

Evaluating the WELS Principal Training Program

by

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Abstract

The Principal Training Program started in 2014 as a proactive effort by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to train new graduates to serve as principals in their elementary schools. The number of principal vacancies is outpacing the number of individuals willing and qualified to fill the WELS's current and future principal needs. The purpose of this study is to discover what experiences the participants in the PTP had that helped prepare them and how prepared they felt to be a school principal in the WELS. The participants of the PTP were asked a series of questions aimed at better understanding the successes and challenges of the PTP. The research was designed by analyzing the responses from mentors and protégés who participated in the PTP, and found that those who entered the PTP as protégé felt prepared to be a principal and valued their time spent as a part of the PTP. Those who served in PTP as a mentor feel protégés are ready to be principals and would take on another PTP protégé.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Problem Statement

Many Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) congregations operate elementary schools and high schools. There are roughly 282 elementary schools and 26 high schools across the church body. The WELS church body has 2,459 teachers and 273 principals serve as gospel ministers in those schools. Staffing those schools with people who are able to teach and lead in a ministry setting is challenging (WELS, 2022).

To help meet those staffing challenges, the WELS operates Martin Luther College to prepare men and women for the ministry needs of the WELS, including in Lutheran schools. The college has programs to train teachers at the undergraduate level and programs to train school leaders at the graduate level. However, in recent years, the need for more teachers and school leaders has outpaced the number of candidates the college has produced.

In the past, it was common for newly trained teachers to also be given the principal role upon graduation with a bachelor's degree, even though the beginning teachers had no previous leadership training or experiences. The practice of assigning graduates as principals is likely one of the reasons that have resulted in 40% of WELS principals reporting in a 2013 WELS convention report saying they would not like to be a principal (Granberg, 2013). One in eight WELS elementary schools filled the principal position with an interim to start the 2021-2022 school year. These two statistics follow in line with a national survey of principals in which 75% of respondents said the principal

role is becoming too complex. Synod leaders addressed this problem in several ways, one of which was a Principal Training Program (Meyer, 2016, Meyer; 2021).

The Principal Training Program (PTP) is a proactive effort led by local Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) schools and the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools. The program seeks to give hands-on experience to young men who are possible candidates for the principal positions in WELS elementary schools. The program started in 2014 with its first candidate.

The program's goals are nuanced and difficult to measure for success, yet these goals are crucial to understanding and evaluating the success of the PTP. Two men heavily involved in the development of the PTP were Kyle Bender and Jim Rademan. Kyle is a WELS principal at Immanuel Lutheran School in Greenville, Wisconsin, and Jim is the director for The Commission on Lutheran Schools. When the PTP started, it was and still is a goal to give young men hands-on experience to help prepare them to be ready to face the challenges and blessings of being a WELS principal. This goal was identified because many principals were leaving ministry within their first seven years after being assigned as a principal out of Martin Luther College (Rademan, 2022). The belief was that if these guys were first given experience under the mentorship of a veteran principal and school ministry, they would be better prepared to handle the staffing, financial, relationship-building, and administrative challenges of the principal position and less likely to leave the ministry or leave principal positions.

Another goal of the Principal Training Program was to address the future needs of WELS leadership in schools. The number of principals retiring or projected to retire is outpacing the number of qualified individuals willing to take divine calls to serve as

principals. Creating a new model to train principals was needed because the old model of assigning new graduates from Martin Luther College (MLC) to serve schools as principals was proving unsustainable.

The researcher contacted Mr. Rademan and Mr. Bender to discover what they would like to uncover about the PTP. What is interesting is how similar both of their interests aligned. Both men want to know what PTP experiences helped prepare participants for ministry and what qualities the mentor had that made the PTP a positive or negative experience. Mr. Bender specifically was interested in developing a "measuring tool" for past members of the PTP to help understand what they did in the PTP that is helping them now in ministry.

The two goals of the PTP are:

1. Give men graduating from MLC hands-on experience before becoming WELS principals.
2. Meet the needs of WELS schools by giving men the training to become principals and be part of the solution to satisfy current and future principal vacancies.

Though this program has been in place for seven years and has produced twenty candidates for principal positions, no evaluation of the program has yet been done.

Purpose of the Study

Evaluating the PTP is an essential step in understanding past success and future challenges of the PTP. The PTP is a crucial mentorship program that can help young men entering ministry to better serve their congregations, schools, and students. Qualified principals matter. In 2021 *Issues in Lutheran Education* quoted the Wallace Foundation, which found that a principal has nearly the same impact on student achievement as a

classroom teacher. This finding is significant because a classroom teacher only has influence over their students for one year and only possibly more if they teach in a multi-grade setting. Principals impact every child in the school every year (Meyer, 2021).

The PTP is a tool that WELS leaders can use to positively impact WELS schools across the synod. Having qualified individuals step in to take the place of retiring principals, or vacant positions can help to decrease disruption to a school's culture and mission. Currently, the WELS is approaching the issue of a lack of principal leaders through various approaches, including the WELS Principal Credential Cohort, which aims to train current teachers and prepare them to become principals. The PTP exists to give new MLC graduates experience in teaching, leading school programs, and a mentor relationship. May the Lord fulfill the void of principal leadership between these various approaches.

The author of this work served in the PTP from 2015 to 2018. The researcher served Immanuel Lutheran School in Greenville, Wisconsin as a sixth-grade teacher and vice principal. While serving in the program, the researcher's mentor was Richard (Dick) Huebner. While the researcher's experience included many difficult days and challenges, overall, his experience was excellent. The researcher felt the PTP gave him the needed training and confidence to enter ministry and impact the Lord's kingdom. Four years removed from them being in the PTP, the researcher still reflects on lessons learned during his time at Immanuel. The researcher still values his mentor relationship with his mentor and relies on him for counsel in my current ministry.

The researcher thinks it is important to consider why he felt blessed to have the opportunity to enter the PTP. Upon graduation from high school, The researcher enlisted

in the United States Navy and served four years honorably, making three deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. During his time in the service, the researcher served under a wide variety of leaders. He learned the importance of leadership and the positive and negative effect it has on an organization's mission. When nearing the end of his undergraduate studies at MLC, The researcher was presented with the opportunity to join the PTP. Determining that since he was older than a traditional student, already had some real-world working experience, and did well in his student teaching internships, it was possible that the researcher would be assigned as a principal on assignment day. The researcher wanted to be proactive and get some mentorship before taking on the responsibilities of being a principal and teacher in a WELS school. During his undergraduate coursework, the idea of being a principal was appealing, and the opportunity to get a jump on principal leadership while having a mentor seemed like too big a blessing to pass up.

1. To what extent do PTP completers feel prepared for the principal position?
2. Is the PTP producing enough principal candidates to be considered a part of the solution of satisfying current and future principal vacancies?
3. What experiences did men participating in the PTP have that helped or hurt them in their pursuit to serve the Lord as a principal?

Definition of Terms

WELS. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A Lutheran church synod with 1,264 churches in fellowship with one another across North America. These churches operate early childhood ministries, elementary schools, high schools, Martin Luther College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

MLC. Martin Luther College. The WELS college of ministry, located in New Ulm, Minnesota, established in 1995 with the mission of training a corps of Christian witnesses to meet the ministry needs of the WELS.

PTP. Principal Training Program. A three-year program where new graduates from MLC who are prospective principals are matched up with a current WELS principal and school for mentorship and hands-on leadership and teaching experience.

CLS. Commission on Lutheran Schools. A WELS commission established to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools.

Protégé. A teaching graduate of Martin Luther College who is currently or was in three year Principal Training Program, designed to give new graduates teaching and administrative training.

Mentor. A Called WELS principal who has taken on a protégé through the Principal Training Program.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this research is the author as in the PTP from 2015 to 2018. Not only was he in the program, but his experience was excellent. His mentor was a colleague he considers himself blessed to work with and someone who has become a dear friend.

The congregation that the researcher served wholeheartedly bought into the idea of having a teacher who was learning to be a principal and would leave the school after three years. The congregation's goal was to use the PTP as a model for other congregations, the same way the church mentored vicars and the school took on student teachers. This mindset by the congregation helped the researcher have a positive experience with his mentor and the congregation at large when his time in the PTP concluded. The author certainly faced challenges while in the PTP, but undoubtedly also knew the program's benefits.

Overview

This study sought to understand the effectiveness of the Principal Training Program by determining how prepared PTP protégés feel ready to take on the role of WELS principal. The study also sought to understand what experiences participants in the PTP had that made the experience valuable. PTP mentors and protégés were surveyed, and the results are presented in Chapter IV, and recommendations are explained in Chapter V.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The sources for this literature review were limited to mentorship in education, both classroom teaching and principal or school leader mentorship. The sources were also limited to the past 15 years, meaning this literature is not a full-scale historical review of mentorship in education. Instead, it is a review of the current trends, themes, and commonalities. The literature was limited to the most recent 15 years because characteristics between different generations change, evaluating the current research suggests formulating successful relationships. The blog *Issues in Lutheran Education*, which MLC produces, was used to help partner what the secular world is saying about mentorship to the current challenges principals face in the WELS. Through understanding the current difficulties in mentorship in the WELS, the goals of the PTP can be better understood.

Current WELS Principal Challenges

Entering the 2021-2022 school year, one in eight WELS schools had an interim principal (Meyer, 2021). One of the main issues Meyer's research suggests that have led to the current principal shortage in the WELS is insufficient training (Meyer, 2017). This thesis will focus on the role of principal training. By combining secular and WELS-specific research on principal challenges, I'll address principal training as a solution to the current challenges principals face (Steinberg & Yang, 2020).

School principals and administrations need to be prepared. The National Policy Board for Educational Administrators has published standards for school leaders to strive for in the principal profession. The core purpose of these standards is to inspire staff,

improve schools, and promote student learning. These standards are a model that communicates the expectations and the role of the principal to policymakers and the public. In the WELS setting, these standards communicate to the congregational leaders, congregational members, and community families the role and expectations of the principal (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration lists and defines these ten professional standards for educational leaders:

1. Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.
2. Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
3. Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
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.
5. Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.
6. Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

7. Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
8. Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
9. Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
10. Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Given the complexity of these standards, school leaders and specifically principals, need the proper training to become the type of leaders that students can count on to help them reach their full potential. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration emphasizes the need for training as they describe these standards being a model for leaders to work toward and use to help them make decisions and guide their understanding of the principal responsibilities because achieving these standards is a work in progress. Refining and developing skills to reach these standards require training and preparation (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The WELS also developed a set of standards for men serving the synod as principals. These standards are the benchmark for all WELS principals to work toward in their ministry. These standards cannot be achieved without the proper understanding and training in school leadership. The eight standards defined within four domains by the WELS exemplify the need for mentorship.

Domain I: Spiritual Leadership

Standard One. An effective Lutheran school principal is a person of faith.

Standard Two. An effective Lutheran school principal fosters a Christ-centered vision for the spiritual and academic success of all children under his care.

Domain II: Instructional Leadership

Standard Three. An effective Lutheran school principal knows how to teach.

Standard Four. An effective Lutheran school principal fosters a culture of student spiritual growth and academic achievement.

Standard Five. An effective Lutheran school principal enables, supports, and coaches teachers and staff to faithfully serve God's people through the growth and use of their gifts.

Domain III: Administrative Leadership

Standard Six. An effective Lutheran school principal wisely manages the school facilities and resources for a safe, efficient, organized, and effective learning environment.

Domain IV: Community Leadership

Standard Seven. An effective Lutheran school principal reaches out to and engages the school, congregation, synod, and local community

Standard Eight. An effective Lutheran school principal understands both the local and broader context in which the school exists.

With the unique set of challenges WELS principals face, meeting these standards can only be done through a combination of coursework, experience, and mentorship. These standards are designed to benefit the students directly and indirectly in the

principal's care. Given the importance and complexity of this task, WELS principals need proper training, including mentorship, to reach these standards (MLC Ministry Certification, 2022).

Lutheran principals need to be afforded a proper understanding of the role of the principal before being called to a school to serve as principal. Mentorship is integral to giving principals the training needed to be influential school leaders.

Educational researcher and professor Grissom et al. (2021) addressed the importance of mentorship by establishing the effect principals have on students and schools. Their research builds on earlier research by Leithwood (2004), which found that school principals are second only to classroom instruction when it comes to student learning. Grissom et al. set to examine what makes an effective principal, how the role of the principal has changed, and the effects of principals on their schools and students. Grissom et al. determined four main leadership behaviors drive student outcomes. These four are:

- Engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers.
- Building a productive school climate.
- Facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities.
- Managing personnel and resources strategically.

Given the complexity of each of these behaviors, it can be understood that principals need mentors and learning communities to facilitate these behaviors in their professions (Grissom, 2021).

The first leadership behavior of engaging in instructional-focused interaction with teachers is grouped into three categories: observation and evaluation, feedback and

coaching, and the establishment of data-driven instructional programs. These are the ways principals have direct contact and communication with teachers. An essential aspect of having successful professional interactions with teachers and principals can secure teacher buy-in around the programs the principal is establishing. To help facilitate these positive professional interactions, the principal needs to seek successful research-based programs and utilize principal communities to implement the observation and evaluation, feedback and coaching, and the establishment of data-driven instructional programs (Grissom et al., 2021).

Grissom et al. next point on leadership behavior is building a positive school climate. School climate describes how teachers, staff, and students feel when inside or considering their school building. According to educational researchers Bevel and Mitchell, the factors that contribute to a positive school climate for teachers are collaboration, engagement with data, organizational learning, and a culture of continuous improvement. Grissom and coauthors describe the process of enabling these factors to occur. One part of the process is building trust among teachers, and part of building trust is a willingness to collaborate with other school leaders, which is a part of the mentorship process (Grissom, 2021).

For principals building a productive school, climate extends beyond the classroom and teachers. Principals also need to focus on building trust with parents and the community. In schools where parental and community involvement is higher, so is academic achievement. Increasing parental involvement also contributes to lowering student suspensions for disciplinary reasons. New principals can benefit from mentor relationships to build a community of support among parents and the community. These

mentor relationships help make inroads into the community and parental groups (Grissom, 2021).

Perhaps the most significant connection to principal mentorship described by Grissom et al. is about the impact principals have on schools is the leadership behavior of facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities. This behavior is characterized in which all parties involved in the collaborative relationship are equal in working toward a common goal with shared resources, responsibilities, and accountability.

Principals who are influential instructional leaders provide time and support for learning communities to reach their goals. Principals should engage directly with professional learning communities to demonstrate the importance of collaboration among teachers, which, in return, builds trust among teachers and gives teachers a sense of the shared responsibility the principal has in supporting student success (Grissom, 2021). Principals can model effective professional learning communities by engaging in collaborative groups among fellow principals and mentorship relationships.

The last leadership behavior described are strategically managing personnel and resources. Using the word strategic means optimizing how scarce resources are used to support teaching and learning (Grissom, 2021). These resources can be tangible, such as money and personnel, and intangible, such as time and social capital. Some evidence suggests that principals who spend time interacting with parents and community members see high reading scores (Hornig, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Navigating the complexities of using tangible and intangible resources is challenging, and principal mentors can better handle these challenges.

Mentorship Models

Current models for mentorship are somewhat varied across states and nations. What is understood is the importance of mentorship. What is not yet known is the best model. Many factors affect what mentorship model is best, from the size and location of the school, district policies, and state mandates. Perhaps the most significant factor is the makeup of personnel within a district and individual school. As described in the mentor and mentee characteristics section, the mindset of the individuals in the mentorship relationship is the most crucial factor to achieve success (Grossman & Davis, 2012).

Currently, for principals and new school leaders, there are two main mentorship models in practice. There are, of course, individual schools and districts doing things slightly differently. The two main models are to partner a mentee with an experienced mentor for one to five years. The other model is to have a team of mentors assigned to a group of new principals. So new principals do not get one mentor but a team (Gray, 2018).

Of course, there are drawbacks and benefits to both. The benefit to the one-to-one approach is the possibility for deep relationships where both the mentor and the mentee get to know each other well and realize the strengths and weaknesses of each other. The drawback is the real possibility that the mentor and mentee are not a good match. Without anyone else available, the mentee can be brought down by a negative relationship (Lipke & Apthorpe, 2019; Kumar & Blake-Beard, 2012). A benefit to the team approach is that all the mentors will be qualified because they had to get approval based on a stricter set of standards to mentor a group of new principals. Another benefit is that a mentee will have more people to turn to for mentorship advice. A serious negative is that mentors and

mentees are not given the same opportunity to form deep relationships. Also, research suggests that when a team is used to mentor new leaders, there is less buy-in from the mentees (Gray, 2018). These accepted trends of benefits and drawbacks have led to varied approaches by states and school districts.

In the past decade, the WELS has started two programs to help address the needs of needed mentorship in principals. The Principal Training Program targets men graduating from MLC, giving them three years of experience before exposing them to becoming principals themselves. Hopefully, one of the outcomes of the PTP will be fewer principals being assigned as principals right out of MLC. Ending this practice is crucial as only 0.75% of WELS teachers feel that a bachelor of science in education is enough training to become a principal (Meyer, 2016). The second program started by the WELS CLS is the Principal Credential Cohort. This program targets current WELS teachers and gives them education, training, and mentorship to prepare the participants to become principals (Meyer, 2021). These two programs both address the importance of having a mentor relationship for principal candidates to succeed in school administrative leadership.

Mentorship Outcomes

Researchers have long understood the benefits of mentorship. Desired outcomes have traditionally been to keep qualified individuals in the teaching and school leader workforce and improve teaching to improve student achievement (Gumus, 2019). More recently, researchers are discovering that principals through a mentorship program can help increase student retention, improve school culture, and decrease the number of staffing issues schools traditionally face (Kay, Hagan,& Parker, 2009), Although some

benefits are abstract in the narrative, the improvement with a school on the teachers and students is real and known.

Currently, the WELS is going through the process of adapting to the needs of the synod. Clearly, there is a lack of qualified people willing to take on principal positions. Interestingly, there is not a lack of people qualified to become principals. This distinction is important because it highlights the need to address the challenges associated with the school principal position (Meyer, 2017). Research suggests that if challenges are solved in public and private education, teacher turnover can be reduced, and student learning will benefit (Meyer, 2021; Steinberg & Yang, 2020).

Researchers Grissom et al. (2021) studied the effect of interventions such as mentorship programs to support principals. New Leaders Aspiring Principals Program, Inspired Leadership in Pennsylvania, and the Principal Pipeline Initiative are three mentorship programs that support early career principals. Principals participating in this program all had increased reading and math scores. Grissom also studied interventions such as mentorship to support principals regardless of how long they have been principals. They found that veteran teachers were less likely to see increases in student achievement than beginning principals. However, teachers reported better principal leadership and school climate from principals participating in some mentorship programs.

Educational researchers and authors Hall et al. (2016) addressed the importance of mentorship for principals Hall established a framework for developing leadership in principals. Hall describes one of the first things that needs to be established is a growth mindset for current and aspiring principals. If a growth mindset does not exist in school

leaders, school improvement, teacher professional growth, and student learning are not likely to occur.

Hall et al. (2016) addresses two pathways to develop leadership in principals. The first is at a school level, and the other is at a district level. The school level does not include establishing mentor relationships. At the district level, Hall and his co-authors describe the importance of having mentors for principal and principal candidates:-

Professional development is essential for principals and prospective principals. However, mentors can combine the effects of professional development with job-embedded coaching and feedback, and leaders can apply their learning and skills at a 95% increased rate of effectiveness with a mentor (Hall et al., 2016). One in every five principals leaves their schools within the first or second year of becoming a principal. This turnover negatively affects teacher and student learning and achievement (Hall et al., 2016). This is why mentors are uniquely important at the district level. Matching principals together as mentors help to ensure the right people are in the right places at the right time because the difficulties and challenges of the principal position. Having a mentor will not only help with professional development but also skill development (Hall et al., 2016).

Hall et al. (2016) describe a process of selecting mentor principals. Mentor principals assist in developing aspiring principals within a given school district or organization. Mentors serve many roles and can identify and develop future leaders and create a web of support for both veteran and new principals:- Because the role of mentors is essential, selecting mentors who are professional, supportive, caring, and respectful is

crucial. Hall et al. offer a sample of questions for school districts to consider before making a principal a mentor. These sample questions are:

1. What are the tenets of successful mentoring?
2. Tell about an experience where you felt your mentoring efforts were successful.
3. Describe the methodology that you will use to develop a coaching/ mentoring plan.
4. How will you measure the impact of your mentoring efforts?
5. What adjustments will you make when sufficient progress isn't made?
6. Imagine that I (the interviewer) am your protégé and I confide in you that I am having difficulty garnering staff support of an instructional initiative. Engage me in a conversation to simulate how you would approach the mentor-protégé dialogue.

The importance of mentorship programs is evident. The need for a positive mentor- protégé is essential. Student success and teacher development are on the line, and mentorship programs give principals, teachers, and, most importantly, students a better outlook on success.

Summary

The importance of mentors for beginning teachers and principals is well documented in WELS school settings and other school systems. Studies suggest that positive mentor relationships for principals increase student learning, staff retention and positively impact school culture. Understanding the mentorship needs of emerging and veteran principals and the benefits it has on students and the individuals participating in

the mentorship relationship is essential. Both WELS and other school systems are working toward furthering the use of mentors to address the challenges of school leadership.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

WELS elementary schools continue to face a shortage of qualified school leaders. To address this need, the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools have started the Principal Training Program, which aims to identify men graduating from Martin Luther College who have the potential to serve as principals and give them experiences to sharpen their leadership skills and prepare them for the unique challenges of the principal role. I sought to determine what experiences these men had while serving in the PTP that they felt helped them or hurt them and how the PTP enabled them to become school leaders, specifically school principals.

1. To what extent do PTP completers feel prepared for the principal position?
2. Is the PTP producing enough principal candidates to be considered a part of the solution of satisfying current and future principal vacancies?
3. What experiences did men participating in the PTP have that helped or hurt them in their pursuit to serve the Lord as a principal?

Research Design and Procedures

This study is a descriptive study of the people who participated in the program. The questions asked were both open open-ended and forced choice. Both protégés and mentors were asked four open-ended questions in an effort to provide feedback on individual experiences. From these responses, themes were identified based on similarities of responses. Multiple themes were identified from the individual responses. For example, if a mentor mentioned meeting together regularly and studying God's Word together, his response was used to bring attention to both themes.

The scale that protégés and mentors responded to in the questions was a one to five scale. With one representing strong disagreement or strong dissatisfaction and five representing strong agreement or strong satisfaction. In this study 87.5% of the participants in the PTP who completed the program had experiences that helped them become a principal—again leading to the conclusion that the design of the PTP led protégés to have experiences that helped them feel ready to be a principal.

The research for this study considered both the protégés and mentors who participated in the PTP. Participants were asked a series of questions to help the author better understand the specific actions and character traits of mentors who helped prepare their protégé to feel ready to take a leadership role in education. The questions were also designed to allow protégés to rate their experiences and give specific feedback about what they did while participating in the PTP that helped them in their current role as principal or current role in education. Finally, the study's design provided helpful information on what actions and experiences the people in the PTP had that led to their readiness to serve in the WELS as a school principal.

All the participants, both mentors and protégés, in the Principal Training Program were asked to complete a survey about their experiences in the PTP. Participants were given one week to complete the survey. Participants were sent one follow-up email four days after the survey was sent to them.

Population and Sample

Since the inception of the PTP, the WELS and CLS have had fifteen different men currently serving as principals to mentor the twenty different men who have served in the PTP as protégés. The protégés are assigned out of MLC after graduation by the

WELS assignment committee to serve the school they are assigned to. Prior to PTP, none of the protégé participants had teaching experience. Commonly, in addition to serving as protégé participants in the PTP, these men also serve in teaching positions also. For example, a PTP will be assigned to the congregation as a teacher and PTP participant. After three years of mentorship, the protégé is given the opportunity to evaluate Divine Calls to another congregation as a principal. In some cases, after three years in the PTP, the protégés are assigned by the assignment committee to serve a specific school as a principal.

This study is limited to a cohort group of people. Only people who participated in the PTP were asked and responded to questions seeking to understand how prepared the participants felt the PTP made them.

Using a list compiled by the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools, the researcher emailed all the participants of the PTP, both protégés and mentors asking them to participate in my study. The email contained a link to the Google Forms survey. Responses were kept anonymous to the other participants and me.

Twenty-one men have participated in the program as protégés of those twenty-one, twenty were contacted. The one protégé not contacted to complete the survey is the researcher of this study, as his opinion could be biased as a participant in the program and the researcher. Fourteen of the twenty protégés responded to the survey for a response rate of 66%. Not all protégés have completed the PTP. Some responses are from men who are currently completing the program. Because they have not completed the program, there were some questions they answered as "not applicable" because these questions were for PTP protégés who are currently principals.

The PTP has produced seven men who completed the full three-year program and are currently serving as principals. The other thirteen men are either still in the PTP or have not accepted divine calls to serve a different school as principals.

Fifteen men participated in the program as mentors and all fifteen were contacted to participate in the survey. Fourteen of the fifteen mentors respond to the survey with a response rate of 93%. The mentors are selected and asked to participate in the PTP by the CLS. Fourteen of the fifteen mentors in the PTP are still currently serving as principals in the WELS. One is retired.

Instrumentation

Protégés of the PTP were asked to respond to questions to understand the relationship between what experiences they had while in the PTP and how ready they felt about taking a position in a WELS school as principal. The questions also seek to determine the effectiveness through questions about the relationship between those who completed the PTP and those now serving in an administrative position at a WELS school.

Mentors in the PTP were asked a series of questions to understand better what experiences of the PTP were effective and helpful for their protégé be ready for a principal position in the WELS. The questions are also designed to allow mentors to consider if they would take on protégés in the future or if they would recommend the PTP to current undergraduate students. Responses to these questions provided data on the future of the PTP and if the program is producing enough participants to help meet the need for current principal vacancies.

Data was gathered electronically via an electronic survey in Google Forms. The survey included opened ended questions and forced choice questions in which participants were asked to rate their experiences in the PTP using a scale of one through five, with five being high and one being low. Mentors and protégés were asked a different set of questions within the same survey. The survey questions are included in Appendix A.

Data Analysis Procedures

The responses were converted to a Google spreadsheet using Google Forms, and figures were created using Microsoft Excel. Open-ended responses were analyzed in Google Forms, with responses to individual questions grouped together.

To analyze the open-ended questions, the researcher printed, compared, and contrasted the responses to identify themes. Themes were identified by looking for similarities and keywords within the responses. For each question the researcher color-coded the responses based on the themes. Some themes, such as the importance of communication between mentor and protégés, applied to all the questions. Some themes, such as the importance of protégés observing their mentors, only applied to one set of responses to one question. Each response by each mentor or protégé was reviewed for unique answers that gave individuality to the responses.

The number of themes identified varied based on the responses to the question. The responses with the most themes were the open-ended questions asked to the protégés about their experiences in the PTP that have helped them in their current ministry. Within this question, seven themes were identified the other open-ended questions generated between three and five themes per question. The theme most clearly identified through

the responses of protégés was the importance of communication between the mentors and the protégés.

A rating scale of one through five was used to analyze the forced-choice questions. To both protégés and mentors, the scale was described as one being low and five being high regarding agreeing with the statement or questions. For example, one of the survey statements that mentors had to respond to reference if the PTP was doing an effective job and preparing WELS principals mentors were given the one through five rating scale. With this type of question, responding with one meant a “very bad” job preparing PTP participants to become WELS principals. Responding with a two meant a “bad” job and preparing PTP participants to become WELS principals. Responding with a three meant the person responding was “neutral” or did not think the PTP was doing a particularly good or bad job preparing PTP participants to become WELS principals. Responding with a four meant the PTP is doing a “good” job of preparing PTP participants to become WELS principals. Responding with a five meant the PTP was doing a “very good” job preparing PTP participants to become WELS principals.

Using a rating scale of one through five effectively measured the support or discontentment toward the question or statement the survey responders were asked to react to. Responses of one and two were not grouped but were considered negative or disagreeing with the question or statement. Responses of four and five were not grouped but were considered positive and supported the question or statement.

Limitations

The study is a descriptive study of the effectiveness of the PTP. Participants were not studied before they entered the PTP and again after they finished the PTP. With this

in mind, personal experiences will be influenced by several incalculable factors, including the school's location, faculty, and congregational support of the PTP.

The working and personal relationship between a mentor and his protégé will undoubtedly affect the emotional feelings that mentors and protégés will have toward the PTP. These relationships will affect how participants answer these questions, both positively and negatively.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to have a better understanding of the impact the PTP is making in addressing the principal needs in the elementary schools in the WELS. The questions this hopes to answer are:

1. To what extent do PTP completers feel prepared for the principal position?
2. Is the PTP producing enough principal candidates to be considered a part of the solution of satisfying current and future principal vacancies?
3. What experiences did men participating in the PTP have that helped or hurt them in their pursuit to serve the Lord as a principal?

Summary of Protégé Responses

The first open-ended question for protégés asked what experiences they had while in the PTP that have helped them in their current ministry. The most common response was about communication. Eight of the thirteen responses mentioned meeting with and communicating with their mentor as something that has currently helped them. The second theme identified through the responses of protégés was about getting the opportunity to be part of or observe the duties of a principal. Eight of the thirteen responses mentioned the opportunity to observe or take part in but not lead a school initiative. The third theme through protégés' responses was how protégés had the opportunity to better understand a school's daily and yearly operations. Many responses to this question included the phrase "seeing how a school works." Six of the fourteen responses mentioned school operations have benefited them in their current ministry. The final consistent theme that protégés provided was focusing on teaching first. Five of the

thirteen responses addressed the benefit of the opportunity to observe teaching and the opportunity to teach themselves.

The second open ended question asked protégés what experiences they did not have in the PTP that would have helped them in their current ministry. Two clear themes were identified through the responses. The most common response was “nothing”. Eight of the thirteen protégés who responded said there is nothing they would like to have done differently or gotten the opportunity to participate in. The other theme identified through this question was the protégé's desire to participate in or observe more of the daily or yearly school operations. Five of the thirteen responses asked for training on how a school operates, such as hiring or firing personnel or bookkeeping.

The third open-ended question asked of protégés asked them what qualities their mentor had that helped them prepare to become a school principal. Similar to responses of other questions, protégées identified the ability and willingness to communicate as being a critical takeaway from the PTP. Eight of the thirteen responses mentioned communication. The second identifiable theme was the experience the mentor had. Six of the thirteen protégés identified their mentor's experience as a quality their mentor had that helped them. The three other themes identified through this question, with four of the thirteen protégés responding, were that mentors were flexible, desired to see them succeed, and were faithful to God's word.

The last open-ended question for protégés asked how their mentor impacted their satisfaction. Of all the questions asked to mentors and protégés, the responses to this question were unanimous, with thirteen of thirteen respondents saying their mentor positively impacted their experience. Specifically, protégés responded to this question by

using phrases like greatly, very much so, incredible, the main reason, definitely, and highly.

Each mentor and school setting is unique the experience of the protégés in the PTP is unique. Protégés were asked about experiences in the PTP that benefited them in the current ministry. Even if the exact experiences differed between protégés, it is crucial to discover the different experiences the PTP provided to help protégés feel ready to take on the unique challenges of being a WELS principal.

When asked about what experiences they had that helped protégés in their current ministry, one response centered around getting the opportunity to observe and then participate in "meeting preparation" as one thing that has helped them in their current ministry. When asked about what experience they did not have that would have helped them, one responder centered his responses on not getting enough time to work with his mentor because of the amount of coursework the protégé was taking. When asked about what qualities their mentor had, that helped them in their current ministry, one protégé responded their mentor had a strong marriage. In the last question about how mentors affected the satisfaction of the program for protégés, a protégé answered that their mentor was "there for me every day."

Summary of Mentor Responses

The first open-ended question for mentors asked them to reflect on what qualities their protégés had that made them good principal candidates. Three themes were identified. The first and most consistent response by mentors, with twelve of the fourteen responses addressing the protégés' willingness, desire, or eagerness to learn or develop the necessary skills to become a principal. The second theme identified was the protégé's

ability to communicate effectively with fellow teachers, school parents, and students. Eight of the fourteen mentioned communication as an ability their protégé had. The third and final theme was the protégé's organizational ability. Five of the fourteen mentors responded by saying their protégé was organized.

The second open-ended question asked to mentors was what experiences they had while in the PTP that helped them in their own ministry. Similar to responses by the protégés, the mentors also responded that the weekly meeting and communication were the most beneficial. Nine of the fourteen responses mentioned the weekly meetings and communication opportunities. The second most consistent theme identified as a benefit to mentors was the PTP giving the mentors the ability to be purposeful with their planning of school operations. The mentors had to communicate and make plans to include their protégé in school operations, and the structure of the PTP helped them to focus on how and when they made school operation-type plans. Ten of the fourteen responders made a note of being purposeful with their school operation plans. The third theme identified was the benefit of the PTP, giving the mentors a fresh perspective on their ministry. Five of the fourteen responses mentioned the positive effects of seeing ministry from the perspective of new teachers and leaders again.

The last open-ended question mentors were asked to respond to was about their experiences that helped them and their protégé develop a relationship. Three themes were identified. The first theme with ten of the fourteen responders was spending time in regular meetings together. Some meetings were weekly, while other mentors said they met every two weeks. Regardless of when they met, all ten mentors who responded with this theme mentioned meeting together "regularly" or "consistently." The second theme

identified that helped mentors and protégés develop a relationship was spending personal time outside of school together. Nine of fourteen mentors responded that spending social time together helped develop a relationship. Of the nine that responded about spending social time together, five of the nine mentors responded they would get together for dinner or drinks where they had the ability to communicate informally about personal and professional challenges. The third and last theme identified throughout the mentors' responses was spending time in God's Word together. Five of the fourteen responses mentioned being in the word together.

In addition to the themes identified through similar responses by mentors, some additional responses that provided valuable insight were given and provided some context to how mentors responded. When asked about qualities their protégé had that made him a principal candidate, one mentor responded their protégé had "a good head on his shoulders," which is difficult to analyze and is subjective but, in the context of identifying principals, is helpful. When asked about experiences in PTP that helped mentors in their ministry, one mentor responded that the PTP gave them a better perspective on how the WELS synod is walking together to prepare future leaders.

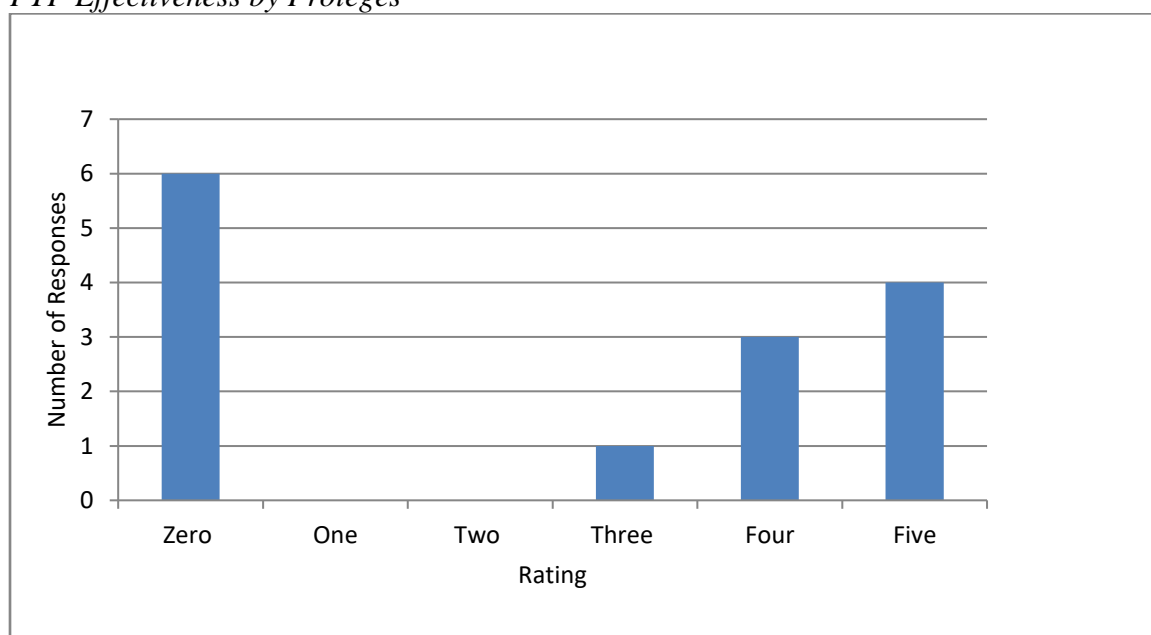
To what extent do PTP completers feel prepared for the principal position?

The PTP has existed for nine years. With the need for qualified principals only increasing in future years, understanding if protégés feel ready to take on the challenges of a full-time principal position is crucial to understanding the success and future needs of the program. One of the purposes of the survey sent to the individuals who participated in the PTP as protégés was to give them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences to

help WELS school leaders by giving them information about the success and challenges of participating in the PTP.

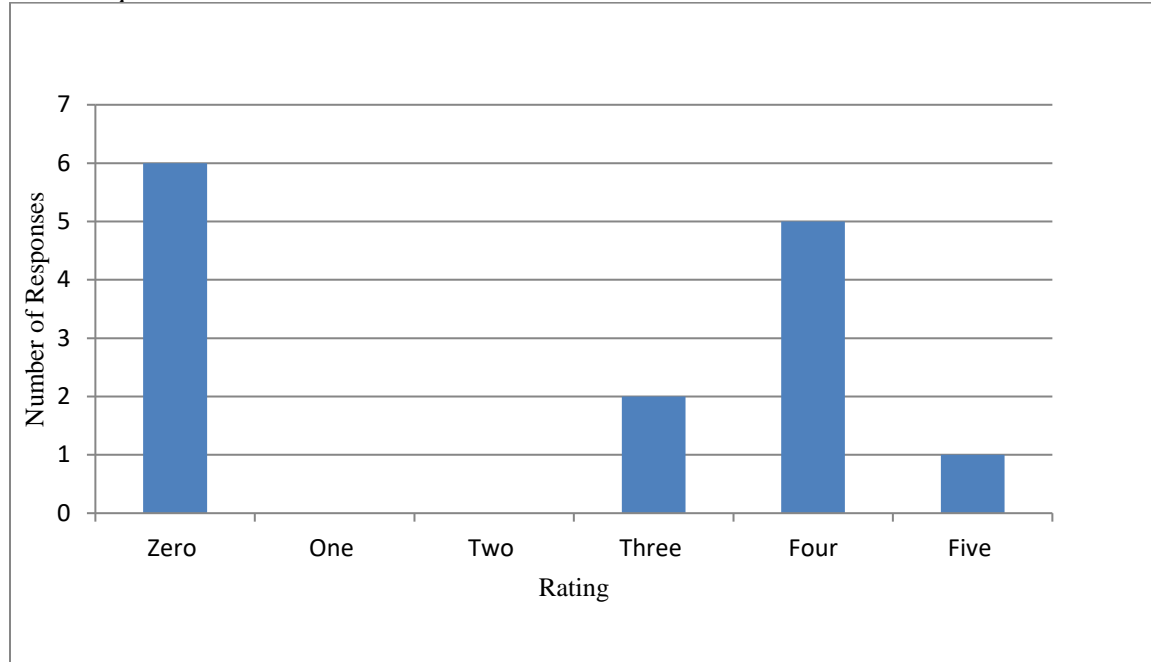
Overall PTP participants feel prepared for the principal position. Figure 1 displays how effective protégés feel the PTP is at helping them become a principal. Some protégés have gone through the PTP but have not yet become principals or are still in the PTP and are not yet principals of their own schools. These responders answered zero for not applicable to the question regarding how the experience has helped them now that they are a principal.

Figure 1
PTP Effectiveness by Protégés



Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high and zero if not applicable). How effective were your experiences in the PTP in helping you become a school principal?

Figure 2
PTP Preparedness

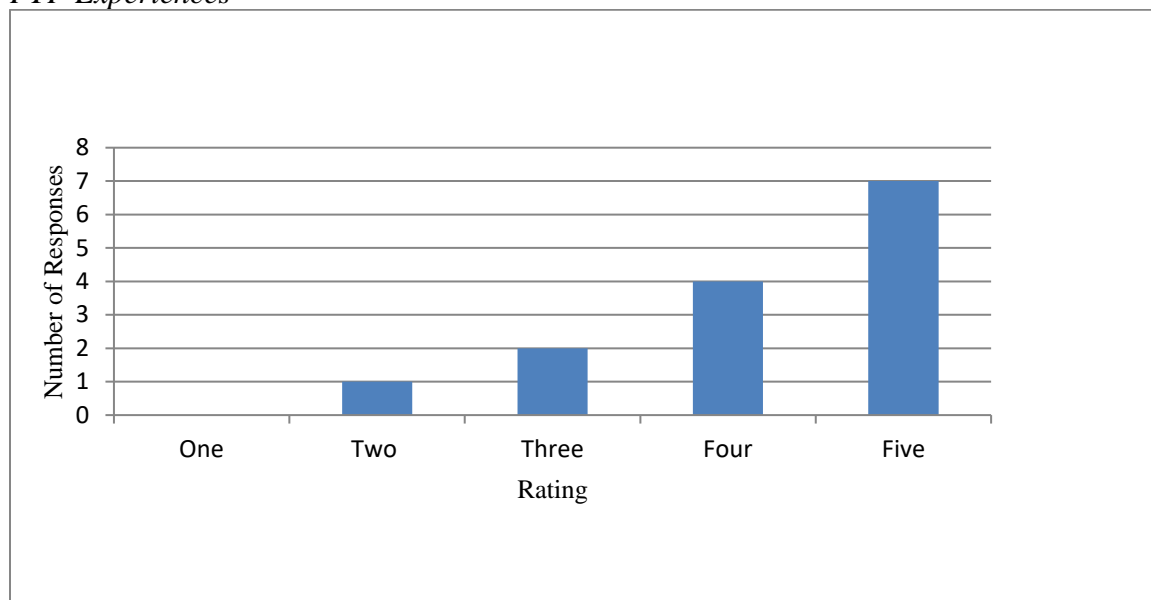


Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high and zero if not applicable). I felt prepared to be a school principal after completing the principal training program.

Protégés had experiences that helped them feel prepared to the principals while in the PTP. Using responses from the survey as demonstrated in figure 2 and figure 3, it is clear that participants in the PTP feel ready to be principals. As shown in figure 2, 75% of the participants had experiences that helped them feel prepared to be a principal. The protégés who completed the PTP answered the forced choice rating questions with either a four or five, or “agree” or “highly agree” grouping those two responses together as a positive reaction from those who have completed the PTP and felt ready to being a principal. Figure 1 represents data asking if PTP participants had experiences that helped them being a principal, only two protégés answered with a three, which can be determined that they did not feel strongly enough to say their experiences helped them. The lowest response to this question was a two out of five. The answers to this question

provide feedback that the design of the PTP is giving its participants experiences that help them feel ready to be a principal.

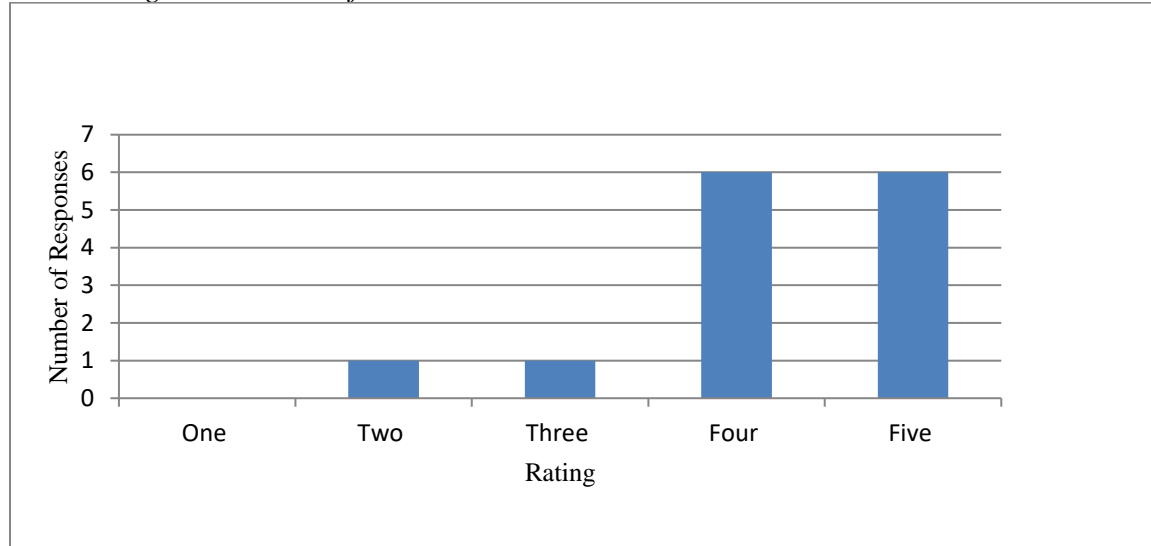
Figure 3
PTP Experiences



Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). I had experiences in the PTP that prepared me to be a principal.

As visually communicated in figure 4, when asked how satisfied PTP participants were with their PTP experience again, six of the fourteen answered with a “five,” and another six answered with a “four.” The lowest rank was by one responder who answered “two.” These results communicate that 86% of those people participating in the PTP rate their overall experience as positive.

Figure 4
PTP Protégé Overall Satisfaction



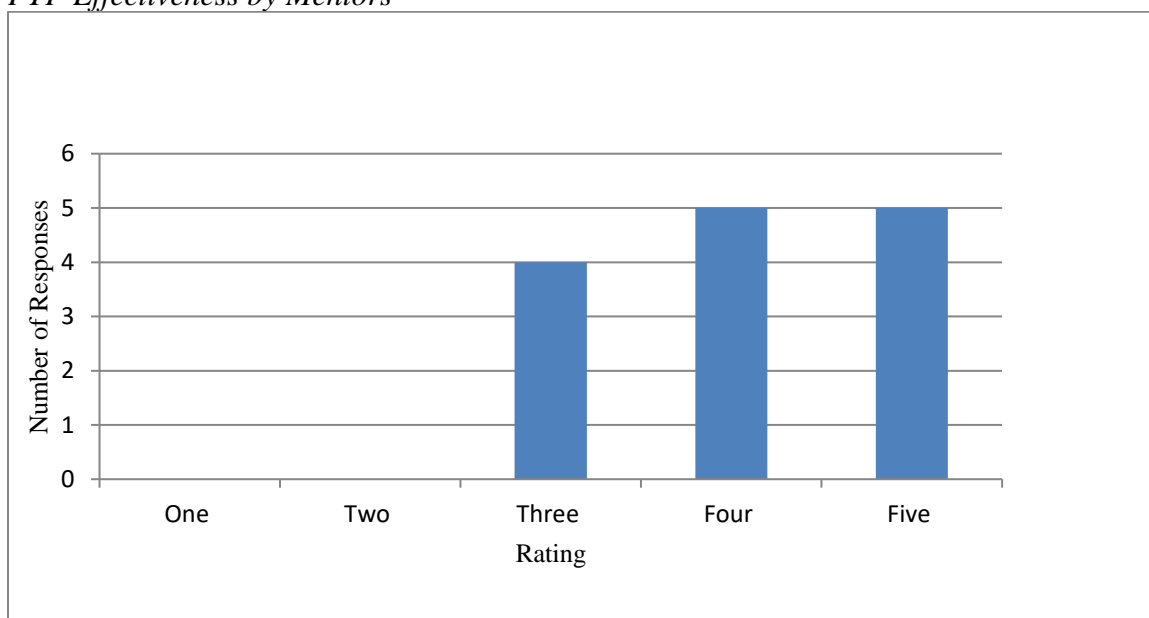
Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). How satisfied are you with your PTP experience?

One of the most exciting responses was if the PTP participants would recommend the PTP to current undergrad students preparing for ministry in the WELS. All fourteen of 100% of the PTP protégés who responded to this survey said they would recommend the PTP current undergraduate students.

The perspective of the mentors is also crucial to understanding if the PTP is effective and helping the protégés feel prepared to be principals. The mentors in the PTP are working with their protégés by meeting with them regularly and spending personal time with protégés. Each PTP mentor has years of experience in school leadership, which gives them a valuable perspective if they feel the PTP is effective at helping their protégé feel ready to be a principal. There have been fifteen PTP mentors in the history of the program. Fourteen of the mentors responded to the survey.

PTP Mentors were asked if they feel the PTP is effective in preparing WELS principals on a scale of one to five, with five being high. Like the protégés, mentors responded overwhelmingly positive that the PTP is effective at preparing principals. Five of the fourteen mentors responded with a “five,” and another five responded with a “four.” This means 71% of the mentors who responded to the survey feel the PTP is effective at preparing principals. Just as noteworthy, the only other response was a “three,” meaning no one answered with a “one” or “two,” so even the mentors who do not feel strongly or very strongly that the PTP is effective at preparing principals still do not disagree the PTP being effective as indicated by the response of a “three.” Since no one answered with a “one” or “two” rating no mentor disagrees or strongly disagrees that that the PTP is effective at preparing principals. Figure 5 represents the data demonstrating that mentors feel the PTP is effective at preparing future WELS principals.

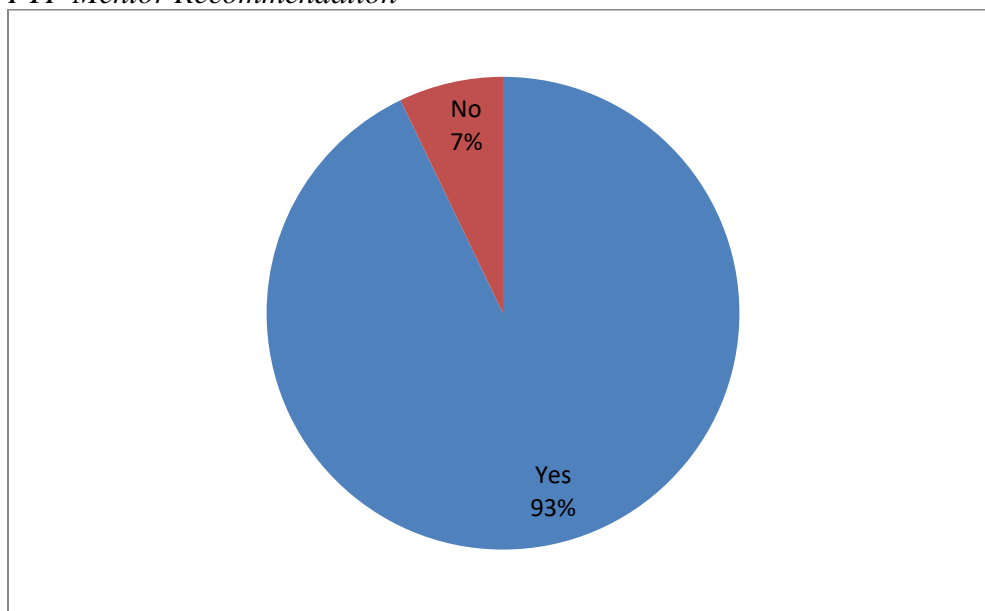
Figure 5
PTP Effectiveness by Mentors



Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). How effective do you think the PTP is at preparing WELS principals?

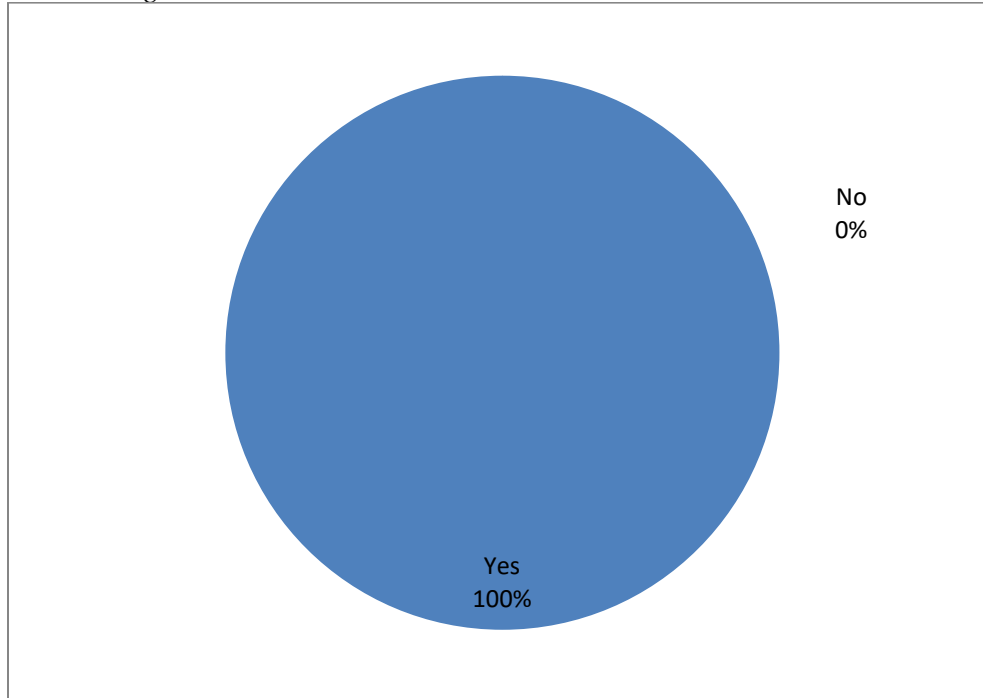
Mentors were also asked if they would recommend the PTP to current undergraduate students preparing for ministry. This question was asked to get a perspective on the belief in the goals of the PTP and its ability to reach those goals. Of the fourteen men who are or have served as mentors, thirteen would recommend the PTP to current undergraduate students preparing for ministry. That is 93%. That statistic is even more powerful when combined with the protégés who were asked the same question. Of the twenty-eight protégés and mentors who participated in the survey, 96% responded they would recommend the PTP. Figures 6 and 7 provide a visual representation of the overwhelming positive recommendation of the PTP for undergraduates by protégés and mentors.

Figure 6
PTP Mentor Recommendation



Note: Would you recommend the PTP to undergraduate students preparing for ministry?

Figure 7
PTP Protégé Recommendation



Note: Would you recommend the PTP to undergraduate students preparing for ministry?

Is the PTP producing enough principal candidates to be considered a part of the solution of satisfying current and future principal vacancies?

In nine years of existence, the PTP has produced seven principals. On the February 13, 2023, WELS Call Report, 19 WELS elementary schools were calling for a principal for the 2023-2024 school year (WELS, 2023). There are several reasons why more men have not entered the PTP, but those reasons are the purpose of this study.

In addition to the seven men that have gone through the PTP and are currently principals, seven others are not principals but are currently serving in other school administration positions, such as athletic director or vice principal, and are eligible to receive Calls to serve as a principal and eleven men are currently in the PTP and will be eligible to serve as a principal provided they complete the three-year PTP program.

For the PTP to significantly impact the future number of principal vacancies in the WELS, more graduates from MLC are needed in the program. The positive reactions of those in the program indicate the potential benefit for graduates to begin their ministry in the PTP. Only one of the mentors who responded would not recommend the PTP, and all the protégés would recommend the program. This indicates that more significant numbers of men should consider the PTP upon graduation. If more graduates enter the program, the PTP can make a more substantial impact on the principal needs of the WELS.

The future contributions of the PTP in fulfilling the principal needs of WELS schools are not solely dependent on the number of graduates from MLC who enter the program. WELS congregations who own and operate a school must take part in supporting the PTP. Without congregational support of the PTP, the program is not sustainable because PTP protégé candidates need to be given the right setting to learn and grow in the knowledge and understanding of the teaching and school administration professions. To understand if more congregations would be willing to take on a protégé, mentors were asked if they would be willing to take on another protégé through the PTP. This question aimed to identify the likelihood that if mentors were willing to take on another protégé, other qualified principals would likely take on multiple PTP protégés if they would get started in the program. The future positive impact of the PTP on the principal needs of the WELS not only protégés entering the program but also includes having qualified mentors and congregations ready for the protégés.

When asked if they would be willing to take on another protégé on a scale of one to five, with five being high, eight of the thirteen mentors answered with a “five,” four

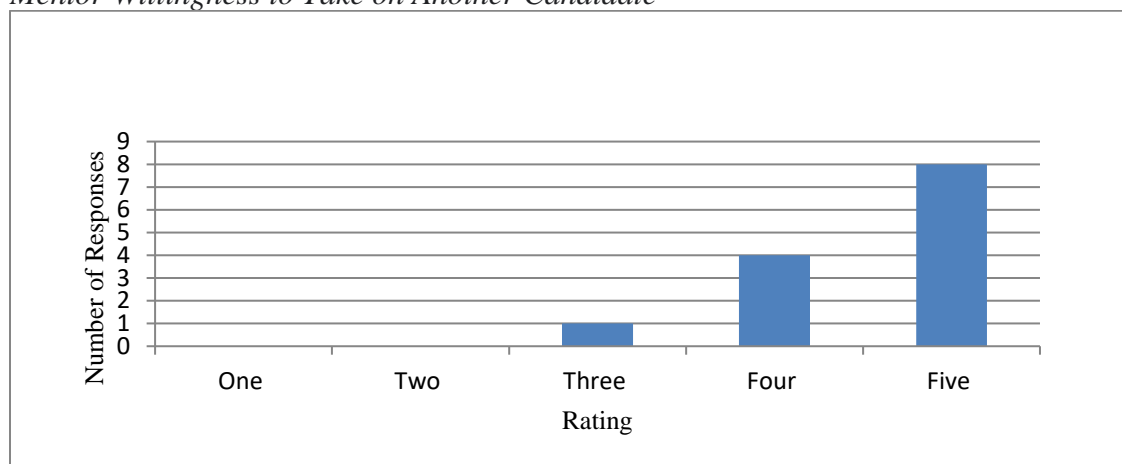
others answered with a “four,” and one answered with a “three.” None of the mentors answered with a “one” or “two” 92% of the mentors responded with one of the two highest ratings on the scale. This overwhelmingly positive reaction to taking on another protégé indicates the willingness of current WELS principals and congregations to provide the necessary environment to support and bring up the next generation of WELS principals.

Mentors were asked to describe their experiences that benefitted their ministry through participation in the PTP. All fourteen mentors who participated in the survey responded to this question. Many of the principal responses addressed the benefit of mentoring a protégé in the PTP because the protégé was able to take on responsibilities the current principal did not have time for. Some responses talked about the blessings of seeing ministry through a new teacher's eyes again and how doing that helped them in their role as a school leader. One response in particular completely encapsulated the blessing the PTP is to a congregation and how the congregations can benefit from having a PTP protégé.

They (PTP protégés) both tackled projects and responsibilities that I, more than likely, didn't have time for in the ministry. They really served as a vice-principal, but yet so much more in working to be trained as future principals. It was great seeing the other teachers and members of the church view this as an opportunity to support and help grow a future school leader. It created a "walk together" mindset in our congregation as they realized they are piece of the synod that works together.

To answer the research question of if the PTP can be part of the solution to satisfying the current and future needs of the WELS principal vacancies, the responses from both the protégés and the mentors indicated strong satisfaction with the work the program is doing in training future principals. Mentors also feel strongly they would be willing to take on more protégés. Figure 8 displays the results of the survey question asking if mentors would be willing to take on another protégé. The PTP can be part of the solution in satisfying WELS principal vacancies' current and future needs.

Figure 8
Mentor Willingness to Take on Another Candidate



Note: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). Would you take on another PTP protégé?

What experiences did men participating in the PTP have that helped or hurt them in their pursuit to serve the Lord as a principal?

In a survey, the PTP protégés were asked to describe experiences they had in the PTP that helped them in their current ministry. Thirteen of the protégés responded to this question. Eight of the thirteen responded by saying having a dedicated opportunity for communication was helpful. The importance of communication was a theme identified in all of the short answer responses by the protégés. Through this prevalence of identify the

importance of communication it can be understood that what the protégés appreciated most was consistency and purposeful time spent in conversation. Some of the protégés and mentors met weekly. Others met over the other week, and one met daily with his mentor for a brief time period to preview the day ahead. Mentors were able to provide feedback throughout these meetings together. The time spent in conversation together has helped the protégés become principals.

Another experience for the protégés was the opportunity to lead initiatives independently. They had mentors to guide them and provide feedback. Multiple protégés mentioned the benefits of leading faculty meetings as a protégé before becoming a principal and having to lead faculty meetings without feedback.

Another initiative that protégés could lead that was mentioned as being helpful to them before becoming principals was student discipline. Multiple protégés mentioned the benefit of leading student behavior meetings and then having the opportunity to debrief with their principal as helpful to them when they became principals.

To new graduates preparing for the first year of ministry, it is difficult to understand all the operations of making a school run effectively. Six of the thirteen survey protégé responders mentioned observing and participating in school operations as a beneficial activity for learning how to become a principal. School operations are a difficult thing to describe fully. The protégés mentioned ordering school supplies, setting budgets, writing reports for the local public school, and policy writing and helping them. Multiple protégés did not fully describe what school operation activity they observed but used phrases such as seeing the work behind the scenes and understanding how a school works to describe what they learned through observing school operations.

MLC graduates coming into the PTP are trained as teachers. The PTP not only allows these principal candidates to learn how to be effective principals, but it also allows them to teach. Getting them the opportunity to teach through the PTP is an incredibly beneficial characteristic in the design of the PTP. When asked how the PTP helped them become principals, five of the thirteen protégés responded by saying the PTP allowed them the opportunity to become better teachers. By becoming better teachers, they were able to become better principals.

Protégés were also asked what experiences in the PTP they did not have that would have helped them become better principals. Six of the thirteen protégés responded there was no experience they did not have that would have better enabled them. The only thing mentioned by the protégé that they would have liked to participate in is more school operation planning that school principals do from the school year to the next. Based on the responses, the protégés communicated wanting more operation planning. It seemed they did get to participate in school operations but would have liked the opportunity to do more.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Within the WELS, the demand for qualified and experienced leaders has outpaced the availability of people to fill the principal positions. To help address this challenge, the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools developed the Principal Training Program to give new graduates from Martin Luther College three years of teaching and leadership experience with a qualified mentor before taking on the challenges of becoming a principal in the WELS. The PTP is a proactive effort by the WELS to address the current and future needs of the elementary and high schools in affiliation with the WELS. The challenges facing 21st-century WELS principals are varied and unique to each ministry. To help set a benchmark for men serving as principals, the WELS developed a set of standards for men to work toward.

Conclusions

The first research question this study sought to answer is to what extent do PTP completers feel prepared for the principal position? To be sure, the principal position at any WELS elementary school is unique, and situations will undoubtedly arise in any ministry that principals cannot be completely prepared for. However, the PTP aims to give those who complete the program the necessary training to be ready to step into a principal position, and based on the responses of those who have completed the program and are now principals, the PTP is preparing the young men participating the PTP to feel ready to be principal. Protégés in the PTP are having or had experiences that help them feel prepared to be a WELS principal. The relationships between mentors and protégés are equipping protégés to feel ready to be a principal. The undeniable theme based on

what those who have participated in the PTP is the PTP that they do feel ready to be principals.

The second research question this study sought to answer is whether the PTP produces enough principal candidates to be part of the solution of current and future principal needs. In its nine years of existence, the PTP has produced seven principals. This is undoubtedly well short of the current needs of the WELS synod. It is also well short of the projected needs of the synod. Based on the number of principals the PTP is producing the PTP cannot be the only solution for future needs.

However, the PTP is producing effective candidates who feel ready to be principals. So the PTP can be part of the solution of preparing enough men to serve as principals in the synod. In particular, the PTP is effective and training new graduates from MLC to be principals. Both mentors and protégés recommend the PTP to current undergraduates, preparing for the public ministry. It is this researcher's opinion that if you are willing to recommend the program to another person entering the same field as you are currently in, you feel strongly that your entry path into your current profession has been satisfactory or better.

The last research question of the study asked what experiences did men who participated in the PTP have that helped or hurt them in their pursuit to serve the Lord as principal? To answer this question, one must rely on feedback from those who have or are participating in the PTP. Three clear experiences are helping PTP protégés become ready to be principals, meeting regularly with their mentor, getting the opportunity to lead events or programs on their own with the support of their mentor and the school to help them be successful, and finally getting to focus on teaching. By doing these three

things, protégés in the PTP feel better prepared and informed to take on the challenges of a school leadership position.

Mentors have an immense amount of insight into if the PTP is an effective way for candidates for ministry to enter the public ministry. The response to this question is also significant because many mentor principals were assigned as principals out of MLC when the assignment committee still assigned graduates as principals. The answer by the mentors to recommend the PTP or not provides valuable insight on in mentors feel the PTP is doing an effective job preparing future WELS principals or if the old model of assigning principals is the preferred system according to those who have insight into both the PTP program and the old method of assignment graduates as principals.

Recommendations

1. MLC and the CLS should continue to encourage undergraduate students preparing for ministry to consider entering the PTP. With an overwhelming positive reaction to how protégés have responded to their experiences in the PTP, it can be concluded that entering ministry through the PTP is a personally and professionally beneficial way to enter the public ministry.

Even if the young men who enter the PTP do not eventually become school principals, they do get the opportunity to learn and develop ministry and leadership skills that will enable them to become school leaders in other ways besides being a principal. For example, although the PTP has only produced seven men who are currently serving as school principals, there are an additional seven men who are serving as school leaders in roles such as athletic director or vice principal. Although one of the goals of the PTP is to train and prepare future principals, these seven who went through the PTP but are not

principals are still greatly contributing toward the needs of school leadership through their role as an athletic director or vice principal. This is especially true because while these men are not principals now, they, Lord willing, will still have many years in the public ministry where they will have the opportunity to to receive and deliberate Divine Calls as principal. Every year MLC does an effective job at making known the ministry opportunities graduates will encounter though the annual Evangelism Day, a participating mentor or protégé of the PTP should encourage young men at MLC to consider the PTP.

2. The WELS CLS and Conference of Presidents should make every effort to encourage congregations and school leaders to consider the PTP to fulfill teacher vacancies. When a teacher vacancy arises, congregations should consider fulfilling the vacancy through a protégé of the PTP. Even if the school does not have a need for a principal, they can use the opportunity of having a teacher vacancy to fulfill the needs of the school through fulfilling the and the synod through training future leaders. The Conference of Presidents should also encourage congregations to consider making use of the PTP if they know their principal is nearing retirement. Instead of having a principal retire and then issue Divine Calls to men serving as principals at other schools, congregations should coincide taking on a PTP protégé for three years and then Call that protégé to serve as principal when the principal retires. The congregation would then need to replace a teaching position and not a principal.

In conclusion, the findings of the research in this thesis detail the clear and overwhelmingly positive impact of the PTP. The only criticism of the PTP is a lack of involvement in the actual number of participating protégés, mentors, and congregations. This will only change through an increase in the human resources put into the PTP.

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Appendix A: Assessment Activity

Questions for mentors and protégés in the Principal Training Program

1. In years how long did you serve in the PTP as either a mentor or protégé?
2. Were you a mentor or protégé?
 1. Mentor _____
 2. Protégé _____

Questions for protégés in the Principal Training Program

1. Are you a school principal now?
 1. Yes _____
 2. No _____
2. Did you complete the Principal Training Program?
3. If you are not a principal are you serving in another school administrative position, for example, vice-principal or athletic director?
 1. Yes _____
 2. No _____
 3. Not Applicable _____
4. Did you complete the PTP?
 1. Yes _____
 2. No _____
5. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). I had experiences in the PTP that prepared me to be a principal.
6. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high and zero if not applicable). How effective were your experiences in the PTP in helping you become a school principal?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high and zero if not applicable). I felt prepared to be a school principal after completing the principal training program.
8. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). How satisfied are you with your PTP experience?
9. What experiences did you have while in the PTP that have helped you in your current ministry?
10. Are there any experiences you did not have in the PTP that would have better helped you in your current ministry?
11. Would you recommend the PTP to undergraduate students preparing for ministry?
 1. Yes _____
 2. No _____
12. What qualities did your mentor have that helped prepare you to become a school leader?
13. How did your mentor impact your satisfaction with the PTP?
14. How long have you been a school principal or school administrator?

Questions for mentors in the Principal Training Program

1. What qualities did your protégé have that made him a principal candidate?

2. What experiences did you and your protégé have that benefitted your ministry?
3. What experiences helped you and your protégé develop a relationship?
4. Would you recommend the PTP to undergraduate students preparing for ministry?
 1. Yes _____
 2. No _____
5. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). How willing was your congregation to take on a PTP candidate?
6. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). Would you take on another PTP protégé?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high). How effective do you think the PTP is at preparing WELS principals?