is a dearth of literature. This section will review literature related to the role of the department leader with respect to the tasks and challenges of the role. As reflected in the literature, the evolution of the role of department leader has been accompanied by a lack of uniformity in terms of the selection and supervision of individuals to serve in these positions. In many cases, the department leader has teaching responsibilities, although this is not a consistent practice in all schools.

The literature related to department leaders conveyed information related to the roles and challenges of individuals in these roles. Many department leaders’ responsibilities are determined by the principal and include a variety of management activities. However, department leaders felt that they possessed a lack of authority related to instructional leadership (Feeney, 2009; Leithwood, 2016; Weller, 2001; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). Moreover, these challenges have been exacerbated by department leaders’ perceived lack of training and resources (Tapala et al., 2020; Weller, 2001; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007).

Responsibilities of Department Leaders

In a 1948 study published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 124 survey responses identified responsibilities and challenges faced by department heads. The responsibilities included providing instructional materials, course content planning, teacher personnel problems, professional growth programs, and school wide participation, with the first two the only tasks chosen by more than one third of the respondents (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1948). Among the issues presented as challenges to the position were a lack of instructional planning time with teachers, negative teachers’ attitudes towards supervision, and insufficient budgetary funds. While much has
changed in education since 1948, the following studies will reveal similar themes in relation to department leadership.

Authority

Weller (2001) referred to department heads as “the most underutilized leadership position” (p. 73). Leaders in this role serve as a link between teachers and administrators, adding to the complexity of the position. In this study, 200 department heads completed a survey with questions derived from literature related to job performance. Over 90 percent of respondents listed “people skills” (interpersonal relations skills), command of subject matter, and good communication skills as most essential to success, while due to lack of time and responsibility less than 30 percent of the respondents mentioned instructional supervision or curriculum development as essential knowledge and skills for success.

For many department leaders in the study, the lack of authority and participation in school wide decision-making contributed to feelings of frustration and less than optimal effectiveness. “I am a glorified paper pusher, information disseminator, and truce-maker. I should be improving instruction and aligning the curriculum. I honestly think my experience in teaching is being wasted, and that’s a shame” (p. 78). Moreover, over 70% of respondents indicated a lack of training for their position. Weller (2001) stated, “Those with any training at all indicated graduate coursework in leadership, staff development, and supervision” (p. 77). Consequently, Weller explained that many department leaders learn on the job or continue to perform the role in the same manner as their predecessors.

Feeney (2009) examined the leadership capacity of five department chairs in a case study of high school administrators. Feeney collected data from observation, interviews, artifacts, role description and then triangulated the data to determine the extent of leadership capacity. The
purpose of the study was to ascertain what department leaders see as their role in the school, how they support teachers in the practice of leadership to improve student learning and the current level of leadership capacity within the school.

In this case study, department chairs managed teaching and administrative responsibilities. As a result, they mentored and oversaw the work of the same colleagues that they taught with. When describing their role, they utilized terms such as liaison, manager, enforcer, supplier, fixer, department representative, advocate, communicator, and mediator. These terms were not reflective of instructional leadership, curriculum or student learning. Feeney (2009) stated, “Department leaders spent a disproportionate amount of time completing tasks and addressing problems instead of engaging in leadership activities that would generate collaboration and mutual learning” (p. 216). In response to this, Feeney suggested four guidelines to build the leadership capacity of department chairs: (1) define roles related to practice not position, (2) focus on learning, (3) define improvement and (4) structure collaboration. This would shift the focus away from management and more toward a culture of learning.

In a study conducted by Klar (2012), department chairs were nominated by teachers in the department and selected by the principal. They also received a stipend and an extra preparatory period while working under the teachers’ contract. By conducting 40 interviews with principals, department chairs and school-based grant coordinators, observing leadership team meetings and retreats and analyzing documents from three urban high schools, Klar examined the extent to which principals developed chairperson leadership capacity to engage in instructional leadership. The study occurred during a two-year Leadership for Learning grant funded by the Wallace Foundation.
Through analysis of the data, Klar (2012) identified five macro strategies employed by principals:

- Cultivate a shared understanding of distributed instructional leadership.
- Provide opportunities to develop instructional leadership capacity.
- Provide opportunities to be instructional leaders.
- Monitor chairs’ needs and adjust required levels of support.
- Demonstrate a long-term commitment to distributed instructional leadership (pp. 184-185).

Feedback was a significant component of the relationship between the principal and the department chair. Based on formal and informal feedback, principals designed individual and team activities that provided the department chairs with information and skill development. Additionally, the principals modeled approaches to distributed leadership and collaborative learning that the department chairs could utilize with teachers and altered the scope and pace of activities as needed. Overall, Klar concluded, “…department chairs demonstrated clear improvements in their abilities to monitor the teaching and learning process and provide support to teachers and students within their departments and across their schools” (p. 192). Meetings with teachers increased in frequency and emphasized discussions about instruction, student achievement, and staff collaboration around developing improvement plans and sharing classroom practices. Furthermore, department chairs became more involved in discussions about instructional practices during leadership team meetings, leading Klar to suggest that these results can be viewed as laying the groundwork to enhance school-wide instructional capacities, enhance classroom instruction and increase academic achievement for all students (p. 193).
Supporting Novice Department Leaders

Instructional Leadership

High school department leaders shared their perspectives on instructional leadership in a study conducted by Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007). In this case study, three department chairs (one science, one mathematics and one social studies) participated in open-ended interviews centered on three questions:

- What does instructional supervision mean to the department chairs?
- What does instructional supervision look like in practice?
- What organizational constraints get in the way of department chairs supervising teachers?

In their responses, the department chairs voiced concerns about conflicting job expectations given the perceived need to satisfy teachers and administrators. To the participants in this study, the development of trusting relationships with teachers was a major component of instructional leadership since they would need to differentiate their approach to supervision, yet they did not receive adequate time to attend to this task. When discussing instructional leadership, they raised concerns about non-instructional responsibilities hindering their ability to spend time in classrooms. These responsibilities included preparing departmental budgets, securing substitute teachers or subbing for absent teachers, securing textbooks for teachers, and completing reports for the principal, keeping an accurate inventory of instructional materials, books and the maintenance of equipment.

The department chairs in this study maintained that their superior, in this case the principal, valued non-instructional tasks as equally important to instructional responsibilities such as data analysis. Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007) stated:

The findings indicate that the department chairs were not prepared for the practice of instructional supervision in that the participants received little instruction to enact the role
of instructional supervisor, and the participants were compelled to create their own roles given the lack of direction by the principal. (p. 44)

They concluded that instructional leadership tasks should be prioritized to the same extent as managerial tasks. Additionally, they suggested that department chairs should be afforded training and resources to support their role as instructional leaders.

Referring to the department chair position as “the most prevalent formal leadership position in secondary schools,” Brent et al. (2014, p. 883) utilized the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators’ (NCATE) “Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership—School Building Leadership” to assess principals’ expectations related to department chair leadership. In this study, a survey was sent to all principals in public junior/senior and senior high schools in New York State, except those in New York City. As they explained,

We asked principals whether the standards for building leaders identify expected chair roles. Because the standards refer to roles in terms of standards, elements, and competencies, we employ their terminology to guide our discussion. We simply asked principals how important it is that chairs demonstrate these competencies, based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not important, 5 = extremely important). (p. 890)

In part, this information was used to consider the implications of principals’ expectations of department chairs on practice, professional development, and training.

The study yielded significant information regarding secondary department chairs’ roles. Overall, “respondents overall placed a high level of importance on chairs’ ability to improve curriculum and instruction generally (Items 1–4) and less importance on specific approaches to program improvement” (pp. 895, 897). With respect to developing and implementing a vision
that promotes student success, in all but one category the mean score of principals’ responses exceeded the very important threshold. The second highest response was demonstrating respect for and engaging in honest interaction with others. Of less importance were involving family members, developing outreach aimed at businesses and service organizations, and using community resources to solve departmental goals. Given these findings, Brent et al. (2014) concluded that principals’ expectations for department chairs include improving teaching and learning as well as resource management.

Leithwood (2016) advanced the discussion of department leaders’ role as instructional leaders in a review of 42 methodologically diverse empirical studies. Of 42 studies reviewed, 29 were qualitative in nature. Using the information from 32 studies and Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and related studies, Leithwood summarized the findings. Of the department head leadership practices identified, all align with the elements of effective leadership reflected in the OLF: (1) Setting Directions, (2) Building Relationships and Developing People, (3) Developing the Organization, (4) Improving the Instructional Program, (5) Securing Accountability, and (6) Personal Leadership Resources. Leithwood concluded,

    Departments, it seems from this evidence, are more effective units for improving teaching and learning than are secondary schools, as a whole, and the contribution of department-head leadership is likely greater than the contribution of principal leadership to the improvement of teaching and learning. (p. 135)

However, it was further suggested that for department leaders to be effective instructional leaders, adequate opportunities to acquire leadership capacity are needed and small administrative and clerical tasks should be de-emphasized.
Much of the literature regarding department leadership did not focus on a specific discipline. However, Peacock and Melville (2018) examined the changing role of the science department chair over the years. They contended that the department leaders have become conflicted between their roles as middle managers and content specialists and explained that science department leaders have generally not received specific job descriptions and have consequently served in a primarily managerial role focusing on “operation of classroom facilities and compliance with relevant policies and procedures” (p. 2). Yet, department leaders are also the link between teachers and building administrators and responsible for instructional leadership. Peacock and Melville (2018) posited, ‘Despite these challenges, teachers, chairs, and administrators, all believe that the chair’s focus should be on instructional improvement” (p. 7). Particularly in science, the pressure for reform created a difficult situation for department leaders. Thus, for science department leaders to provide effective instructional leadership in the reform efforts, they will need to be given the support and resources to advance teaching and learning.

One international study examined the barriers experienced by heads of department in South African secondary schools. Tapala et al. (2020) reported on the experiences of secondary school department leaders referred to as Heads of Department (HODs). After selecting 12 HOD participants through purposive sampling, Tapala et al. employed semi-structured, open-ended questions to collect data. From the interviews, a variety of barriers were identified: lack of time; school culture and working environment; lack of resources and facilities; poor learner discipline, performance and attitude; poor communication; changes in the curriculum; lack of incorporation of technology in teaching and learning and lack of training and development.
Of the HODs interviewed, their most mentioned barrier to instructional leadership was a lack of proper development. Many of them stated they received little or no training other than induction. As Tapala et al. (2020) stated, this makes it difficult for the HODs to carry out their roles:

If HODs are not developed they will not be able to deal with challenges of lack of support and being ignored by principals, they won’t be innovative in dealing with the lack of resources and general organization of the school and their department and attend to competing priorities. The HODs may struggle with the workload and how to distribute work equitably and fairly among their educators, they may also struggle to manage time, find it difficult to adapt to the school culture and deal with poor learner discipline. If not well-developed, HODs may not be able to deal with or communicate properly with stakeholders, struggle to understand the context of school in terms of the socio-economic challenges the school feeder community faces, incorporate new technologies in teaching and also struggle with dealing with the curriculum changes that occur constantly in the country. (p. 13)

Several recommendations were offered to address these concerns. Tapala et al. (2020) suggested that aspiring HODs should be provided with centralized, coherent and deliberate training that makes participants aware of attitudes, skills, and practices needed for instructional leadership. Additionally, it was suggested that this will help them to become aware of the possible pitfalls of the position. Chen and Chang (2006, as cited in Tapala et al. (2020) recommended that any training be integrated and developmental in approach so that the HODs are supported through the various stages of their careers.
Supporting New Administrators

Literature related to the support of administrators ranges from studies about leadership preparation programs to in-service learning opportunities. As Brondyk and Searby (2013) acknowledged, a lack of research-based best practices exists and is primarily small scale and qualitative. This section will focus more on the in-service experiences of novice administrators. Examples of support for administrators will include mentoring, coaching and professional development. Novice administrators have suggested that opportunities to work with a mentor can benefit their transition to the role (Connery & Frick, 2021; Johnston et al., 2016; Honig, 2012; Key et al., 2015; Silver et al., 2009; Smith & Arsenault, 2014). Moreover, benefits to mentoring were perceived to be greater when pairs were compatible (Alsbury & Hackmann 2006; Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh, 1992; Duncan & Stock, 2010).

Silver et al. (2009) acknowledged that new administrators are hesitant to ask for support due to fear of being viewed as ineffective. Their study focused on the experiences of new principals participating in an induction program designed to support graduates of the university’s educational administration program during the first three years of employment. Using a blended coaching approach, the program trained a leadership coach, generally a retired building or district administrator, to work directly with a new administrator. The research questions in this study were (1) How do participants view the university-based program (2) What, if any, characteristics of this program appear to have the greatest influence on the support provided to program participants and (3) How do program participants use the support they are provided in their individual practice. From August 2006 to June 2007, multiple qualitative research strategies including semi-structured interviews, observations, and document collection were utilized to gather data, with 17 program participants interviewed in their coaching pairs.
The findings of the study suggested that the program had a positive effect on the experiences of new administrators. Novice administrators identified multiple benefits of the personalized coaching approach as they were provided with support in both managerial and instructional areas. Silver et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of pairing the coach with the new administrator, explaining, “…the program engaged in a unique matching process that paired new administrators with their leadership coaches based on their leadership philosophy, type and level of school, and the nature of the challenges they faced” (p. 224). New administrators cited specific ways in which the coaches supported them, such as by modeling. One administrator shared, “She did a few walk-throughs with me and then came back next time and offered an example she thought would work” (p. 224). Moreover, coaches explained that they felt the experience helped build problem solving capacity. The authors concluded that coaching is an effective method of supporting new administrators but is context specific. Furthermore, they suggested that additional research is needed on the impact of coaching on leadership practices.

**Availability of Support**

To gain a more clear and comprehensive understanding of the supports that school leaders receive while they are on the job, Johnston et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study with members of the American School Leader Panel. This panel is a randomly selected, nationally representative panel of U.S. public school principals for kindergarten through grade 12 who respond to periodic surveys about policies, practices, and the profession (p. 3). For this study, of approximately 550 school leaders, 175, or 32 percent, responded. The purpose of this study was to investigate not only the prevalence of supervision, mentoring, and professional development for school leaders and also the extent to which this supported instructional leadership. Three research questions were posed: (1) What on-the-job supports for principals are
available across American school districts? (2) To what extent do these supports emphasize principals’ role in teachers’ instruction, and how does that influence principals’ perception of the quality of support they are receiving? (3) How does the quantity, quality, and format of on-the-job support vary for principals in districts of different sizes (p. 2).

Overall, about two-thirds of principals reported they were offered some type of on-the-job support in their district, such as mentoring or professional development. Specifically, 89% of principals indicated that professional development opportunities were available during the school year and summer, with 40% receiving one or more opportunities a month. 45% of principals reported receiving mentoring and 70% found the experience to be valuable. Johnston et al. (2016) explained the impact of this support:

However, importantly, school leaders were also more likely to value the mentoring they received when they thought the mentoring focused more on instructional improvement…. Fifty-six percent of respondents who indicated their mentoring focused on improving teachers’ instruction “to a great extent” also said the mentoring was highly valuable, with the remaining 44 percent saying it was moderately valuable. 4). On the other hand, most school leaders whose mentoring had limited or no focus on instruction reported their mentoring experience as being slightly valuable or not valuable at all. (pp. 7-9)

Furthermore, there was a direct relationship between the size of the district and the availability of support. Given their findings, Johnston et al. (2016) concluded that school leaders valued opportunities to develop their instructional leadership capacity. They suggested that school leaders in smaller districts would benefit from efforts by district leaders and policymakers in small districts to increase the quality and amount of support.
Several studies have focused on the unique needs of new administrators in rural school districts. Duncan and Stock (2010) researched the needs of school leaders in Wyoming. They prepared and mailed a survey to all 274 principals serving the 354 schools in the state and received 68.3%, or 187 surveys, back. Specifically, they sought to determine the extent to which principals in the state received mentoring, assess principals’ perceptions of the programs, and to identify areas in which new and veteran leaders need additional mentoring and coaching. Part one identified demographics, part two assessed the existence and importance of mentoring, and part three utilized a Likert scale to rate the need for mentoring on a selection of topics separated into organizational socialization and professional socialization.

Overall, 6% of principals reported having received formal mentoring, 62% of principals indicated that they received no formal mentoring, and 29% received what they described as informal mentoring through their collegial networks. Across all groups, all but the leaders with 0-3 years of experience reported having no mentor at a rate of 70% or higher. In Table 5 of the article, they identified the Likert scale responses indicating the four most important areas for support by experience. Interestingly, all groups identified difficult faculty and data-driven decision making among the top four responses. For the 31 novice administrators in the study, the four areas in need of support in order of importance were data-driven decisions, difficult faculty, difficult parents, and legal issues and budget and finance (p. 304). While costs and time can be potential obstacles to designing mentoring programs, Duncan and Stock (2010) concluded:

Rather than setting up formal mentoring programs, which can be time consuming and expensive and depend on careful matching of mentor to mentee, districts can promote principal collaboration and collegiality to form informal support networks. Such
networks require creating a district climate of trust and a culture that focuses on resource sharing rather than interschool competition. (p. 307).

Furthermore, they recommended eschewing the one-day professional development model in favor of forming partnerships with surrounding districts to pool expertise and provide ongoing coaching.

**Mentoring**

A mentoring relationship has the potential to enhance the professional capacity of both mentor and mentee. In a seminal work on mentoring, Kram (1983) identified the primary tasks of early and middle adulthood and discussed the four stages of the mentoring relationship. The study consisted of a sequence of two-hour interviews in which 18 pairs of younger and older managers were asked about their relationships. Kram identified psychosocial functions such as role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship, as ways in which mentors contribute to the leadership development of their mentees. The four distinct phases of the mentoring relationship were described as follows:

- an initiation phase, during which time the relationship is started;
- a cultivation phase, during which time the range of functions provided expands to maximum;
- a separation phase, during which time the established nature of the relationship is substantially altered by structural changes in the organizational context and/or by psychological changes within one or both individuals;
- a redefinition phase, during which time the relationship evolves a new form that is significantly different from the past, or the relationship ends entirely. (p. 614)
For new leaders, during the initiation phase the mentor is admired and viewed as someone who will support and guide their development. As the new leader gains competence, this view of the mentor is confirmed. Moreover, both participants develop positive expectations about the relationship. This sets the stage for cultivation, referred to as the peak of the mentor relationship. Kram (1983) explained, “...the young manager not only acquires critical technical skills and learns the ropes of organizational life, but s/he also has the opportunity to experience confirmation and support for whom s/he is becoming” (p. 617). Furthermore, it was suggested that the senior manager, or mentor, benefits from the personal satisfaction gained from enhancing the capacity of the young manager and influencing the entire organization.

Most of the literature regarding school administrator mentoring focuses on the first three years in the role, what Kram would refer to as the initiation and cultivation phases. Given the complexity and challenges of the position, schools experience a great deal of turnover, and many new administrators have little or no experience (Daresh, 1992). In conjunction with the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Northern Colorado, Daresh worked with local school districts to develop mentoring programs for new administrators and identified five domains related to effective mentoring programs: (1) orientation to mentoring - goal is to help people succeed as leaders, (2) instructional leadership, (3) human relations skills, (4) mentor process skills and (5) local implementation issues (pp. 4-5). Additionally, it was suggested that more experienced administrators be assigned to provide ongoing support to new administrators, with a key element being that mentors receive sufficient support and training in their responsibilities.

*Importance of mentor and mentee relationship*
Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) conducted a literature review of in service and preservice mentoring studies and explained that the mentoring relationship increases the capacity of veteran and new administrators. However, the success of a mentoring relationship requires committed program participants. They described effective mentors as those who give mentees responsibilities to perform tasks without fear of reproach, provide constructive guidance and communicate honestly and openly about expectations. Thus, forced relationships failed to provide the appropriate or individualized support required.

In 2002, Iowa enacted the Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction (IAMI) program, mid-year, for first-year superintendents and principals. The program trained and paired mentors to work with novice administrators, developed training materials and allowed for formative assessment by the participants. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) utilized a survey to examine the extent to which the IAMI affected the experiences of new administrators. Each participant received a survey via email titled Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction Program Assessment in which they rated the benefits of seven mentoring activities on a four-point scale and included narrative responses to open-ended questions. In 2003, 43 of 62 participants returned their surveys, and in 2004 89 of 111 participants responded, representing a 69% and 80% return rate, respectively.

Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) contended, “...the most important component of mentoring programs is the development of a supportive mentor-protege relationship, with an emphasis on role socialization into the progression, reflective conversation, and role clarification…” (p. 183). The survey results reflected that participants felt the project met their expectations with a mean score of 3.20 out of 4 (4 = met all expectations). Overall, most respondents found contact with their partners to be the most beneficial component of the
program. Written responses indicated that both partners felt the time to meet was most critical, with proteges requesting more meetings. Mentors and proteges also agreed on the four most valued points: mentors’ availability to listen, use of reflective questions, the establishment of informal networks, and providing encouragement, sympathy and support. Specific skill-building like budgeting, evaluating staff and instructional leadership did not show up as important outcomes of the program. Among the components rated as least beneficial were professional growth plans and the website survival guide. Moreover, they suggest several recommendations for the design and implementation of formal mentoring programs, including beginning programs and establishing pairs prior to the onset of the year, providing joint training, and requiring socialization activities but separate skill training, encouraging professional reflection, and selecting pairs that account for proximity, shared style of thinking and gender (p. 184). Finally, the authors explained that the IAMI expanded to include curriculum coordinators in year two and that they rated the program as meeting expectations with a mean of 4.0.

Clayton et al. (2013) examined the effects of mentoring on mentors and mentees. Given the lack of research on the mentoring of administrators in rural school districts, they sought to understand the implementation, challenges and benefits of the relationship. To conduct the study, the authors utilized participants from the Futures Program, an accelerated leadership program that included a three-semester internship. During year two of the program, seven mentees and four mentors agreed to engage in 60 minute semi-structured interviews. Additionally, documents, researcher notes, coursework and internship projects were utilized for data collection.

Through analysis of the data, Clayton et al. (2013) categorized information into themes of time pressures of accountability and development and sustainability of the mentor/mentee relationship. They cited conflicting accountability priorities, such as assessment preparation, and
benefits of meaningful opportunities for interaction as time pressures. Thus, they suggested that district leadership did not prioritize opportunities for mentoring to be used as a means to improve student achievement.

With regard to the mentor and mentee relationship, the authors discussed three important trends:

First, careful attention to the pairing process between mentors and mentees impacted the success of the working relationship; second, the use of a tool…to facilitate conversations, particularly at the initiation of the interaction, was effective; and third, both mentors and mentees profited from reflecting on and comparing their leadership styles, based on their interactions. (p. 86)

Mentees and mentors spoke about the benefits of being paired with individuals with similar backgrounds and leadership styles. Furthermore, they noted the increase in confidence related to interactions that helped them think differently about instructional leadership and encouraged them to try new ideas.

A study by Augustine-Shaw and Funk (2013) examined a mentoring program designed by the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI). The program was developed in response to a perceived gap in available support for new superintendents in a state where districts are located hours away from each other. The mentoring involved veteran superintendents meeting face-to-face with novice leaders sharing knowledge and skills and opportunities for phone conversations. Mentors received training, provided new administrators with monthly checklists, attended and provided feedback on two performance demonstrations in the academic year.
For this study, former mentees/mentors responded to a questionnaire that also included five open ended questions. Perceptions from program participants were analyzed for common themes. Augustine-Shaw and Funk (2013) shared:

Increasing confidence through these experiences became a positive theme in mentee/mentor responses. Additional themes emerged around a safe and trusting environment, face-to-face mentoring, reflective practice, and networking. Mentees overwhelmingly noted the helpfulness of face-to-face mentoring as impacting their practice, while mentors consistently affirmed the value of professional training to develop deeper coaching skills. (pp. 22-23)

Augustine-Shaw and Funk repeatedly identified face-to-face mentoring as an essential component to developing the mentor-mentee relationship and building leadership capacity. Furthermore, mentees valued the opportunities to participate in reflective dialogue and networking activities. Specifically, networking “… affirmed that other first year executives were ‘going through some of the same struggles’” (p. 24). Augustine-Shaw and Funk concluded that the KELI should continue to build on its success by ensuring that new superintendents have access to well-trained mentors, the ability to respond to changing needs, and access to current research.

Smith and Arsenault (2014) examined the experiences of novice administrators in a specific discipline, special education. In line with the work of Kram, they focused on role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship, the psychosocial aspects of the mentoring relationship found to enhance the protégé’s sense of professional competence, identity, and effectiveness. Smith and Arsenault posed two research questions:
• Which career and psychosocial functions are present, and how are they manifested in the relationships of beginning special education administrators and their mentors?

• What is the perceived value of the functions to mentors and protégés in the career development of beginning special education administrators?

In the study, 14 mentoring dyads of special education administrators participated in semi-structured interviews about their relationship; questions were predetermined, and participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Using the qualitative data, a content analysis was conducted to produce narrative summaries about each of the nine psychosocial functions; including whether, how, and how often each function was manifested in the relationship (p. 467).

In reviewing the data, Smith and Arsenault (2014) found that protégés and mentors both ranked role modeling and frequency/intensity as the two most important aspects of mentoring affecting career development. Role modeling was tied for first in importance to career development with coaching, and mentors ranked it second, while protégés ranked frequency/intensity first and mentors ranked it second. Coaching, a career function, and role modeling, a psychosocial function, were the only two functions present in all 14 relationships. Additionally, both agreed that sponsorship and friendship were the least important to protégé development (p. 475). Smith and Arsenault concluded that mentoring positively impacted the development of the protégés in this study. However, they suggested that the training of the dyads may increase the benefits of the relationship and attract more mentors to participate in the program.

Connery and Frick (2021) studied the impact Missouri Administrator Mentoring Program and their research question, “What meaning making is native to participants in a formal
mentoring program, and how does this contribute to the well-being of novice principals” (p. 2)? Seven participants, four mentees and three veteran principals serving as mentors volunteered to participate in an in-depth interview process. Connery and Frick (2021) analyzed the transcripts to identify themes related to the perceived learning benefits and the well-being of the participants.

Several themes emerged from the interviews. It was reported that mentees learned to communicate more effectively with stakeholders; this was an area that they initially identified as a challenge. Furthermore, mentees reported benefits to time management. Additionally, Connery and Frick (2021) shared, “Mentees developed a better understanding of their new role as an administrator and believed they learned to be better leaders. Participants also reported learning situational problem solving involving policy and procedure” (p. 13). Specifically, mentees valued the opportunity to participate in authentic learning opportunities such as teacher observations and classroom walkthroughs which led to reflective discussion and new learning as the mentees implemented new ideas. They also valued having a mentor as a sounding board who could understand the challenges that they were facing. Connery and Frick asserted that the support provided to new administrators is important to keeping and developing staff. Furthermore, they concluded that university preparation programs and local school districts can close gaps in preparation between providing a theoretical foundation of school leadership and designing experiences that prepare aspiring leaders for the day-to-day responsibilities of the position.

Central Office Experiences

The literature on supporting new leaders also provided insight into the roles of Assistant Superintendents and Superintendents in this area. Honig (2012) studied the work practices of executive-level central office staff in three districts dedicated to providing instructional
leadership support to principals. Utilizing data from 283 interviews, approximately 265 observation hours and 200 documents, Honig examined two research questions: (1) To what extent are central office administrators overcoming such trends and supporting principals’ development as instructional leaders? (2) What conditions help or hinder them in the process? The study focused on relationships between principals and central office staff who worked with principals, referred to in the study as Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs).

Honig (2012) found, “With remarkable consistency, respondents reported that the ILDs’ main charge was to help an assigned group of principals strengthen their ‘instructional leadership’” (p. 744). Specific areas of support included joint work, differentiation, modeling, tools and brokering. Honig described effective actions for each area. At the conclusion of meetings, ILDs identified the next steps for principals to focus on to improve instruction and attempted to differentiate their approach based on the needs of individual principals. Some ILDs modeled behaviors such as delivering evaluation results and having challenging conversations with staff, and many utilized rubrics and self-evaluation tools to promote reflection. The goal was for principals to see the ILDs as supportive rather than directive and evaluative. Honig suggested that school districts should consider the ability to support principals’ growth as instructional leaders as a prerequisite for hiring ILDs. Ultimately, Honig posited that this investment in supporting improvements in principals’ instructional leadership practice can strengthen teaching practice and student learning.

A study by Key et al. (2015) also looked at Assistant Superintendents and mentoring. In this study, they surveyed 149 assistant superintendents in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, New York and Westchester County, New York, and examined the research question, “Is there a mean difference between mentor and no mentor groups in the variables Emotional
Intelligence, Personal and Professional Challenges and Desire to become a Superintendent?” The survey included 68 closed-ended items and one open-ended question.

The results indicated that assistant superintendents with mentors are more willing to take on the personal and professional challenges of the superintendent role such as understanding the lack of personal time. Additionally, assistant superintendents who had a mentor were more likely to desire to lead a district, while 30% of those without mentors lacked interest in the superintendency. Assistant superintendents indicated that a mentor had little or no importance on emotional intelligence. The authors concluded, “The findings of this research suggest that assistant superintendents are the main candidates for the position of superintendent because they work directly with the superintendent and have access to their knowledge” (p. 14). Therefore, having a superintendent as a mentor can greatly impact the career aspirations of assistant superintendents.

**Leadership preparation programs**

Daresh and Playko (1992) suggested that aspiring administrators need adequate support to develop their leadership vision, yet leadership development programs tend to emphasize managerial tasks. Consequently, they maintained that mentoring and coaching should be included in these programs, as mentoring to increase self-awareness and socialization for new leaders would be more beneficial than focusing on tasks that could be completed by clerical staff.

Clayton et al. (2013) presented suggestions for ways in which school districts and administrator preparation programs can better design mentoring experiences to maximize the benefits. They maintained that partnerships between university programs and district leadership should consider methods to develop meaningful mentoring projects and employ a global view to articulate goals related to student achievement. Specifically, they suggested conducting a needs
assessment to determine ways in which aspiring leaders can support the district’s vision and be ready to assume formal leadership roles upon completion of the program.

**Adult Learning**

Trotter (2006), discussed the effects of adult learning theories and professional development. Citing Gibb’s functional theory of adult learning, Trotter explained the importance of reliance on internal rather than external standards, collaboration, and viewing things from multiple perspectives as essential to growth. Moreover, meaningful learning occurs best when experiences are experience-centered. Trotter further explained that Oja identified four essential components to adult learning: (1) use of concrete experiences (2) continuously available supervision and advising, (3) encouragement of adults to take on new and complex roles, and (4) the use of support and feedback when implementing new techniques (p. 12).

In discussing adult learning, Allen (2007) explained how behaviorism, cognitivism, social learning, and constructivism influenced leadership development. Behaviorists believe that what is being learned should be reinforced quickly and undesirable performance should be corrected immediately. Thus, Allen suggested that aspiring leaders should experience authentic learning opportunities that include coaching or immediate feedback; these activities should be linked to learners’ goals and desired outcomes such as a promotion or degree. Allen discussed cognitivists’ belief in experience-centered instruction as a means for learners to develop new insights and ways of understanding the world around them. Bruner (as cited in Allen, 2007) described three stages of learning: (1) the learner acquires new information that refines what was previously known, (2) transformation, and (3) evaluation. To support leadership development from this perspective, Allen maintained educators should develop case studies that encourage
learners to move through complex problem-solving activities and challenge them to think in new ways.

Allen (2007) described the role of modeling as it pertains to social learning theory. Moreover, what one observes in one environment may not translate to another. Allen explained the theory in relation to leadership development, “Proponents of social learning assert that teachers or leaders who do not model the desired behavior undermine efforts to effect lasting change” (p. 32). Consequently, it was posited that congruence between leadership development and the corresponding culture is highly important. When considering the relationship between constructivism and adult learning, Allen discussed Mezirow’s work on transformative learning, and the importance of critical reflection as a means to better understand policies, procedures, and cultural norms of the organization. Allen concluded:

A leadership development program that incorporates the thinking of behaviorists, cognitivists, social learning theorists and developmentalists will not only involve learners at a higher level, it will help architects of leadership development programming design and implement interventions and environments more conducive to learning. (p. 36)

**Transformative learning**

*Transformative learning and self-direction*

The role of new administrator as a learner affects leadership development. Mezirow (1997) posited that transformative learning empowers the individual to become an autonomous, socially responsible thinker as opposed to responding to the judgments of others. Mezirow explained, “When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (p.
5). Furthermore, Mezirow explained that as one enters adulthood, learning tasks shift to allow one to become

(1) more aware and critical in assessing assumptions—both those of others and those governing one’s own beliefs, values, judgments, and feelings; (2) more aware of and better able to recognize frames of reference and paradigms (collective frames of reference) and to imagine alternatives; and (3) more responsible and effective at working with others to collectively assess reasons, pose and solve problems, and arrive at a tentative best judgment regarding contested beliefs. (p. 9)

To facilitate transformative learning, Mezirow (1997) suggested that instructional materials reflect real-life experiences and learners are provided with opportunities to collaboratively solve and redefine problems through examination, analysis and reflection.

Furthermore, Mezirow (1997) discussed the importance of discourse and critical reflection, as transformative learning will not occur if one’s learning fits comfortably in existing frames of reference. Educators, therefore, must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions. Mezirow described the conditions that facilitate effective discourse:

Effective discourse depends on how well the educator can create a situation in which those participating have full information; are free from coercion; have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments); become critically reflective of assumptions; are empathic and open to other perspectives; are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view; and can make a tentative best judgment to guide action. (p. 10)
Thus, by fostering self-direction, educators will have prepared adult learners to become productive and responsible workers for the twenty-first century.

*Professional learning communities*

Kelly (2017) examined the relationship between transformative and professional learning. Interviews with eight teachers over two years provided insight into the extent to which belonging to a professional learning community (PLC) led to transformative learning. All participants were elementary classroom teachers or literacy intervention teachers with five to thirty years of experience in a rural school district in western Canada. The PLC was designed to support educators involved in the Changing Results for Young Readers initiative. Using a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and observational field notes, Kelly captured the participants’ evolving knowledge, experiences or feelings connected to participation in the PLC.

Participants conveyed changes in assumptions, expectations, values, and beliefs resulting from their experience in the PLC. Kelly (2017) explained, “…participants experienced transformative learning when they encountered diverse perspectives through dialoging with colleagues about issues in education that were personally meaningful and important to their role as a teacher and their practice…” (p. 9). Over time, teachers’ hesitancy to share their experiences was replaced by collective comfort and a sense of community. Additionally, teachers began to view their colleagues in the PLC as experts with whom they began to collaborate. A sense of collective efficacy led to the questioning or affirmation of practices as they related to students’ learning. Kelly also discussed the importance of critical reflection and suggested, “Perhaps constant movement is needed between learning collectively and reflecting individually – placing
equal importance on each act—in order to truly merge frames of references and experience transformational learning” (p. 12).

Popper and Mayseless (2007) presented a framework for leadership development with an emphasis on personalized and socialized leaders. In a meta-analysis based on 222 correlations from 73 samples, they described major developmental precursors of leadership to demonstrate how the concepts presented may be translated into empirical research (p. 5). Popper and Mayseless identified three of the Big Five Model personality attributes, neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience as significantly related to leadership development. Additionally, they found that leaders with an internal locus of control and a greater sense of self-efficacy are better suited to leadership roles than those who do not believe in their abilities. Feelings of self-efficacy were linked to experiential learning opportunities. Moreover, they explained, “A recent study based on interview data and involving five organizations sought to understand the characteristics of an ideal mentor and models. The results emphasized the importance of senior leaders’ exposure to dimensions such as listening and communication skills, patience, honesty, and trustworthiness” (p. 28).

**Constructivism**

Cox’s (2015) examination of adult learning addressed the extent to which constructivism affects coaching in the work setting. Cox explained how Knowles’s theory of andragogy, which posits that new learning is built on previous understanding, and Mezirow’s ideas on transformative learning influenced the experiences of two individuals who were subject to coaching. Cox suggested that coaches’ utilization of nonjudgmental listening and open questioning driven by the learner’s agenda creates a safe environment that stimulates new learning.
Given the emphasis on leadership development as a collaborative process involving all stakeholders, Hotho and Dowling (2010) suggested a shift towards a socio-constructivist perspective to support leadership development. Hotho and Dowling studied the link between adult learning and leadership development programs. Their explorative study included a review of relevant literature and use of a case study to collect qualitative data. 24 participants in a leadership development programme (LDP) took part in the focus groups and 8 participated in follow up interviews after the focus group discussions. Hotho and Dowling explained, “The programme aimed to develop in particular self awareness and emotional intelligence; strategic leadership behaviours; whole systems approaches to working across boundaries; creativity and innovation; ability to enact organizational development and change and partnership working” (p. 3). Three research questions were posed: (1) How did participants differ in their understanding of leadership as a consequence of having undertaken the programme? (2) How did participants differ in their understanding of their own role as leaders as a consequence of the programme? (3) How did participants differ in the way they see their own leadership development progressing in the future?

Data suggested that notions of self-awareness, strategic leadership behaviors, innovation and change barriers, organizational contexts and personal/professional contexts affected participants’ reflection on their experiences. The eight interview participants were separated into three categories based on confidence and perceived ability to impact the organization: three senior managers, referred to as champions, who were confident in their ability to act, deliver on key issues and make a difference, two middle managers, implementors, who carried out duties and felt little ability to make a difference, and three junior managers, optimists, who were evolving into their roles and felt they would be able to act in decisive ways as their careers
progressed. Optimists placed great value on experiential, collaborative learning opportunities that helped to develop a support system and cope with job realities. Additionally, optimists spoke of the personal growth and related leadership development afforded by the leadership program.

**Critical Social Theory**

Duncan (2011) examined the role of critical social theory on administrator preparation and explained

Critical social theory has its roots in the works of Paulo Freire (Leonardo, 2004) and focuses on facilitating learners to see connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they exist. When educators reflect on the ways in which they prefer to learn and what they avoid, and challenge their own biases, they begin ‘consciously to confront, their often unconscious, long-held beliefs about learner success and failure.’ (p. 68)

This case study included aspiring principals in an online graduate level, preparation course that focused on curriculum, instruction and assessment. As part of the course, participants completed and posted e-journal entries and online discussion postings. Duncan utilized this data, as well as emails and transcripts of one-hour interviews with each participant, to ascertain the extent to which online dialogue challenged their assumptions about learning and teaching and led to new understandings of self and about the students they taught (p. 67).

From the data collected, Duncan (2011) identified several themes. All participants were given the opportunity to redo their submissions based on the instructor’s feedback. This led to feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability, yet also provided potential for further growth. Furthermore, participants felt that the instructor’s use of engaging texts facilitated relevant and productive discussions on practice. Some participants utilized the e-journal to reflect, question,
re-examine and rework their thoughts. Duncan concluded, “Resituating themselves in a learner role and examining their own vulnerability allowed participants to critically revisit who they were as educators, as well as question current educational practices through a learner’s lens” (p. 70) and suggested that university teachers provide opportunities for a reflection and evaluation while mixing theory with practical application.

**High Quality Connections**

Dutton and Heaphy (2003) discussed the ways in which High Quality Connections (HQC) can influence adult learning. Those engaged in HQCs sense a feeling of vitality, a heightened sense of positive regard, and mutuality. Thus, they feel safe displaying their emotions and exhibit creativity and action when working in teams. Dutton and Heaphy explained that HQCs such as mentoring lead to psychological growth due to mutually empathetic interactions. Knowledge is absorbed faster and more completely and allows individuals, consequently, to establish a learning environment for others.

**Chapter Synthesis**

The literature reviewed in this section highlighted the challenges faced by novice administrators as they transitioned to leadership roles. Furthermore, studies suggested that department leaders have unique needs due to the lack of clarity of their roles and responsibilities. This has shown to be true in New York, as the requirements for building leaders such as assistant principals and principals have been clearly defined, as opposed to department leadership positions, for which there have been fewer defined requirements. The literature further reflects the inconsistent amount of support provided to novice administrators. Notably, these studies have also focused almost exclusively on support provided to building leadership positions.
Studies related to adult learning conveyed ways in which educators can effectively be prepared to assume administrative responsibilities. In the literature reviewed, there appears to be a correlation between support strategies utilized by school districts and leadership preparation programs perceived as effective by novice administrators and adult learning theory. For example, modeling and experiential learning yielded positive benefits in both areas.

The methodology presented in Chapter III seeks to determine the challenges identified by novice department leaders and the extent to which they are receiving support in their roles. Additionally, the researcher will examine the novice department leaders’ perceived benefits of the support they are receiving. Finally, the researcher will investigate the relationship between the type of support provided and the roles and responsibilities of the department leaders.
CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

This mixed-methods study addressed the availability of support for novice department leaders and novice department leaders’ perception of the effectiveness of informal and formal support. The following research questions were examined: (1) To what extent were novice department leaders supported in their first three years? (2) How did novice department leaders perceive the support they received during their first three years? (3) To what extent did these supports define the roles and responsibilities of department leaders?

**Mixed-Methods Study**

A convergent methods design with a questionnaire variant was used. This is a type of design that includes open-ended and closed questions on a questionnaire and the open-ended questions are utilized to explain the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to gain an understanding of the reasons why certain supports are perceived to be most and least beneficial. Furthermore, respondents were provided with an opportunity to share additional information related to their experiences. Mixed-methods studies have become more prevalent in recent years (McKim, 2017; Migiro & Magangi, 2011). McKim (2017) shared that based on a ProQuest search, there were three mixed-methods dissertations and theses between 1980 and 1984 and 2,538 between 2010 and 2013. The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data provide researchers with an ability to develop a clearer understanding of the multiple realities presented by each method (Bryanton & Weeks, 2014). For this study, the mixed-methods approach yielded data to draw more comprehensive conclusions.
Research Design

Sample

The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders questionnaire (see Appendix B) was created by the researcher through Survey Monkey and distributed to novice department leaders in public school districts on Long Island, a suburb in the northeastern region of the United States. The sample included 83 K-12 department leaders and building department chairpersons with no more than four years of department leadership experience. This sample included individuals overseeing any subjects for which teacher certification is required. However, this did not include assistant principals, assistant superintendents, or district superintendents who assume department leadership responsibilities. Questionnaires were distributed online through email in the spring of 2023 and were available for completion for a period of six weeks. The goal was to obtain a sample of at least 30 to 50 subjects, which has been recommended by Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) as the minimum. By working with local leadership organizations to facilitate the emailing of the questionnaire to members, the sample exceeded this goal; 116 questionnaires were reviewed, and 83 were fully completed and utilized for the data analysis.

Instrument

In this study, quantitative data were used to test the idea that providing formal and informal support to novice department leaders positively influenced the department leaders’ perceived benefits of this support. The responses to open ended questions explored the reasons why respondents assigned a value of “1” or “5” on the Likert scale for specific items. A Likert scale is utilized to ascertain respondents’ attitudes about clear, concise, straight-forward statements (Likert, 1932). In this study, the following labels were utilized: 1 = Strongly
Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. This information was provided to respondents in the introduction to the questionnaire.

The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders questionnaire was designed in alignment with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), as well as questions modified with permission via email from previous studies by Johnston et al. (2016) and Wilson and Clayton (2020). Johnston et al. administered the American School Leader Panel (ASLP) survey instrument to principals to gain a better understanding of the availability and effectiveness of district provided support to school building leaders. Wilson and Clayton’s study included semi-structured interviews with novice assistant principals to ascertain perceptions of professional learning experiences. To design this questionnaire, interview questions were reformatted as closed questions. From each study, questions were modified to study department leaders as opposed to building leaders.

**Questionnaire Contents**

Three sections of the questionnaire were divided as follows: demographics, experiences of novice department leaders, and optional reflection questions. Demographic questions gathered information related to departments and grades under the respondents’ supervision, age, gender, months of administrative experience, teaching responsibilities, direct supervisor, and size of the school district. Responses to these questions identified subgroups for further analysis. Section two was comprised of twenty-two statements of which six required a yes or no response and fifteen were measured with Likert scale responses. The first six statements asked respondents to identify the availability of support. The next subset of seven statements sought to ascertain perceived effectiveness of support. The third subset of six statements addressed ways in which professional learning experiences define the roles of department leaders in alignment with
the domains of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. The final set of three closed-ended questions examined the availability and effectiveness of support provided by professional organizations such as the New York State Council for the Social Studies and the New York State English Council. Two open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to expand on responses to closed-ended questions. Respondents were asked to elaborate on any statements rated “Strongly Agree” or “Strongly Disagree.” Finally, four optional open-ended questions provided respondents with an opportunity to share information related to specific accomplishments, challenges, and preparation pertaining to their position.

**Pilot Study**

In February 2023, The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders Questionnaire was administered to six volunteer participants via Survey Monkey as a pilot. All participants were currently working as department leaders. Participants completed the questionnaire and provided feedback about the completion time, and the nature of the directions and questions; one respondent declined to answer the questions but provided feedback about the questions and directions. Three of the six participants suggested that the six questions regarding the availability of support would be easier to answer with choices of yes or no as opposed to the Likert scale. Additionally, two participants suggested changes to the questions about areas of growth. This feedback was utilized to modify the questionnaire for the version that was submitted to the Institutional Review Board.

**Institutional Review Board**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for evaluating risks and benefits associated with human participant research (Eissenberg et al., 2014). Prior to distribution to participants, the questionnaire was submitted for approval to the Long Island University IRB.
Following approval, the questionnaire was shared with individuals willing to distribute the instrument and individuals willing to participate in the study. Assurances regarding the anonymity of subjects and their school districts were shared in all communications. Furthermore, participants were informed that risks associated with participation in this study were no greater than those encountered in daily life, and that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to answer. The approved IRB protocol was adhered to throughout the study.

**Data Analysis**

After obtaining the results of the questionnaire, data were analyzed to draw conclusions about the availability and perceived effectiveness of support provided to novice department leaders. Answers to demographics questions were reviewed to identify the frequency of each subgroup represented by the respondents. Data were analyzed to determine the frequency of values assigned by respondents to statements in each subset. Open-ended questions were analyzed to identify the patterns and themes that emerged from the data related to most and least desired supports and information shared about experiences as novice department leaders.

As part of the mixed-methods study, quantitative data analysis was included in the research design. Lester et al. (2014) explained, “…the Alpha coefficient provides a means of determining the extent to which any scale or instrument contains true measurement” (p. 61). In this study, the Alpha Coefficient was computed to measure the internal consistency of the items in the Likert scale. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) indicates the degree of relationship between two variables (Lester et al., 2014). In this study, the Pearson $r$ measured the strength of the relationship between the factors tested by the instrument. As a result, the analysis of this data reflected the extent to which a relationship existed between each
subgroup and each questionnaire statement, such as between the size of the school district and the availability of district provided mentoring.

To measure a particular trait, Boone Jr. and Boone (2012) asserted that means and standard deviations should be utilized to describe the scale. Following the receipt of completed questionnaires, responses to the Likert scale items were analyzed to identify the values assigned to each of the statements. The use of SPSS allowed for the analysis of means and standard deviations. This data reflected the novice department leaders’ perception of professional learning supports. Independent samples t-tests showed differences among the averages for each question based on groups and the statistical significance of this data.

To analyze qualitative data, responses to open-ended questions were reviewed and a coding system was created to organize and document themes and patterns (Lester et al., 2014). This information was summarized, and specific examples were identified to further emphasize the findings. Triangulation refers to the “cross-checking of data using multiple data sources or multiple data-collection procedures” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2018, p. G-9). As part of the data analysis in this study, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data provided a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

**Limitations**

While this study provided insight into the experiences of novice department leaders, there were several limitations. The subjects of this study, novice department leaders in New York, represented a small sample. Furthermore, this sample was confounded by the lack of uniformity in organizational structure throughout the state. The scope of leadership responsibilities ranges from K-12, building-only, and elementary or secondary settings and this study did not disaggregate data based on that variable.
Anticipated Benefits of this Research

It was anticipated that the results of this study would suggest that policymakers can further support the success of novice department leaders whose responsibilities include supporting teaching and learning in a variety of academic areas. While policymakers scrutinize students’ academic achievement data, policies and regulations often overlook the preparation of aspiring leaders to provide departmental instructional leadership. Providing more guidance to leadership preparation programs and school districts to support the development of department leaders will yield significant benefits for administrators, teachers, and students. For example, requiring all leadership preparation programs to offer courses related to department leadership and embedding authentic learning experiences into coursework will address needs identified by the participants in this study. Collaboration between school districts and universities would maximize the benefits of these experiences.

It was also anticipated that school districts and professional organizations could utilize the results of this study to support novice department leaders. Establishing formal district mentoring programs for all administrators can help to define the roles of department leaders and ensure that novices have opportunities to speak to an empathetic veteran administrator. Furthermore, mentors and mentees should be strategically paired so that the mentor can understand the challenges faced by their mentees and offer meaningful feedback. Similarly, local and national department leadership organizations that are joined by many novice administrators could provide department-specific mentoring for their members.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter includes the results of the study based on the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire. The first section of the chapter provides a review of the preliminary data analysis procedures. The second section includes a description of the participants of the study. Finally, the last three sections consist of a description and analysis of responses to Likert scale questions and open-ended questions in relation to each respective research question.

Preliminary Data Analysis

The sample consisted of 83 elementary and secondary public school district department leaders on Long Island, New York. The first step of the data analysis was to assess all responses and to evaluate the data for missing or incomplete responses. Of the 116 questionnaires that were reviewed, 83 were fully completed and utilized for the data analysis. Thirty-three were incomplete and therefore not included. Additionally, 55 questionnaires included responses to open-ended questions. Each of these was among the 83 fully completed questionnaires and responses were included in the analysis of research questions two and three. IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0 was used to determine the reliability of the 16-item scale used to assess participants’ experiences that yielded the quantitative data,. The measure had high internal stability based on Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.938$. Therefore, this scale was considered to be reliable, as this result exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Cohen et al., 2007).

Demographics of the Sample

The majority of participants (56.6%) were employed in a districtwide leadership role, while others supervised teachers in middle school only (13.3%), secondary schools (12%), high
school only (10.8%), or elementary level only (7.2%). Among the participants, 34.9% were employed in a department leadership role for between 1 to 12 months; 27.7% were employed in a department leadership role for between 37-48 months; 25.3% were employed in a department leadership role for between 13-24 months; and 10.8% were employed in a department leadership role for between 25 to 36 months. Within the sample, the majority of respondents were female (62.7%), and the majority of respondents did not have any teaching responsibilities (71.1%).

When asked to identify the number of teachers under their supervision, 36.1% reported that they supervised over 30 teachers; 33.7% reported that they supervised between 11 and 20 teachers; 16.9% reported that they supervised 10 or fewer teachers; and 13.3% reported that they supervised between 21 and 30 teachers. Lastly, when asked to share the number of students in their school district, the majority (56.6%) of respondents indicated that their district serves over 3,000 students. Full results are shown in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1**

*Demographic Profile of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What grades are you responsible for supervising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in your role?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districtwide</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Only</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Only</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How long have you been working in a department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership role?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-12 months</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-24 months</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-36 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-48 months</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you have any teaching responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, participants were asked, “What department(s) are you responsible for supervising?” Some participants responded with more than one category, indicating that they supervise multiple departments. Coding this data entailed assigning a category for each department type and combining it as needed. The most frequent responses were Science (18%), Social Studies (17%), and English Language Arts (14%) as seen in Table 4.2.

### Table 4.2

**Departments Under Supervision of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a New Language (ENL)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Consumer Science (FACS)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Languages</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/Music</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technical Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Registration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked, “Who is your direct supervisor?” The most frequent response (41%) was that they directly report to an assistant superintendent, while approximately 29% report to a principal, and 13% report to the superintendent. Frequencies of all responses, including those who responded “other” are summarized in Table 4.3. Some participants reported to multiple supervisors. Coding this data entailed assigning a category for each supervisor type and combining as needed.
Table 4.3

*Supervisor Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Supervisor Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Director of Special Ed./PPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Athletic Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Department chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Deputy superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Director of curriculum &amp; instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Humanities coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Assistant superintendent for health and physical education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Questions**

This study included three research questions designed to further understand the extent to which novice department leaders feel supported in their roles and ascertain department leaders’ perceptions of informal and formal support provided by their school districts. The results for each research question are presented below.

**Research Question One**

The first research question was, “To what extent were novice department leaders supported with mentoring and professional learning experiences in their first four years?” Statements 10 through 15 required participants to answer yes or no about their access to mentoring and professional learning experiences from their current school districts. Additionally, responses to open-ended questions, statements 32 through 37, provided data relevant to this research question. Responses are presented in the following section.

**Qualitative Results**
In response to statement 32, participants provided details for any statements that they rated “Strongly Disagree.” Respondents shared their beliefs about the availability of support provided by their district. Eight of nine respondents (88%) reported that the reason for disagreeing strongly was because they currently have no mentoring. One respondent explained, “My district does little in the way of mentorship or professional development and relies solely on outside agencies or experiences ….” Furthermore, respondents cited the lack of professional development opportunities, such as one who shared, “There have been no opportunities for PD provided by my district … I have learned from experience and trial and error.”

Additionally, for statement 33, participants were asked to provide details for any statements that they rated "Strongly Agree." Coding this data entailed assigning a category for each reason for agreement and combining as needed. The most frequent response was support from professional organizations (47%). Experiences related to mentoring (23%) and professional development (23%) were also cited as reasons for strongly agreeing with questionnaire statements, signifying that respondents believed that they have been receiving this type of support from their districts. As one respondent shared, “I meet with my direct supervisor twice a month and it provides me with much of the support needed as a new administrator. I was able to join a collegial circle of other math leaders in the area.”

**Quantitative Frequency Results**

Participants were asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics.” Seventy-four respondents (89.2%) believed that their district provided opportunities to meet with the leadership team to discuss these topics. Frequencies of responses are summarized in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4

*My Current District has Provided Opportunities for Me to Meet With a Leadership Team to Discuss School Improvement and Related Administrative Topics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “My current district has provided mandatory professional development for me this past year,” 62 respondents (74.7%) expressed their view that their district provided mandatory professional development during the year. Frequencies of responses are summarized in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

*My Current District has Provided Mandatory Professional Development for Me this Past Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “My current district has provided voluntary professional development for me this past year.” Seventy-four respondents (89.2%) believed that their district provided voluntary professional development this past year. Frequencies of responses are summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

*My Current District has Provided Voluntary Professional Development for Me this Past Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “My current district provided me with mentoring or coaching.” Forty-six respondents (55.4%) believed that their district provided them with mentoring or coaching. Conversely, 37 respondents (44.6%) reported that they did not believe that their district provided them with mentoring or coaching.

Frequencies of responses are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “I meet regularly, one on one, with my direct supervisor over the course of the school year,” the majority of respondents (n = 64, 77.1%) expressed their view that they met regularly with a supervisor over the course of the year.

Frequencies of responses are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to respond yes or no to the statement, “My current district provides professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders.” Forty-six respondents (55.4%) believed that their district provided them with professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders. Conversely, 37 respondents (44.6%) reported
that they did not believe their district provided them with these opportunities. Frequencies of
responses are summarized in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9
My Current District Provides Professional Development Opportunities Specifically for
Department Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire statements 29 through 31 included statements about the availability of
professional learning experiences to department leaders from professional learning organizations
outside of their school district. Respondents indicated their responses to Likert scale statements,
with a choice of 1 representing strongly disagree, and a choice of 5 representing strongly agree.
To demonstrate central tendency and variation, the mean, mode, and standard deviation of the 83
responses to these statements are summarized in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Responses to Statements About Professional Learning Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. I have opportunities to interact with other individuals in the region who hold a similar title</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Professional organizations related to my subject area(s) provide valuable professional development opportunities.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Professional organizations related to my subject area(s) provide mentoring or coaching.</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender Identification and Availability of Support

After identifying the demographics of the participants and the frequencies of responses to questions related to the availability of support, a chi-square test was conducted to determine if there were any statistically significant differences based on gender identification (i.e., males compared to females) in terms of the support available to novice department leaders. This test assesses if there is a difference between statistically generated expected results and actual results to determine if they are different based on a significance level less than 0.05 (Cohen et al., 2007). For each chi-square test, the first two test assumptions were met. Those who preferred not to answer were not included in the analysis. All variables were categorical and there was an independence of observations (Laerd Statistics, 2016). Results of the third assumption (expected cell count ≥ 5) are reported in Tables 4.11 through 4.16 for questionnaire statements 10 through 15, related to participants’ reported availability of support.

A chi-square test was conducted to analyze the relationship between gender identification and the perception of the availability of district provided mentoring and professional learning opportunities; Of the six statements analyzed, two indicated statistically significant results. As shown in Table 4.11, female participants were much more likely to report that they meet regularly with a leadership team as compared to men. Fewer than expected men reported having this opportunity. The results of the chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between gender and opportunities to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics were significant, $X^2 (1, N = 82) = 7.394, p = .007$. For this test, one cell did not meet the minimum count per the assumptions for the chi-square test. This was noted but did not necessarily invalidate the findings.
Table 4.11

*Gender Identification and Opportunities to Meet with a Leadership Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Gender Identification</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative</td>
<td></td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topics.</td>
<td></td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4.12, female participants were more likely to report that their districts provided them with mentoring or coaching as compared to men. Fewer than expected men reported having this opportunity. The results of the chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between gender identification and having been provided with mentoring or coaching was not significant, $X^2 (1, N = 82) = 3.130, p = .077$.

Table 4.12

*Gender Identification and District Provided Mentoring or Coaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Gender Identification</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My current district provided me with mentoring or coaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 4.13, female participants were much more likely to report that they meet regularly with a direct supervisor as compared to men. Fewer than expected men reported having this opportunity. The results of the chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between gender identification and meeting regularly, one on one, with a direct supervisor over the course of the school year was significant, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 82) = 8.995, p = .003 \); all assumptions were met.

### Table 4.13

*Gender Identification and Opportunities to Meet Regularly, One On One, With Direct Supervisor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Gender Identification</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. I meet regularly, one on one, with my direct supervisor over the course of the school year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender Identification</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Gender Identification</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics and Availability of Support

To further examine the extent to which demographics affect the availability of district provided support, crosstabs and chi-square tests were analyzed. As shown in Figure 4.1, the majority of respondents, regardless of direct supervisor, indicated that they believed that their current district provided opportunities to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics. For respondents for whom a principal is their direct supervisor, 19 (76%) responded yes, while 6 (24%) responded no. The results of the chi-square test of independence to indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the novice department leaders’ direct supervisor and opportunities to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics, $X^2 (3, N = 82) = 9.28, p = .026$. For this test, four cells did not meet the minimum count per the assumptions for the chi-square test. Therefore, the result of this test should be interpreted with caution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>52</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected Count</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Gender Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When additional chi-square tests were conducted to determine the association between demographics and the responses to statements 10 through 15, most did not yield statistically significant results. However, two associations were found to be statistically significant. Data related to the first association are shown in Table 4.14. To examine the relationship between the number of teachers under department supervision and opportunities to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics, four groups were combined into two due to four cell counts being less than five. This resulted in variables related to the number of teachers under supervision: 0-20 and over 20.

As shown in Table 4.14, those participants with more than 20 teachers under their supervision were more likely to report that they meet regularly with a leadership team as compared to those with zero to 20 teachers under their supervision. The results of the chi-square test of independence to examine the indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the number of teachers under supervision and opportunities to meet with a leadership team.
leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics, $X^2 (1, N = 83) = 5.920, p = .015$.

**Table 4.14**

*Teachers under Supervision and Opportunities to Meet with a Leadership Team*

| 10. My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics. | Number of teachers under department supervision |
|---|---|---|
| | 0-20 | over 20 | Total |
| Yes | Count | 34 | 40 | 74 |
| | Expected Count | 37.4 | 36.6 | 74.0 |
| | % within Number of teachers under department supervision | 81.0% | 97.6% | 89.2% |
| No | Count | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| | Expected Count | 4.6 | 4.4 | 9.0 |
| | % within Number of teachers under department supervision | 19.0% | 2.4% | 10.8% |
| Total | Count | 42 | 41 | 83 |
| | Expected Count | 42.0 | 41.0 | 83.0 |
| | % within Number of teachers under department supervision | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Twenty-three of the 82 respondents indicated they had teaching responsibilities, and 59 respondents did not have any teaching responsibilities. Additionally, 18 (78.3%) respondents with teaching responsibilities believed that their district provided opportunities to meet with a district leadership team, while 56 (94.9%) of respondents who did not have teaching responsibilities believed their district provided opportunities to meet with a district leadership team (see Table 4.15). There was a statistically significant association between teaching responsibilities and opportunities to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement.
and related administrative topics as assessed by Fisher's exact test, p = .036. Fisher’s exact test is
used to determine the statistical significance of a 2x2 relationship when there is an expected
count of less than five (Laerd Statistics, 2016).

Table 4.15

Teaching Responsibilities and Opportunities to Meet with a Leadership Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any teaching responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any teaching responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Two

The second research question was, “How did novice department leaders perceive the support they received during their first four years?” Statements 16 through 22 required participants to rate Likert scale statements related to their perceived effectiveness of support provided by their current school districts. Additionally, six open-ended questions, questionnaire statements 32 through 37, produced responses related to this research question.

Qualitative Results

Open-ended questionnaire items provided data related to this research question. In explaining the reason for strongly disagreeing with a questionnaire statement related to professional development, one respondent shared, “Due to teaching responsibilities the PD provided was only related to teaching not leadership.” Respondents also shared reasons for strongly agreeing with questionnaire statements related to support received, including:
• I meet with my direct supervisor twice a month and it provides me with much of the support needed as a new administrator.

• I meet weekly with my direct supervisor which has been incredibly helpful during this transition. I also find ELA Collegial circles through BOCES to be helpful. I work closely with the other directors/coordinators in my district.

Although many participants’ responses to open-ended questions did not directly address the perceived effectiveness of support and professional learning experiences, the information provided contributed to the determination of subgroups to further examine. As referenced previously, experiences related to mentoring and professional development were cited as reasons for strongly agreeing with questionnaire statements. As a result, two of the variables examined in the analysis of research questions two and three were the availability of mentoring and the availability of professional development specific to department leadership. Moreover, a third variable, teaching responsibilities, was evident in participants’ responses to the question about the biggest challenge faced as a novice department leader. These responses included statements such as, “Balancing time teaching and as an educational leader,” and “Understanding the needs of my department while managing my own classroom requirements.”

Summary of Likert Scale Statement Responses

Participants were asked to respond to seven Likert scale questions about their perception of the effectiveness of district provided professional learning experiences with a choice of 1 representing strongly disagree, and a choice of 5 representing strongly agree. As shown in Table 4.16, the mean response to all statements was greater than 3, indicating a favorable perception of professional learning experiences. Participants reported the most favorable response to the statement, “My current district provided an adequate amount of time for me to meet with my
supervisor” \((M = 3.95, SD = 1.07)\). Participants’ least favorable response was to the statement, “My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader” \((M = 3.32, SD = 1.19)\).

### Table 4.16 17 18

*Respondents’ Perceived Effectiveness of Professional Learning Experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>(M)</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Professional development provided by my current district has increased my sense of preparation for my role.</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My current district has provided voluntary professional development that has increased my sense of preparedness for my role</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader.</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My current district provided an adequate amount of time for me to meet with my supervisor.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Mentors or coaches provided by my current district have the skills to provide high quality mentoring/coaching.</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To analyze the extent to which a relationship existed between the availability of support and perception of professional learning experiences, three variables were examined: the presence of a mentor, the ability to meet with a supervisor, and district provided professional development.
opportunities for department leaders. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine there was a statistically significant difference between groups within each variable (i.e. mentor vs. no mentor).

**Effects of Mentoring**

Table 4.17 displays a summary of group responses to statements 16 through 22 by those who reported being provided with district mentoring or coaching and those who did not. For all statements, the mean score was higher for those who reported being provided with mentoring. The largest difference in mean scores was evident for the statement, “Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader,” with those who reported being provided with mentor having a more favorable perception ($M = 4.22$) than those who did not receive a mentor ($M = 2.31$).

**Table 4.17**

*Mentoring and Effectiveness of Professional Learning Experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>My current district provided me with mentoring or coaching</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Professional development provided by my current district has increased my sense of preparation for my role.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My current district provided me with mentoring or coaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district provided voluntary professional development that has increased my sense of preparedness for my role</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district provided an adequate amount of time for me to meet with my supervisor.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors or coaches provided by my current district have the skills to provide high quality mentoring/coaching.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent samples t-tests showed statistically significant relationships between having received a mentor and perceived effectiveness of professional learning experiences. Respondents who reported having been provided with a mentor perceived that they experienced a more successful transition to the leadership role ($M = 4.28, SD = .75$) than those who reported that they did not receive mentoring ($M = 2.92, SD = 1.04$), $t(81) = 6.94$, $p = < .001$. This represented a
statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did not receive mentoring. This is further reflected in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.3**

*Relationship Between Mentoring and Perceived Effectiveness Of Professional Learning Experiences*

![Bar Chart](image)

Participants were asked to respond to the statement, “My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader.” Additionally, an independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were statistically significant differences between those who did and did not report having received mentoring. Respondents who reported having been provided with a mentor were more likely to perceive that they received adequate training ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.04$) than those who reported they did not receive mentoring ($M = 2.67, SD = 1.04$), $t(80) = 5.01, p < .001$. This represented a statistically significant difference, including two outlier results. This is further reflected in Figure 4.3
Additionally, an independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in perceived benefits to district provided professional development between those who did and not report having received mentoring. When asked if professional development provided by their current district increased their sense of preparation for their role (statement 16), respondents who were provided with a mentor reported a higher mean score ($M = 3.83, SD = .95$) than those who reported they did not receive mentoring ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.33$), $t(81) = 2.97, p = .004$. Results included one outlier and represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did not receive mentoring.

**Meeting with a supervisor**

The ability to meet regularly with a direct supervisor over the course of the year was the second variable examined in relation to questionnaire statements 16 through 22. For all
statements, the mean score was higher for those who reported meeting regularly with a direct supervisor. When responding to statement 17, “My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader,” with those who reported meeting regularly with a direct supervisor having a more favorable perception ($M = 3.84$) than those who did not report meeting regularly with a direct supervisor ($M = 3.11$). Additionally, respondents who met regularly with a direct supervisor believed professional development provided by their current district increased their sense of preparation for the role ($M = 3.64$) than those who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor ($M = 2.95$). Full responses are displayed in Table 4.18.

**Table 4.18**
*Meeting with Supervisor and Effectiveness of Professional Learning Experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I meet regularly, one on one, with my direct supervisor over the course of the school year</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Professional development provided by my current district has increased my sense of preparation for my role.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My current district has provided voluntary professional development that has increased my sense of preparedness for my role</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in the perceived benefits of professional learning experiences between those who met regularly with a direct supervisor and those who did not. Those who met regularly with a direct supervisor believed professional development provided by their current district increased their sense of preparation for my role ($M = 3.64, SD = 1.10$) more than those did meet regularly with a direct supervisor ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.35$), $t(81) = 2.28$, $p = .025$ (see Table 4.19). While all assumptions were met, there were four outliers accounted for in the results. This represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor and the perceived sense of preparation of the role due to district provided professional development.
Additionally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceived successful transition to a department leader role between those who met regularly with a direct supervisor and those who did not. All assumptions were met. Those who met regularly with a direct supervisor believed that their current districts facilitated a successful transition as a new department leader ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.06$) more than those who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor ($M = 3.11, SD = 1.15$), $t(81) = 2.621, p = .01$ (see Table 4.19). This represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor and the belief that their current districts facilitated a successful transition as a new department leader. This is reflected in Figure 4.4.

Table 4.19

*Meeting with Supervisor and Effectiveness of Professional Learning Experiences t-tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Professional development provided by my current district has increased my sense of preparation for my role.</td>
<td>1.717</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to statement 19, “My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader,” those individuals who met regularly with a direct supervisor responded more favorably ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.19$) than those who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor ($M = 2.79, SD = 1.03$). An independent samples t-test, inclusive of four outliers, was conducted and showed a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did not meet regularly with a direct supervisor and the perceived adequacy of training, $t(80) = 2.270, p = .026$.

**Professional Development for Department Leaders**

The topics of statements 16 to 22 were perceived benefits to district provided professional learning experiences/ Responses to were examined to determine if differences existed between those who did and did not believe that they received professional development
opportunities specifically for department leaders. Table 4.20 includes a summary of mean responses. For each statement, respondents who reported having been provided with professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders had a higher mean response than those who did not.

**Table 4.20**

*PD for department leaders and effectiveness of professional learning experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My current district provides professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district has increased my sense of preparation for my role.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current district has provided voluntary professional development that has increased my sense of preparedness for my role</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement | My current district provides professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders | N | M | SD
---|---|---|---|---
19. My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader. | Yes | 45 | 3.78 | 1.04
| No | 37 | 2.76 | 1.12

20. Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader. | Yes | 45 | 3.69 | 1.16
| No | 37 | 3.00 | 1.33

21. My current district provided an adequate amount of time for me to meet with my supervisor. | Yes | 46 | 4.28 | .83
| No | 37 | 3.54 | 1.19

22. Mentors or coaches provided by my current district have the skills to provide high quality mentoring/coaching | Yes | 46 | 3.76 | 1.06
| No | 37 | 3.00 | 1.25

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences in the perceived benefits of professional learning experiences between those who did and did not believe they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders. Those who received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders believed professional development provided by their current district increased their sense of preparation for their role ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.84$) more than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(64.2) = 6.02$, $p = <.001$. This represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between
respondents who did and who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders; for this test, three outliers were identified, and assumptions of normality and homogeneity were not met.

Additionally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceived successful transition to a department leader role between those who did and did not believe that they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders. Those who received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders believed that their current districts facilitated a successful transition as a new department leader ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.99$) more so than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.07$), $t(81) = 4.096, p < .001$. This represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and did not believe they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders and the belief that their current districts facilitated a successful transition as a new department leader. Most assumptions were met; however, there were six outliers in the data.

In response to statement 19, “My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader,” those who believed that they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders responded more favorably ($M = 3.78, SD = 1.04$) than those who did not believe that they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 2.76, SD = 1.12$). An independent samples t-test was conducted and showed a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and who did receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders and the perceived adequacy of training, $t(80) =$
4.277, \( p = .001 \). All assumptions other than normality were met for this test. Results are reflected in Figure 4.5

**Figure 4.6**

*Department Leader Specific Professional Development and Adequate Amount of Training*

**Research Question Three**

The third research question was, “To what extent did this support define the roles and responsibilities of department leaders?” Statements 23 through 28 required participants to respond to Likert scale statements about professional growth related to the roles and responsibilities of the position. Additionally, six open-ended statements, 32 through 37, produced responses related to this research question.

**Qualitative Results**

Responses to open-ended questions provided examples of participants’ beliefs related to their roles and responsibilities. When describing challenges associated with their experiences as
novice department leaders, respondents cited a lack of understanding of their roles. Challenges faced included:

- The lack of clear expectations and definition of my role.
- Learning the requirements and expectations in my role, along with the how-to procedures and protocols.
- There are so many different aspects of the job that it is difficult to complete any one task in the time set aside.
- I think understanding the different roles of the position.

Additionally, participants were asked, “Reflecting on what you know now, is there anything you wish you had done differently to prepare for this role? If so, please explain.” The most frequent response was, along with taking an alternate career pathway (10%), having a better understanding of the role (10%). One respondent shared, “I wish I would have asked more questions about my specific responsibilities.” Another respondent conveyed, “More experience with the teacher evaluation process, more experience and learning associated with curriculum development in general.” Frequencies of all responses for those who responded are summarized in Table 4.21. Coding this data entailed assigning a category for each reason for agreement and combining as needed. These responses, in addition to responses to Likert scale statements, helped to provide an understanding of the extent to which novice department leaders were being supported in their roles and responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Alternate career pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Better understanding of role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21
Anything Respondents Wished They Had Done Differently to Prepare for the Role
## Frequency of Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Not make immediate changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Did it sooner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Work with administrators prior to the role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Different internship experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Provided with more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>More law knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Consider all outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Earlier observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Apply different theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Learning who to trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>More experience with observations and curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Asked more questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Better coursework in SDL program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Discuss expectations with teachers earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Done more research on the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Understanding of budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Taken more notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Taken more workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Summary of Responses

Participants were asked to describe the most significant challenges they had to overcome as a novice department leader. Coding these data entailed assigning a category for each reason for agreement and combining as needed. The most frequent response was understanding roles (18%). Additionally, when asked, “Reflecting on what you know now, is there anything you wish you had done differently to prepare for this role? If so, please explain,” the most frequent response, along with was taking an alternate career pathway (10%) and having a better understanding of the role (10%). Given these responses, quantitative data were examined to better understand the extent to which novice department leaders received support to understand their roles and responsibilities.

Participants were asked to respond to six Likert scale statements, 23 through 28 about professional growth related to the roles and responsibilities of department leadership positions,
with a choice of 1 representing strongly disagree, and a choice of 5 representing strongly agree.

As shown in Table 4.22, the mean response to all statements was greater than three, indicating a favorable perception of professional growth. Participants reported the most favorable response to statement 23 regarding growth in the area of instructional leadership ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.15$). This was also the statement with which most respondents strongly agreed and is further reflected in Figure 4.6. Participants’ least favorable response was to statement 25 regarding growth in the area of curriculum development ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.07$). The statement with which most respondents strongly disagreed was, “I have grown in the area of understanding professional norms because of district provided learning experiences.”

Table 4.22

Professional Growth and Role Definition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I have grown in the area of instructional leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have grown in the area of organizational leadership because of district provided learning experiences.</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I have grown in the area of curriculum development because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have grown in the area of assessment because of district provided learning experiences.</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I have grown in the area of providing support for students because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I have grown in the area of understanding professional norms because of district provided learning experience</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effect of Mentoring on Perceptions of Professional Growth and Role Definition

To analyze the extent to which a relationship existed between different subgroups and professional growth related to the roles and responsibilities of department leaders, three variables were examined: the presence of a mentor, district provided professional development opportunities for department leaders, and teaching responsibilities.

The first variable analyzed was mentoring. Responses to statements 23 through 28 reflected perceptions about mentoring by those who reported being provided with district mentoring or coaching and those who did not (see Table 4.23). For all statements, the mean score was higher for those who reported being provided with mentoring. The largest difference in mean scores was evident for the statement 23, “I have grown in the area of instructional leadership because of district provided learning experiences,” with those who reported being
provided with mentor having a more favorable perception ($M = 4.04$) than those who did not receive a mentor ($M = 3.08$).

### Table 4.23

*Mentoring and Professional Growth and Role Definition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>No Mentoring</th>
<th>$T$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I have grown in the area of instructional leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have grown in the area of organizational leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I have grown in the area of curriculum development because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have grown in the area of assessment because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I have grown in the area of providing support for students because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I have grown in the area of understanding professional norms because of district provided learning experience</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Independent samples t-tests showed statistically significant relationships between having received a mentor and all statements related to perceived growth in the areas related to roles and responsibilities of department leaders. The full results are shown in Table 4.23. For all statements, all assumptions were met. However, there were three outliers for statement 23, and one outlier for statement 26. The largest effect size existed for the statement related to the area of instructional leadership, $t(80) = 4.12, p = <.001, d = .92$.

**Effects of Professional Development on Professional Growth and Role Definition**

Responses to statements regarding perceived professional growth related to the roles and responsibilities of department leaders were examined to determine if differences existed between those who reported that they did and did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders. Results are reflected in Table 4.24. For all statements, respondents having been provided with professional development specifically for department leaders reported higher mean scores. The largest difference in mean scores was evident for statement 28, “I have grown in the area of understanding professional norms,” with those who reported being provided with professional development for department leaders having a more favorable perception ($M = 4.09$) than those who did not receive professional development for department leaders ($M = 2.89$).
Table 4.24

*PD for Department Leaders and Professional Growth and Role Definition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>My current district provides professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders.</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I have grown in the area of instructional leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have grown in the area of organizational leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I have grown in the area of curriculum development because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have grown in the area of assessment because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I have grown in the area of providing support for students because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Independent samples t-tests showed statistically significant relationships between having received professional development specific to department leaders and each statement related to perceived growth in the areas related to roles and responsibilities of department leaders. To further examine this relationship, responses to statements 23 through 28 were transformed to compute a new variable reflecting the mean score for each respondent. An independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in overall perception of growth between respondents who did and who did not receive professional development specific to department leaders. As shown in Table 4.25 and Figure 4.7, perceived growth was rated higher by those whose current districts provided professional development specifically for department leaders ($M = 3.96, SD = 0.79$) more than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 2.99, SD = .97$), $t(81) = 5.087, p = .001, d = 1.12$. This represented a statistically significant difference in the responses between respondents who did and did not believe they received professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders; all assumptions were met.
Table 4.25

Professional Development Opportunities Specifically for Department Leaders and Respondents’ Mean Scores for Statements 23-28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My current district provides professional development opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specifically for department leaders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Scores for Statements 23-28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.8

Perceived Growth by Perceptions of District Provided Professional Development Specifically For Department Leaders

Teaching Responsibilities

The third variable analyzed was teaching responsibilities. In terms of department leaders, having teaching responsibilities means that they are required to teach at least one class. This would include creating and facilitating lessons, grading assessments, parental outreach, and all other teaching related duties. Table 4.26 shows a summary of group responses to statements 23
through 28 by those with and without teaching responsibilities. Respondents indicated the extent to which respondents believed they experienced growth in administrative responsibilities. For all statements, the mean score was higher for those who reported not having any teaching responsibilities than for those leaders who still spent part of their days in the classroom. The largest difference in responses between the two groups was growth in the area of assessment: those without any teaching responsibilities having a more favorable perception \( M = 3.69 \) than those with teaching responsibilities \( M = 3.00 \).

**Table 4.26**

*Teaching Responsibilities and Professional Growth and Role Definition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Teaching Responsibilities</th>
<th>No Teaching Responsibilities</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I have grown in the area of instructional leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>22 3.18 1.05</td>
<td>59 3.78 1.16</td>
<td>-2.112</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I have grown in the area of organizational leadership because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>23 3.09 1.13</td>
<td>58 3.67 1.11</td>
<td>-2.127</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I have grown in the area of curriculum development because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>23 3.22 1.13</td>
<td>59 3.56 1.06</td>
<td>-1.294</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have grown in the area of assessment because of district provided learning experiences</td>
<td>23 3.00 1.00</td>
<td>59 3.69 1.02</td>
<td>-2/784</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceived growth in areas related to the responsibilities of department leaders between those who did and those who did not have teaching responsibilities. Respondents who did not have teaching responsibilities believed that they experienced growth more than those who had teaching responsibilities. Independent samples t-tests indicated a statistically significant relationship between teaching responsibilities and three areas: instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and assessment (see Table 4.26).

With respect to instructional leadership, perceived growth was rated higher by those who without teaching responsibilities ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.16$) than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(79) = -2.112$, $p = .038$; all assumptions were met, with one outlier. In the area of organizational leadership, perceived growth was rated higher by those without teaching responsibilities ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.11$) than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.13$), $t(79) = -2.127$, $p = .037$; all assumptions were met. With respect to assessment, perceived growth was rated higher by
those who without teaching responsibilities ($M = 3.69, SD = 1.02$) than those who did not receive professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.00$), $t(80) = -2.784, p = .007$; all assumptions were met, with two outliers.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the data collection process and provide analysis of the data. Quantitative and qualitative findings were presented in relation to the research questions. Moreover, the statistical significance of the data was analyzed to understand the influence of certain variables on participants’ responses. Data indicated that the support available to novice department leaders on Long Island differs. Moreover, the perceived effectiveness of this support is affected by opportunities to work with a mentor and to participate in professional development. Finally, respondents indicated that they believed they experienced professional growth. However, variables such as mentoring, professional development, and teaching responsibilities contributed to the perceived extent of perceived growth.
CHAPTER FIVE:
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, OUTCOMES, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a discussion of the major themes identified in the study. Additionally, recommendations for policy and practice, and for future research are presented. The strengths, limitations, and delimitations are explained, and overall conclusions are stated.

Demographics of the Sample

For this study, a demographic question was asked about the department each participant is responsible for supervising. The top categories with a frequency of at least 10 were (in descending order) science, social studies, English language arts, physical education, special education, and math. This result was expected given the required curriculum and graduation requirements for all students in New York.

Major Themes

Lack of Mentoring

Although only nine participants provided reasons for strongly disagreeing with any of the statements in the questionnaire, eight responses were focused on the same theme. A major finding from this study is that department leaders at public schools on Long Island, New York reported that their work experience did not include any form of mentoring. This was noted in comments such as no mentoring was provided or that there were no professional development opportunities. This aligns with prior findings by Arrieta and Ancho (2020), Duncan and Stock (2010), and Johnston et al. (2016).

This is important because, as Daresh (1992) has noted, mentoring is an essential component to success. Administrators who do not feel as though they have the necessary tools, skills, or support to be effective in leadership positions are more likely to want to return to the
classroom (i.e., give up their position) or seek employment in another school district. This is further supported by Connery and Frick’s (2021) assertion that the effectiveness of support provided to new administrators is important to retaining and developing staff.

Additionally, the mean value of the response to statement 20, “Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader” was 3.38. This score, further illustrated in Figure 5.1, was the second lowest mean score for statements related to the perceived effectiveness of district provided support. This reflects a challenge for novice department leaders. As Beam et al. (2016) suggested, novice administrators are hesitant to ask for help because they believe that it reflects inadequacy. Thus, it is essential for mentoring, when provided, to be effective and valuable.

**Figure 5.9**

*Perceived Value of District Provided Mentoring*

![Bar chart showing perceived value of district provided mentoring.]

*Note.* Responses were transformed from five to three categories to illustrate the level of responses at the disagree, neutral, and agree levels. Disagree includes responses of strongly disagree and degree, and agree includes responses of strongly agree and agree.
While these findings are not surprising, the absence of mentoring for district-level department leaders was somewhat expected given the absence of such a requirement in New York. The importance of mentoring was further reflected in explanations by 23% of respondents who cited mentoring as a reason for strongly agreeing with any statement in the questionnaire. Therefore, although mentors are not required for individuals with School District Leader certification, districts should consider providing mentoring to all novice department leaders.

The Need for Professional Development Programs

Opportunities to obtain support from professional organizations, mentors, and professional development emerged as themes among the participants who strongly agreed with any statements in the questionnaire. It was noteworthy that almost half (47%) stated that they had taken the initiative to find opportunities to participate in professional development offerings provided by professional organizations. By providing these offerings, organizations create a type of PLC such as those identified by Kelly (2017) as promoting comfort, a sense of community, and collective efficacy. Statements supporting this contention included:

- The professional groups in the social studies world are active and strong. I can always go to anyone in that circle and find the support and resources that I am looking for.
- My professional organization set up a mentoring program specific to my role. They provide courses to further my knowledge and allow me to make contacts that I can run ideas by when I have a question.

These comments reflect the strong presence of department-specific professional organizations on Long Island and align with the findings of Clayton et al. (2013) that novices benefit from learning from individuals with similar backgrounds. It is not surprising that the mean response to statement 30, “Professional organizations related to my subject area(s) provide valuable
professional development opportunities” was 4.23. This is consistent with Boerema’s (2011) findings that new leaders benefited from informal support systems such as professional organizations. It is essential, therefore, for professional organizations to communicate with new department leaders so that they are aware of available professional learning opportunities.

Furthermore, the availability of effective mentoring and professional development contributes to the success of novice department leaders. As one respondent shared, “I think beginning admins need some flexibility in support. They need to have some mandated PD opportunities (i.e., Danielson training, learning specific programs, etc.), but also need flexibility to choose opportunities for learning that meet their individual needs and goals.” This is consistent with Tapala et al.’s (2020) suggestion that department leaders should be afforded training about the responsibilities and possible pitfalls of the position.

Effective professional development is a component of personal growth. However, the statement related to effectiveness of professional learning opportunities that yielded the lowest mean score was statement 19, “My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader.” As Mezirow (1997) suggested, authentic, transformative learning leads to greater autonomy. If novice department leaders do not feel they are experiencing effective professional learning, they are less likely to develop into confident leaders.

Roles of Department Leaders

When asked to describe the most significant challenges they had to overcome as a novice department leader, participants shared 22 unique responses. These responses reflect the many responsibilities of department leaders. The greatest number of responses indicated that understanding their roles and responsibilities was the greatest challenge faced. Furthermore,
respondents cited understanding new systems and supervision of staff as challenges. This reflects of the findings of Feeney (2009), and Peacock and Melville (2018). These responses were unsurprising. If novices understand what is expected of them, it will be easier for them to carry out supervisory and curricular responsibilities.

Similarly, respondents cited developing relationships, establishing new systems and protocols, and curriculum work as their proudest accomplishments. This highlights the importance of providing targeted support in those areas and is consistent with the findings of Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007). While managerial tasks such as budget development and administering assessments are important to the functioning of schools, supervisors of novice department leaders can provide targeted training and support for instructional leadership.

Recommendations

The ability of department leaders to provide instructional leadership affects curriculum, instruction, and assessment, which are key components to student success. Accordingly, it is essential for school districts to support all department leaders, especially novices. Developing protocols to help novice department leaders understand expectations is essential. There is no universal handbook for department leaders, and the scope of the role differs by district. However, a description of expectations that includes tasks, timelines, and relevant resources can serve to promote the success of individuals new to the role.

One of the more interesting findings was that 37 of 83 (44.6%) respondents reported that they did not receive mentoring or coaching. Although it is not certain as to why this was the case, it is alarming, but not entirely surprising considering that mentoring is not mandated in New York for administrators with a district leader certification. Therefore, while some novice department leaders may have previously served in building leadership roles, it can be inferred
from the responses to the questionnaire that those who went directly from teaching to district leadership roles did not have a mentor.

The establishment of mentoring guidelines for school district leaders in New York would provide additional support for novices in these roles. As one participant stated, “I think transitioning teacher to administrator is a difficult task but can be eased with support from your supervisors … along with an understanding that you are not perfect, and you should learn from your mistakes.” School districts have an opportunity to assign mentors to novice department leaders, regardless of state requirements. These mentors will understand district protocols and can assist in the completion of tasks such as budget development and the supervision of teachers. Programs such as those in Missouri that emphasizes communication strategies and authentic learning opportunities (Connery & Frick, 2021), and Iowa that emphasizes the mentor-mentee relationship (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006) can serve as models for districts to follow.

Available mentoring provided by SAANYS and professional department leadership organizations can provide an additional layer of support. One respondent opined, “I think it would be extremely helpful to have a collegial circle or support group for new administrators.” Specifically, mentoring provided by department leadership organizations can provide discipline related support related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Furthermore, the development of regional or statewide PLCs for novice department leaders would allow for the sharing of experiences, ideas, and provide encouragement.

Educational leadership preparation programs can play a role in the successful transition of novice department leaders to their new roles. As stated previously, many of the experiences are geared towards school building leadership. There may be one class related to the supervision of instruction. However, as one participant suggested, “I think there needs to be
coursework in the SDL program specific for this role.” By working with school districts, leadership preparation programs can develop coursework and experiences related to curriculum development. Furthermore, the district leadership internship is often guided by school districts that, in some cases, are reluctant to allow interns to participate in important activities. To remedy this situation, requirements can be developed to provide interns with specific experiences related to the roles and responsibilities of novice department leaders, such as those related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, data analysis, and budgeting.

Professional development opportunities are essential to the growth of all educators. In this study, 37 of 83 (44.6%) respondents reported that they did not receive professional development specific to the needs of department leaders. As school districts develop their professional development plans, professional development opportunities for department leaders should be prioritized. Specifically, districts should provide support opportunities in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Moreover, districts should include department leaders with teaching responsibilities are afforded professional development opportunities that support growth in leadership roles and responsibilities.

**Future Research**

This research presents multiple opportunities for replication. Since this research involved only department leaders in Long Island school districts, the study could be replicated with novice department leaders in all states. Additionally, researchers could conduct a qualitative study in which interviews are conducted to learn more about specific experiences of novice department leaders.

To further investigate the extent to which mentoring benefits novice department leaders, future research can focus on specific mentor and mentee experiences. Questionnaires or
interviews could be directed to mentors, mentees, or pairs. This would allow researchers to understand strengths and weaknesses and inform the practices of formal mentoring programs.

Researchers should also consider conducting studies to learn more about the experiences of aspiring administrators in educational leadership programs to assess the extent to which there is preparation for curriculum development and department leadership. Furthermore, an analysis of required coursework and internship experiences in accredited educational leadership programs would help to better understand the extent to which department leadership training is occurring. This information could be utilized by state education departments to provide guidance related to curricula for educational leadership programs.

**Strengths**

This study includes statistically reliable questionnaire statements, as evidenced by Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.938. Open-ended questions provide insight to the reasons for strongly agreeing and disagreeing with items, as well as successes and challenges experienced by respondents. The triangulation of these data strengthens the analysis of the research questions. Additionally, with a focus on novice department leaders, the study addresses a gap in the existing literature on the experiences of novice school administrators and adds to the literature related to mentoring and professional development for school administrators.

**Limitations**

There are some noted limitations of this study. First, 83 participants responded to the survey; this is representative of a convenience sample as the questionnaire was not disseminated to every novice department leader on Long Island. Additionally, the study did not disaggregate the sample by number of departments under a respondent’s supervision, which is a variable that differs by district and the organizational structure. Another limitation is missing data in some
responses. One hundred twenty-six initial respondents began to answer the questionnaire. However, there were 33 questionnaires with missing responses to multiple questions which led to those questionnaires being omitted from the data analysis.

Several delimitations are present in this study. The sample in this study represented novice department leaders, which constitutes a small group of school administrators on Long Island. This group provides insight into the experiences of individuals whose primary responsibilities are related to the supervision of curriculum and instruction and can be generalized to examine other regions in future research. Additionally, the study focuses on participants’ perceptions of their experiences as novice department leaders. Consequently, there is potential for response bias.

Conclusion

This study focused on the experiences of novice department leaders, an often-overlooked group in the research on educational leadership. These department leadership positions are not new to the education system, yet challenges persist. Educational leadership programs and state requirements emphasize the needs of building leaders, and, as participants reported, school districts are inconsistent in support designed specifically for department leaders.

One of the most encouraging signs from the research is that many novice department leaders shared positive experiences and enthusiasm for their roles. Participants in this study shared a need for mentoring, professional development, and more defined roles. As schools continue to address the academic challenges facing students, the instructional leadership of department leaders is of paramount importance. Educators who pursue these roles deserve the support needed to promote success. Department leaders who feel supported can transform teaching and learning, support teachers, and in turn support students. State education
departments, educational leadership program administrators, and school districts have an
opportunity to prioritize the development of department leaders. The return on the investment
will be worth it, and the hardworking, talented department leaders deserve it.
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https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2007.0018
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Supporting Novice Department Leaders

Faculty Investigator: Dr. Laura Seinfeld, Dean, LIU Post College of Education, Information, & Technology, 720 Northern Blvd, Greenvale, NY 11548, Laura.Seinfeld@liu.edu, (516) 299-4122.

Student Investigator: Bryan Sarandrea, LIU Post College of Education, Information, & Technology, 720 Northern Blvd, Greenvale, NY 11548, bryan.sarandrea@my.liu.edu, (516) 849-9041.

You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later.

Why is this research being done?
This research is being done to better understand the needs of new department leaders, as well as the availability and effectiveness of support provided by school districts and professional organizations. To be eligible to participate, you must currently be a K-12 department leader or building department chairperson with no more than 48 months of experience in a department leadership role. However, this will not include assistant principals, assistant superintendents, or district superintendents who assume department leadership responsibilities.

What will happen if you join this study?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire where you will read statements and select the option that most closely represents your response. Additionally, you will be asked to provide non-identifying demographic information, answer two open-ended questions and four optional reflection questions. This should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
What are the risks or discomforts of the study?

The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. You may get tired or bored when we are asking you questions or you are completing questionnaires. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Although your IP Address will not be stored in the survey results, there is always the possibility of tampering from an outside source when using the Internet for collecting information. While the confidentiality of your responses will be protected once the data is downloaded from the Internet, there is always the possibility of hacking or other security breaches that could threaten the confidentiality of your responses. There is the risk that information about you may become known to people outside this study. Even if identifiers are removed, the information will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Are there benefits to being in the study?

While there is no direct benefit for your participation in the study, if you choose to participate what you are doing is of benefit to the field of professional development and educational leadership.

What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

No.

Will you be paid if you join this study?

No.

How will the confidentiality of your biospecimens and/or data be protected?

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Long Island University Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

All data will be secured through encryption processes and IP addresses will not be stored. Data collected will be destroyed after five years. Results will be reported only in the
What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?
This study has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that reviews human research studies. The IRB can help you if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you have other questions, concerns or complaints about this research study. You may contact the IRB at 516-299-3591 or theresa.faughnan@liu.edu.

What should you do if you have questions about the study?
Contact the student investigator Bryan Sarandrea at 516-849-9041, bryan.sarandrea@my.liu.edu or the faculty investigator Dr. Laura Seinfeld at 516-299-4122, Laura.Seinfeld@liu.edu, If you wish, you may contact the principal investigator by letter. The address is on page one of this consent form. You can also contact the department chair Dr. Tonie McDonald at 516-229-2267, Tonie.McDonald@liu.edu. If you cannot reach the investigators or wish to talk to someone else, contact the IRB office at 516-299-3591.

You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study.
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Institutional Review Board at Long Island University at (516) 299-3591.

What does your agreement on this consent form mean?
By marking the “Agree to Participate” box below, you are indicating that you have fully read the above text and have had the opportunity to print the consent form (printable at this link https://tinyurl.com/53xypkrb) and ask questions about the purposes and procedures of this study. If you choose not to participate, please choose the “Decline to Participate” box below.

☐ I agree to participate.
☐ I decline to participate.

_______________ Date
Appendix B

The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders
Introduction to the Questionnaire and
Informed Consent Form for Human Research Subjects

As a fellow educator and department leader, I am pleased to invite you to complete a questionnaire entitled *The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders*. This questionnaire is part of my doctoral dissertation study, *Supporting Novice Department Leaders*. The purpose of this research is to better understand the needs of new department leaders, as well as the availability and effectiveness of support provided by school districts and professional organizations. To be eligible to participate, you must currently be a department leader with less than 48 months of experience in a department leadership role.

This questionnaire is anonymous and neither you nor your school or district will be identified in any way. As a participant, you will be asked to provide non-identifying demographic information, complete a survey, answer two open-ended questions and four optional reflection questions.

Your responses should take about 20 minutes to complete. There are no known or anticipated risks involved in participating in this study. While there is no direct benefit for your participation in the study, it is reasonable to expect that this study will provide information of value for the entire field of education.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, Bryan Sarandrea, at Bryan.Sarandrea@my.liu.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Laura Seinfeld, at Laura.Seinfeld@liu.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board Administrator, Dr. Theresa Faughnan, at Theresa.Faughnan@liu.edu.

By choosing "Agree to Participate" below, you indicate that you have fully read the above text and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purpose and procedures of this study. If you choose not to participate, please choose "Decline to Participate or simply close the browser.

Thank you for your consideration and support of my dissertation research.

Bryan Sarandrea
Doctoral Student and Study Director
Long Island University

Participation in this study:
- [ ] Agree to Participate
- [ ] Decline to Participate
The Experiences of Novice Department Leaders

For each of the following statements, please click on the choice that is most applicable. This information is not personally identifiable and will be kept confidential.

What grades are you responsible for supervising in your role?
- [ ] Districtwide
- [ ] Secondary
- [ ] High School Only
- [ ] Middle School Only
- [ ] Elementary Only

How long have you been working in a department leadership role?
- [ ] 1-12 months
- [ ] 13-24 months
- [ ] 25-36 months
- [ ] 37-48 months

Do you have any teaching responsibilities?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

What department(s) are you responsible for supervising?

____________________________

Gender Identification
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Prefer not to answer

Age
- [ ] under 34
- [ ] 34-42
- [ ] 43-50
- [ ] over 50
Number of teachers under department supervision
- 0-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- over 30

Number of students in district
- 0-1,000
- 1,001-2,000
- 2,001-3,000
- over 3,000

Who is your direct supervisor?
- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Principal
- Other

Other (please specify)
Experiences

The following statements are related to your experiences as a novice department leader. Please read each statement and click the corresponding bubble to indicate your view.

- My current district has provided opportunities for me to meet with a leadership team to discuss school improvement and related administrative topics.
  - Yes
  - No

- My current district has provided mandatory professional development for me this past year.
  - Yes
  - No

- My current district has provided voluntary professional development for me this past year.
  - Yes
  - No

- My current district provided me with mentoring or coaching.
  - Yes
  - No

- I meet regularly, one on one, with my direct supervisor over the course of the school year
  - Yes
  - No

- My current district provides professional development opportunities specifically for department leaders.
  - Yes
  - No

My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader.

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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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My current district has facilitated a successful transition for me as a new department leader.

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My current district has provided voluntary professional development that has increased my sense of preparedness for my role.

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My current district provided an adequate amount of training during my first year(s) as a department leader.

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Mentoring provided by my current district has been valuable to my development as a leader.

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My current district provided an adequate amount of time for me to meet with my supervisor.

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Mentors or coaches provided by my current district have the skills to provide high quality mentoring/coaching.

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I have grown in the area of **instructional leadership** because of district provided learning experiences.

1 Strongly Disagree  2 Disagree  3 Neutral  4 Agree  5 Strongly Agree

I have grown in the area of **organizational leadership** because of district provided learning experiences.

1 Strongly Disagree  2 Disagree  3 Neutral  4 Agree  5 Strongly Agree

I have grown in the area of **curriculum development** because of district provided learning experiences.

1 Strongly Disagree  2 Disagree  3 Neutral  4 Agree  5 Strongly Agree

I have grown in the area of **assessment** because of district provided learning experiences.

1 Strongly Disagree  2 Disagree  3 Neutral  4 Agree  5 Strongly Agree

I have grown in the area of **providing support for students** because of district provided learning experiences.

1 Strongly Disagree  2 Disagree  3 Neutral  4 Agree  5 Strongly Agree
I have grown in the area of **understanding professional norms** because of district provided learning experiences.

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I have opportunities to interact with other individuals in the region who hold a similar title.

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Professional organizations related to my subject area(s) provide valuable professional development opportunities.

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Professional organizations related to my subject area(s) provide mentoring or coaching.

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For any statements that you rated "Strongly Disagree," please provide details in the space below to explain why.

For any statements that you rated "Strongly Agree," please provide details in the space below to explain why.
Optional Reflection Questions

The following, optional, questions allow you to share details related to your experiences as a department leader. Please share your answers to the questions below in the spaces provided after each question.

Describe the most significant challenges you had to overcome as a novice department leader.

Describe your most significant accomplishment as a novice department leader.

Reflecting on what you know now, is there anything you wish you had done differently to prepare for this role? If so, please explain.

Is there anything else you would like to share? If so, please share below.
Appendix C

Study Recruitment Email

Dear (Name of Organization Executive Board Member and/or email contact),

I am a doctoral candidate at Long Island University and I have been a building chairperson and K-12 department leader for the past eight years after working for 12 years as a social studies teacher. My dissertation questionnaire addresses novice department leaders’ perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of professional learning experiences. I am seeking participation from current chair people and department leaders on Long Island with no more than four years of department leadership experience.

I am writing to ask your help in distributing the link to my online, voluntary, anonymous questionnaire, which is available at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WCGPXCH. I would be very grateful if you would share this link with the members of your organization to share with their leadership team (or share directly with members of your organization). The survey takes only about 15 minutes and does not ask for any information that could identify specific individuals, their school, or their district. More details about my study are provided in the introduction on the first page of the survey.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for helping me with my dissertation. I have shared a draft of an email below that could be used to disseminate the information. I will gladly provide any additional information you might request. If you would like to receive an executive summary of my study, please contact me at Bryan.Sarandrea@my.liu.edu.

Sincerely,

Bryan Sarandrea, Doctoral Candidate
Long Island University, LIU Post Campus

Good Morning,

I have been asked to share a questionnaire to support the dissertation study of Bryan Sarandrea, a doctoral candidate at Long Island University. The study addresses department leaders’ perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of professional learning experiences. He is seeking participation from current chair people and department leaders on Long Island with no more than four years of department leadership experience.

The questionnaire is available at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WCGPXCH, and takes only about 15 minutes. It does not ask for any information that could identify specific individuals, their school, or their district. Additionally, the anonymous survey does not collect the IP address of respondents. More details about the study are provided in the introduction on the first page of the survey.
NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:
Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation, suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

TO:
Laura Seinfeld - Principal Investigator
Bryan Sarandrea - Student Investigator

FROM: LIU Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 03, 2023

PROTOCOL TITLE: Supporting Novice Department Leaders

PROTOCOL ID NO: 23/05-057

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt

ACTION: IRB Exempt Determination/Approval

Your application has been reviewed using the University’s Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) administrative review process and can be considered to be an EXEMPT methodology/approach as defined in 45 CFR 46.104.d.2:

Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: i. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation, or iii. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subject, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).
Please note: Revisions and amendments to the research activity must be promptly reported to the IRB for review and approval prior to the commencement of the revised protocol. **If the project is amended so that it is no longer considered to be exempt research as per the federal definitions, it will be necessary for the investigators to submit an application for full committee review.**

Verification of Institutional Review Board (IRB) Exempt Determination/Approval

**LIU IRB ID:** 23/05-057

**Project Title:** Supporting Novice Department Leaders
LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)  

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Supporting Novice Department Leaders

Faculty Investigator: Dr. Laura Seinfeld, Dean, LIU Post College of Education, Information, & Technology, 720 Northern Blvd, Greenvale, NY 11548, Laura.Seinfeld@liu.edu, (516) 299-4122.

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You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later.

Why is this research being done?  
This research is being done to better understand the needs of new department leaders, as well as the availability and effectiveness of support provided by school districts and professional organizations. To be eligible to participate, you must currently be a K-12 department leader or building department chairperson with no more than 48 months of experience in a department leadership role. However, this will not include assistant principals, assistant superintendents, or district superintendents who assume department leadership responsibilities.

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Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate.
If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
No.

Will you be paid if you join this study?
No.

How will the confidentiality of your biospecimens and/or data be protected?
Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Long Island University Institutional Review Board and officials from government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the Office for Human Research Protections. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

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☐ I agree to participate
☐ I decline to participate

____________ Date