September 2024

Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP): Cultivating and Supporting School Leaders Case Study

Monica B. Smith-Woofter
James Madison University, smithwmb@jmu.edu

Jaclyn R. Nickel
James Madison University, nickeljr@jmu.edu

Doug A. Alderfer
Rockingham County Public Schools, dalderfer@rockingham.k12.va.us

Mark A. Rumley
University of North Carolina Greensboro, marumley@uncg.edu

Nancy N. Barbour
James Madison University, nnbarbour@gmail.com

See next page for additional authors
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr

Part of the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons, and the Educational Leadership Commons

Tell us how this article helped you.

Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP): Cultivating and Supporting School Leaders Case Study

Cover Page Footnote

Authors

Monica B. Smith-Woofter, Jaclyn R. Nickel, Doug A. Alderfer, Mark A. Rumley, Nancy N. Barbour, and James C. Ellerbe

Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP): Cultivating and Supporting School Leaders Case Study

Introduction

The Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP) is designed to increase principal retention, principal effectiveness, and student achievement through university-based induction and support to principals with four core services: 1) ongoing, customized professional development; 2) refining leadership assets to support reflective professional growth; 3) individualized principal advising; and 4) promoting sustainability of effective principal supervisors' supports to principals. The VAPSP is timely since the landscape of schools changed post-pandemic. The design of the VAPSP is to provide specific support and learning opportunities for principals' professional development and growth, to promote self-efficacy, increase leadership effectiveness, and retain school leaders and teachers. Initially, we used *novice* as the reference for principals working within their first and second years as a principal. After the first year of the program, we began using *early career principal* versus *novice principal* because it was more of an inclusive term. Using *novice principal* indicated that the first- and second-year principals were inexperienced, thus not giving them recognition for the talents and skills previously mastered. In addition, we expanded the four professional learning competency areas to five at the end of the first year of VAPSP. We realized that instructional leadership was a necessary competency that should serve as a stand-alone category and be weighted just as importantly as the original four core competencies included in the Conceptual Framework and further explained within the Program Description section.

Literature Review and Context

After two decades of intensive research on school principals and their impact on successful school outcomes, it has been determined that administrators play an even greater role than previously thought as noted by Grissom, et al. (2021). Despite a lack of attention regarding leadership development in the literature, the impact of leadership on student learning was originally ascribed as second to teacher impact on student achievement by Leithwood et al. (2004); however, current research supports that even greater effects of leadership are both possible and crucial to the successful implementation of school transformation and reform efforts that impact student outcomes. Highly effective leadership is necessary to ensure effective instructional momentum in schools. As Grissom et al. (2021) note, "Principals really matter. Indeed, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership" (p. xiv). This understanding supports the critical need for school divisions, states, and universities to form alliances that are both collaborative and mutually beneficial as they work together to create, support, grow, and retain highly effective school leaders. This ideology is further extended in the Learning Policy Institute report (2022) addressing in-service administrator professional development as follows:

> A number of studies of principal professional development focus on programs in their entirety. The programs studied include some or all of the features of exemplary programs identified in earlier studies (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). These features include content focused on leading instruction managing change, shaping a positive school climate, and developing people; individualized, one-on-one support provided by a coach or mentor; opportunities for networking with peers, often in structures like professional learning communities (PLCs); and opportunities for authentic, job-embedded, applied learning activities. These studies examine a range of outcomes, including principals' views of their

knowledge and practice and the effect of principal participation on student achievement. (p. 23)

Benefits of Partnerships Between States, Divisions, and Universities

Collaborative partnerships formed between school districts and University Principal Preparation Programs (UPPPs) can offer a bridge that fosters bi-directional learning opportunities for all stakeholders. In a recent Rand report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, findings revealed that intentional division investment in supporting school principals improves principal retention and student achievement (Wang et al., 2022). School divisions that purposefully design leadership development of their school principal pipeline can maximize data-informed ways to identify, grow, and track effective leaders. Several key benefits were revealed when school divisions and UPPPs partner. One such benefit is that school districts tend to employ more effective and qualified principals. When school districts learn how to improve school leader development and how to refine selection of potential preparatory program candidates, more intentional leadership growth also occurs (Wang et al., 2022). Additionally, UPPP alliances can offer additional resources and enrich the professional learning and development experiences of participating principals as they work to hone their leadership skills. Principal learning opportunities generated from the practitioner school district perspective, coupled with the UPPP research knowledge base, may offer richer, relevant, and real-time experiential professional learning experiences as part of developing effective leaders (Wang et al., 2022).

Establishing solid partnerships between school divisions and UPPPs that collaborate to provide principal professional learning and development can have an impact upon increasing teacher and principal retention. Preparing and continually developing the effectiveness of school principals to excel as leaders factor into the turnover and retention of principals (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Learning Policy Institute, pre-service and in-service principal preparedness, including recognized leadership effectiveness by teachers and division leaders, increases the probability that principals will remain rather than leave their school leadership positions (Wang et al., 2022). The mutual benefits can pave meaningful, productive pre-service and in-service pathways for developing and supporting school principals (Wang et al., 2022).

As reported by Gates et al. (2020), lessons from seven states, which included Virginia, reported key policy actions in support of principal development. Most of these states implement four key policy actions:

- adopt standards for principals
- establish licensure pathways/requirements
- adhere to program approval and oversight processes
- support principal professional development

Virginia included an additional key policy action, which is evaluation. As several Wallace Foundation Reports indicate, district support is necessary and foundational to the success of the principal. Representing NASSP in 2020, Levin agreed and reported the following:

- It is essential to the success of principals for districts to foster a collaborative culture and ensure that principals have the supports and resources needed.
- Districts need to be responsive to principals' needs and provide learning opportunities that directly relate to what a principal may deal with daily and have structures in place that provide ongoing support and continuously connect principals to resources needed.

- Districts should "facilitate collaborative professional learning opportunities for principals that promote schoolwide, cross-school, and often cross-role collaboration" (para 9).

Self-Identified Principal Needs

In June 2020, the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL) surveyed Virginia principals to gather data related to attrition, retention, and mobility. Among the 467 respondents, only 25% of the principals reported being offered coaching and mentoring during their first and second year principalships. One would expect a higher percentage since the Code of Virginia Section 22.1-294 requires mentors for first year principals at all levels. The absence of coaching and mentoring may be attributed to funding limitations within districts, as most lack additional funds to support these efforts.

Other key VFEL survey findings included: 1) principal mobility decreased when principals had the resources they needed; 2) 65% of the principals satisfied with their job had the opportunity to participate in professional development; 3) 80% of principals reported that school-wide professional development is determined by them; therefore, they felt the need to be better prepared to plan for and determine professional development that aligns to the needs of teachers; and 4) principals realize the importance of "vision, core values, equity, cultural responsiveness, instruction, student engagement, curriculum, achievement outcomes with teachers, creating professional communities, fostering community and family engagement and long-term problem-solving" and prefer to be engaged in elements such as this, but they are not engaged in this enough (para, 8). These perception survey data outcomes support a need to facilitate collaborative professional learning opportunities for principals.

The program design of James Madison University's VAPSP includes several aspects that combine programmatic elements, leadership behaviors and practices, and priority skills that are acknowledged in several Wallace Foundation sponsored reports as important components of induction and support programs deemed necessary for new principals to be effective leaders. In addition, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) submitted policy recommendations for consideration (JLARC, 2021). A focus on supporting the school division's efforts related to teacher retention and developing a new model for school improvement were among these recommendations. Teacher retention and school improvement continue to be at the forefront of school effectiveness, especially since the pandemic has greatly impacted both teacher and principal attrition and contributed to the widening of student achievement gaps.

Every school district is concerned about teacher retention, and leaders have reached out for assistance regarding best practices and ideal strategies to ensure that they are implemented within their schools to improve teacher attrition rates. In a 2021 Hanover report entitled *4 Strategies Proven to Improve Teacher Retention*, one of the four strategies recommended is to create a supportive school climate. Practitioners recognize the role and responsibility of principals as drivers of the school's climate and culture. The rate of *principal turnover* can significantly and negatively impact school performance, lead to higher teacher turnover, and impair school climate (Owings & Kaplan, 2020, emphasis added).

The VFEL findings, the VDOE JLARC (2021) recommendations, and numerous principal related research reported by the Wallace Foundation (2021) served as foundational considerations when developing the leadership framework for JMU's VAPSP. In 2017, the Council of Chief State School Officers for 25 states reported six top state priorities, five of which directly correlate to several aspects of the VAPSP customized design and conceptual framework:

- develop programs and resources for principal mentoring and coaching;

- improve principal support and professional development, especially for novice principals;
- improve principal capacity to provide feedback and develop teachers;
- improve principal supervisor practices for developing principals;
- integrate principal related work with school improvement planning; and
- develop programs and resources for both veteran principals and principals of low performing and hard-to-staff schools.

The VAPSP is designed to cultivate leadership skills, competencies, and principal efficacy to promote student focused, effective leaders and expand upon their strengths and assets to meet the unique needs of both the leader and the school they are charged to lead.

Program Description

Division Partners

The Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP) is designed to be part of the solution for improving principal leadership. In partnership with participating school divisions, James Madison University provides professional learning for educational leaders across school divisions. Specifically, for VAPSP, in-service school principals from participating school divisions received continual, customized learning opportunities that aligned with the National Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL, 2015), the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Principal Performance Standards, and the Profile of a Virginia Leader to promote continuous school improvement efforts across school divisions. Superintendents and designated principal supervisors within participating divisions serve as liaisons who assist with the planning and support embedded within the professional learning sessions. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of competencies and skills aligned to areas of leadership for school principals and principal advisors to build capacity and to support continuous professional growth for self-efficacy and positive student outcomes.

Figure 1
VAPSP Conceptual Framework
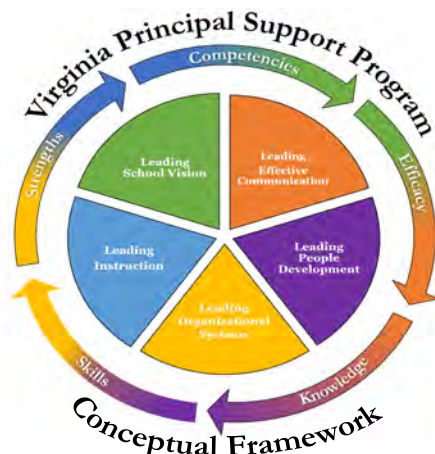
The VAPSP Conceptual Framework is foundational to the overall customized design of the program and integrates the JMU College of Education (CoE) pillars: Teaching and Learning, Engagement with Public Schools, and Leadership Preparation that support cultivating student-focused effective school principals. In addition, data collected by the VAPSP provides helpful insights to university faculty to improve pre-service programing efforts. Principals who complete the VAPSP will confidently lead: a) school vision, b) effective communication, c) people development, d) organizational systems, and e) instruction that ultimately produces student-focused, effective leaders.

As an added strength to the identified five core competency focus areas, all nine of Seaman's (2019) high quality principal induction components were embedded within the design elements of the VAPSP. The nine components include these:

1) Establish core induction beliefs;
2) Create a comprehensive, coordinated, and cohesive program plan;
3) Collaborate policy and practice with division, university, state, and legislative partnerships;
4) Secure school division leadership commitment;
5) Determine a school division induction lead who will be responsible for and assist with the next three components;
6) Ensure ongoing coordination of professional learning;
7) Communicate effectively;
8) Monitor fidelity of implementation efforts; and
9) Analyze data to assess program impact, which is essential to the program design.

VAPSP leaders incorporated these essential elements and strived to maintain the fidelity of implementation of all elements from program inception throughout deployment of the pilot program and continuation thereafter.

Implementation

VAPSP was piloted during the 2021-2022 academic school year. Eleven school divisions, as indicated in Table 1 and Figure 2, across the Commonwealth of Virginia, partnered with Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Office of School Quality and James Madison University (JMU) to pilot this support program for principals within their divisions. VAPSP continued into the 2022-23 academic year to provide a second year of support and expanded to include two additional school divisions as partners due to the transition of some participants assuming employment within new school divisions not previously included during the pilot year. The goal of VAPSP is to support early career principals (first and second year) to cultivate leadership skills, competencies, principal efficacy and reflective practices with intentions to capitalize on leaders' strengths and assets to increase principal retention, teacher retention, and positive student outcomes. The VAPSP aligned deeper learning opportunities to cultivate and support principals in their efforts to lead school vision, lead effective communication, lead people development, lead organizational systems, and lead instruction. A total of 56 different educational leaders participated in VAPSP during the 2021-22 academic year, with an additional 8 joining in 2022-2023 academic year, and 16 joining in 2023-2024, totaling 80 different educational leaders participating over this three-year period.

Table 1

Division Partner Participants

Division Partners	Early Career Principals	Principal Advisors	Principal Supervisors

Augusta County	0	1	1
Buckingham County	1	0	2
Charlottesville City	1	1	1
Chesapeake City	5	7	1
Greene County	0	1	1
Harrisonburg City	1	1	2
Newport News**	3	3	0
Norfolk City	2	3	1
Portsmouth City	11	5	1
Rockingham County	9	5	1
Staunton City**	1	0	1
Virginia Beach City	0	2	0
OpportunityLeaders*	4	0	1
Total	n=38	n=29	n=13

Notes

*Opportunity Leaders include additional principals and/or supervisors who elected to participate in the PL session because they were interested in the PL Topic(s) scheduled for a specific PL session.

** Staunton and Newport News School Divisions were added the 2nd year

Principal Advisors and Professional Learning

VAPSP principals are matched with effective, veteran principal advisors specifically trained to provide one-on-one advising support that extends beyond just mentoring and coaching. Principal advisors were selected and recommended by principal supervisors within partner divisions. Principals and principal advisors receive customized professional learning throughout the school year during six scheduled sessions that align to the leadership competencies shown in Figure 1. Division principal supervisors attended at least two professional learning (PL) sessions throughout the year. Division principal supervisors have led several portions of the PL sessions to include these: Clifton Strengths Finder; Instructional Leadership (observations, feedback, and evaluations); Improvement Science; Climate and Culture; Equity and Inclusion; and Effective External and Internal Communications. The Office of School Quality led professional learning sessions specific to Continuous School Improvement Planning in support of statewide efforts.

Research Methodology

The methodological design for the VAPSP research is an in-depth mixed-methods phenomenological study focused on discovering and learning the impact of advising and professional learning supports to promote the development and growth of early career principals to become effective leaders, remain in the profession, and positively impact teacher retention. The study gathered qualitative data from the participants' perceptions directly involved in the VAPSP and quantitative data obtained from VDOE *Staffing and Vacancy Dashboard* reporting teacher vacancy rates and principal retention rates by school.

There were four data collection methods used as a part of this mixed-methods study. Qualitative data was collected, analyzed, and coded relative to themes that surfaced upon review of the findings. The quantitative data, specific to principal retention rates and teacher retention rates, were analyzed as variables that correlate to the participating principals and their respective schools. The data collection approach used to analyze overall program impact included: a) collecting qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with randomly selected participants; b) collecting qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with small focus groups with participants within specific affinity groups; c) collecting qualitative data through short response PL exit surveys specific to the PL sessions and program impact on an ongoing basis; and d) employing quantitative research specific to teacher retention reported as vacancy rates and the collected principal retention rates based on participating principals who either remained as principals or received promotions.

VAPSP co-leads served as the co-principal investigators for this research study. Co-principal investigators analyzed the archived survey results stored within Qualtrics and the raw data collected from participant interviews to determine themes and codes accordingly. As VAPSP worked diligently to maintain a comfortable, safe learning environment, objective researchers served as external evaluators of the overall program and conducted the individual interviews and small focus group interviews with VAPSP participants. The use of external evaluators provided the opportunity for participants to respond to questions without reservations and/or fear of negative outcomes upon sharing what might be categorized as unfavorable feedback about the overall program impact. The co-principal investigators analyzed all interview transcripts and collaborated to identify and triangulate themes.

Two types of interviews were conducted. Fifty percent of the participants volunteered to participate in a 60-minute individual Zoom interview. Fifty percent (n=10) of the participants were randomly selected by the external evaluators to be interviewed. Additionally, one 40-minute small focus group interview was conducted face to face during the May 2022 PL session with all participants who were in attendance. The semi-structured interview questions were as follows:

- What are the strengths of the VAPSP?
- What aspects of the VAPSP do you view as most impactful?
- What recommendations do you have to improve certain components of VAPSP?
- What do you recommend that future participants consider?
- What do you recommend that JMU CoE VAPSP leaders and VDOE leaders do to support future cohorts?

Research Findings and Implications

Findings and Implications from Focus Group and Individual Interviews

Researchers conducted two (2) focus groups discussions with Principal Advisors (PAs) and four (4) Early Career Principals (ECPs) who participated in the Virginia Principal Support Program (VAPSP) during the 2021-2022 school year. A standard protocol was used for the focus group discussions to promote organic discussions and to receive answers to questions that were important for program leaders to consider either for an extension of this program for the 2021-2022 participants and/or to initiate a new cohort experience aimed at providing impactful support to early-career principals. Ten participants were present for each of the two principal advisor focus group discussions. The focus group interviewers explored a variety of topics, utilizing the developed protocol for the two PA groups and the two ECP groups, to generate discussion and asked follow-up questions to attain both depth and clarity of ideas and responses.

During the summer of 2022, researchers randomly selected four PAs and four ECPs to participate in recorded individual interviews conducted via Zoom, using a semi-structured protocol. The interview transcripts were de-identified in the fall of 2022 by two of the six researchers who were not serving in dual roles as program directors. Beginning in the spring of 2023, interview transcripts were analyzed and disaggregated using open and axial coding, and themes were determined. Whenever appropriate, adjustments were made within the structure of the program, as well as during the PL sessions, when the directors needed to improve program experiences. Open and axial coding were used to generate trends, patterns, and themes that were captured from the transcript analyses. Afterwards, the trends and patterns were organized, using the focus theme categories developed during the focus group discussions with subthemes organized as they emerged from either the focus group interviews (FGI) or individual interviews (II).

Table 2 delineates themes and topics emerged through open-ended questions and periods of discussions/conversations that ensued. In addition, the sub-themes generated are organized accordingly. Several themes support the value and impact that state, university, and local school division partnerships can impart on developing strong, competent school principals.

Table 2

Focus Group Themes

Focus Theme:	Principal Advisor	Early Career Principal
Strengths/Benefits	FGI Sub-themes: Relationships, networking opportunities, mutual benefits, capacity-building	FGI Sub-themes: Professional development, program resources used and acquired, nature and delivery of professional learning topics, relationships
	II Sub-themes: Continuous professional growth, shared experiences with different perspectives, relationships, communication	II Sub-theme: Continuous professional growth, shared experiences with different perspectives, relationships, communication, resources
Noteworthy Feedback	FGI Sub-themes: none	FGI Sub-themes: none
	II Sub-themes: Intentional matching between PA and ECP	II Sub-themes: Low stress, comfortable atmosphere, intentional matching between PA and ECP
Recommendations/Suggestions for Consideration	FGI Sub-themes: none	FGI Sub-themes: Program structure/schedule, meetings between principal advisors and new principals, pairings of principal advisors and early career principals, presentation topics
	II Sub-themes: none	II Sub-themes: none

Principal Advisor (PA) Reported Strengths and Benefits of the VAPSP

Respondents shared the overall importance and significance of such an early career principal support program. A PA participant noted the following, which several others also affirmed. "This program is super important, because we don't have veterans [principals] in schools." Another participant said, "The mentorship and the partnership with experience are gone. This program has to provide that support, because we don't have the veteran principals to coach and support the new principals now." A third PA shared that "The most important part of this program, going into it, there was an intent for us as PAs to support new principals, but it became them helping us, too…we learned from each other." Yet, another PA participant shared specifically that this *program* "was new and powerful." Finally, when responding to a question about their participation in the program as an advisor, another PA stated, "They make it easy to say 'yes.'"

The PAs' perspectives on one strength of the program focused upon the inventories (assessments) chosen by program staff for use during the pilot year, which included, for example, Clifton's Strengths Finder, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and Saboteurs (from Positive Intelligence by Chamine). PAs shared, quite to their surprise, that the inventories explored not only were a source of reflection and growth for principals but also served as a means for such growth and personal reflection for them as PAs. One respondent even shared that "I've never been a principal in a pandemic." Thus, she cited that being prompted to think intentionally about her own learning and growth through these inventories administered and the processing of them

allowed her to grow and learn a great deal from her assigned early career principal, too. Another respondent shared that the inventories helped him to see what the issues are for new leaders so that PAs could then address those issues in advising/coaching/mentoring sessions.

PAs further noted that an emphasis on relationships, networking opportunities, and capacity-building were such important outcomes of this support program. Examples of these program elements and outcomes are described in subsequent sections.

Relationships were built through the sessions that provided a framework for discussion between PAs and ECPs. Regarding relationship building, one PA noted, "It allowed us to delve deeper into their [principals'] needs; the new principal wants to know what to do and when to do it." As a result of the emphasis placed upon the importance of relationships, another PA said, "The program has caused me to polish my lens a little more. Being a thought partner, many discussions focused on sustainability…this allowed me as a principal advisor to provide better services so that initiatives become more sustainable." A PA also shared that "this support program did a great job of matching personalities between advisors and principals. I'm not sure how these assignments were made, but it really worked, and we have developed relationships well beyond being advisors/advisees." Some PAs noted that the program allowed for relationship-building even across districts. A respondent had this to say: "This program serves as a 'safe haven' for us to grow together, and my own personal growth as a principal advisor has been enhanced."

Coupled with relationships, the concept of *networking* was then identified as a strength by PAs. One noted that "It's [the support program] real life and very beneficial to connect with others at the meetings to see how others are doing things." One specific example given was around the teacher evaluation schedule changes that were presented in an early, on-campus support session, which led to a discussion across those school districts represented by PAs at the meetings. This resulted in changes to observation schedules, which were then replicated across districts present at the meeting. This was seen as a positive outcome of such networking and helped people to be held accountable for teacher observations, specifically.

Another benefit of networking was described as *mutual benefits* – those that could be realized for the College of Education at JMU and partnering school districts "to work together, such as this one [project]." A respondent also discussed the option of "IHEs identifying and recruiting people who would become pre-service candidates and nurture them to become education majors." Additionally, a respondent shared that given the current landscape of a dwindling pool of applicants for the education field, "this shortage really underscores the need for a program like this one" Furthermore, "we're forced to hire administrators who may not have the beginning skill set; this program can address some of these deficits, helping to keep the balance so that new principals are not overwhelmed." Yet another respondent stated that "This program is crucial to fill the gaps in skills, especially for young principals."

Regarding *capacity-building,* several PAs described opportunities to utilize session-related content in their own additionally assigned responsibilities within their respective districts/divisions. One respondent specifically stated that

> The power is about building capacity and going beyond the principals, utilizing the knowledge to help and work with all aspects of the classroom, data, and observations…we need to see the impact in the classroom, but we need to share this information beyond here.

Another respondent shared her feelings about how this support program has helped to build leadership capacity back in her district by utilizing some of the content acquired in sessions at

JMU with district-level leaders and principals. A participant noted that "we've really used this opportunity to build the strongest team that I've ever been on [referring to her own district-based team that supports principals in her district/division.]"

Individual interviews provided additional insights relative to *building capacity* and *professional development* of participants. In particular, the professional development/professional learning sessions held year-round were very beneficial in providing reliable resources and relevant content aligned to leadership competencies while also validating good leadership practices to build leadership efficiency. One of the participants interviewed stated that the "VAPSP resources are easy to take back and share with other division leaders" and "being able to just take key points from each meeting and implement them into my leadership" is beneficial.

ECP Reported Strengths and Benefits of the VAPSP

When asked about strengths and benefits associated with VAPSP, an initial respondent noted that *professional development* has been key. "This [support program] has served as true professional development for me" and "has not been another graduate class to attend." Building upon this idea, several participants across the focus groups agreed that "no pressure to do homework," "read assignments before coming," or "complete readings ahead of time" have produced less stress for new principals being supported by this effort. Others noted that they "look forward to coming each time, minus the [up to 4 hours] drive." For those who cited that they had long drives ahead of them following the completion of a session, they noted that "we use this time - at least an hour - to reflect together about what we learned." Others added that "this 'drive time' allows us to discuss problems and challenges that we are encountering in our schools." Thus, their conclusion was that VAPSP sessions were impactful enough such that intentional group conversations and reflections upon their learning emanated immediately following their departure from a given session [for those carpooling from long distances]. Several respondents made statements similar to this one*:* "I look forward to coming every time. I know that I am going to learn something and think more deeply about it." Another participant served by this support effort noted that "These sessions impact my leadership in positive, thoughtful ways when I return to my own building." Finally, one participant offered this extensive and more holistic assessment of this support program as a professional development system for new principals, noting perhaps unintended outcomes for those served by the program:

> There were unintended consequences…we're so tuned in to the mental health of the people we serve dealing with the aspects of Covid. This [VAPSP] has helped us [new principals] deal with our own mental health, and it's important to check that we are okay, too. We can talk through some of the same issues and challenges and make sure we are okay. Helping us to dialogue and being in this space with someone to say, 'It's going to be okay' allows us to have time to reset and refresh. It may not have been intentional, but it happened.

Several respondents across the four groups commented that the "Google site" used by VAPSP was both "very helpful" and "contained resources from every session" attended. Some commented that they "refer often to these resources" and "use them" after the sessions and "even well after the time when a session has been completed." Another focus group participant noted that "The resources are so well organized," with another adding, "I appreciate that program leaders organize resources in this way" and that "they continue to add to the site even after a session is completed"; having the program resources "embedded into the VAPSP website has

been so helpful." As a sub-theme, *program resources acquired and utilized* both during and after the PL sessions were valued by early career principals.

Nature and Delivery of Session Topics is another valued component of VAPSP. When asked to think about and reflect upon the types of support sessions/topics that had been offered by VAPSP, several participants noted especially the strength of the "SPED" [Special Education] topic/day that was "led by Dr. Bateman." One person elaborated that this particular speaker/presenter "caused me to think through the lens of a hearing officer…the resources were amazing…and I used some of these with my own teachers when I got back to my school." Others touted this particular topic as "the most meaningful topic that we engaged in," with one participant saying, "I think this topic could have been two days. I would have sat there engaged the whole time." Another one noted, somewhat jokingly, that "He [Dr. Bateman, presenter} scared me to death!" A second topic that was discussed by many participants across the four focus groups centered upon *school improvement planning.* Though a few respondents cited that this topic was somewhat *"mis-timed"* [offered after some new principal participants had already completed and submitted their School Improvement Plans], all who commented cited the usefulness of this particular topic, especially for new principals. With regard to "mis-timing," one principal noted, "I realized just how many mistakes I made in my plan after attending the session." At times, some focus group members simply spoke to session topics and program foci that were meaningful to them, including "Time Management (I used that immediately)"; "Observation Feedback"; "Scheduling"; and "Book Study of Clifton's StrengthsFinder 2.0." Many participants who discussed StrengthsFinder 2.0 wanted to spend more time on this particular topic and self-assessment, especially to further interpret the results of the assessment. One person even commented that "we could use this work as a theme for this program." It is important to note here that participants in all four focus groups spoke positively about the personal leadership-based assessments that were used throughout the program. They cited and discussed benefits from having taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Clifton's StrengthsFinder Talent Assessment, and Saboteur Assessment as meaningful to them.

Relationships with Principal Advisors: Without hesitation, numerous participants who commented about the program's strengths and benefits always included this aspect of the VAPSP. One participant cited the *"strong, trust-built relationships"* that have been established between themselves as new principals and their respective mentors—the Principal Advisors. During an ECP individual interview, one participant's *perspective,* as it relates to *the mutual benefits* of participating in the VAPSP, is that "someone clear across the state is having the same challenges that you're having, and some of these challenges are worse than yours." This same ECP participant commented,

> Whenever my PA called, you could just escape everything you have, and just pour out what you need to get out, at that moment. My PA also encouraged me to make sure I protect time. Structuring my time and protecting my time to get things done that I needed, as well as the importance of resting.

The following responses depict the nature of these relationships that developed over time and help to bolster the claims about this specific benefit made by principal participants themselves.

> My advisor has been really good; when I meet with her at home, she's being pulled in so many directions, but I get a visit from her weekly; she has a lot on her plate, and I don't want to impede her schedule. I get some high points and then send her on her way.
> My advisor is also my director [principal supervisor]; she gives me homework; When she

completes my school visit, we actually have feedback on those visits. We process all of what we have learned at the JMU support sessions, and then we develop 'next steps' approximately a week later. She comes to my school. The follow up may be about the content of the sessions but also about other things specific to my building, including my problems of practice.

One of the strengths is the partnership with the PAs. It helped that we knew each other somewhat before the program. Our districts are neighboring districts. He's a very strong principal, and asks me some really strong questions that make me think.

Respondents were eager to comment about their respective PAs and the benefits that they realized because of these dyadic relationships. "My PA is in a neighboring district; I can call her, and she helps me to think about different aspects of a problem; she offers some 'pick-me ups,' too." Another principal stated that "My PA is a previous principal; we have dinner/lunch together… this person is at my fingertips and is focused on what I'm really dealing with in my building." Regarding feedback offered by PAs to their respective principals, one participant stated that "My PA is also from a neighboring district. I get lots of feedback, especially when we walk the building. I can still do my job, but she sees me doing it in action and offers me real time, meaningful feedback." In most focus groups, participants spoke about wanting even more time with their PAs to process specifics related to a problem of practice, especially during the times that they spent together at the VAPSP sessions. It was evident that new principals truly valued the expertise and experience that their advisors embodied and shared willingly with them. For example, one new principal commented that "...having an expert principal advisor has been a great support to me this year; there were times that I'm not sure what I would have done without this person to help and guide me."

PA Reported Noteworthy Feedback

Based upon all data reviewed from PAs, there is a strong consensus that this support program has been successfully implemented. One respondent noted that *"The facilitation of this process was awesome!"* Another person added, "This program made me feel like I was still growing and allowed me to be able to be more of a facilitator at my own school while I was also advising a new principal." One respondent also noted this: "The discussions, regardless of the topics, have allowed us to make sense of information. Engagement in the activities was relevant and gave my new principal good ideas to take back to the school." The respondent further shared, "Many of the topics are powerful information." In addition, VAPSP allowed for opportunities to build strong, positive, supportive relationships that last even after finishing the program.

ECP Reported Noteworthy Feedback

As an organic outgrowth of conversations held with the four early career principal participant focus groups, a variety of compliments were bestowed upon both the program directors and some of the elements associated with the planning and execution of this support effort for early career principals. As one respondent noted, "Someone is investing a lot in us…even down to feeding us well. It is a perk. It's nice to be valued, and we're engaging in professional dialogue with colleagues." Another one said, "I actually had a sit-down breakfast this morning, instead of my usual KIND bar." Additionally, one person offered that "They feed us well; these days are comfortable for us." Relative to the VAPSP program structure, one individual participant, when individually interviewed, indicated that they appreciated "they did not give a lot of homework" and that the advising component of the program allowed the PA and ECP to have "open, honest feedback," giving them a chance to "communicate and decompress."

Recommendations and Suggestions for Consideration from PAs

Some questions posed for conversation during focus group discussions also led to suggestions and recommendations for program leaders to consider. The first recommendation revolved around both time and timing. Regarding timing, respondents said that "the biggest challenge is time." "Usually, it's about what's real-life and what's happening at the moment, not necessarily what's on the agenda." This respondent further recommended that consideration should be given to "what's happening right now that leaders are facing" when determining the nature and order of session topics. One topic alluded to, in particular, regarded School Improvement Planning; the suggestion was made that this session be held prior to the times that new principals are required to create, vet, and submit final school improvement plans. Another respondent noted that "real life topics" could be identified by using a "parking lot" protocol so that participants [both PAs and ECPs] could indicate current issues that they are facing to be addressed. A group discussion ensued by PAs around this question: "Would it be beneficial to have principals and PAs present for the entire two-day session?" Building in more time to process what is being learned between PAs and principals was also offered as a suggestion. Regarding inventories/assessments, PAs suggested that at least some of these be completed earlier in the support program, if possible (e.g., leading instruction and leading school vision).

Further discussion led to a recommendation of holding quarterly meetings for either two or two and one-half days, to include all participants together for the entire time. Specifically, PAs shared that it would be much more natural and organic for PAs and principals to go through content at the same time as opposed to the current structure/format that brings PAs in for one day prior to their assigned principals attending on the next day. As one PA suggested, "Embed more time for authentic conversations between PAs and principals, which allows time to have these conversations outside of the school building." "Having these conversations during the support sessions is easier because it helps to build a strong foundation for the principals when they return to their buildings." Additionally, PAs noted that it would be preferable to begin the support program's initial sessions in the month of July, focusing on orientation, expectations of the program, and attending intentionally to relationship-building. Group participants also suggested that program leaders should build in time for self-reflection and shared reflections between ECPs and PAs.

There was not a consensus reached around matching principal advisors to principals either within their own districts/divisions or outside of their districts/divisions. Some preferred and found benefits for *inside* matches, with one person stating, "…it [an inside district pairing] seems to yield a more positive experience and allows for more face-to-face time." On the other hand, some PAs stated that there were benefits to having a PA assigned outside of a principal's district, despite distance and proximity between the PA and assigned principal. One said, for example, "We are able to learn from other districts how they handled similar situations." Yet, other PAs countered this idea, noting that "It's difficult when scheduling visits to schools outside of the district…" because "life happens." The PA noted a couple of situations when a scheduled visit had to be rescheduled upon arrival due to circumstances happening within the school that needed to be attended to immediately. This caused the pre-scheduled advisor/advisee meeting to be canceled on the spot.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Consideration from ECPs

Respondents also reported that program directors sought participants' feedback. One principal participant made this statement: "One of the biggest things for me is that they [program directors/personnel] sought our input, [surveyed] what our needs are, and basically wanted our

responses. That was big, moving forward." Regarding program leaders and presenters, a respondent also noted that "The facilitators have always been supportive, knowledgeable, giving feedback, and non-threatening; the participants feel comfortable being a part of the process." When asked about continuing in this support program if funded for another year, a participant shared, "Right now, my number one goal is to keep my head above water. I feel like next year, if this program is funded, the things we are talking about will also be helpful then, too." The person concluded by saying strongly, "I need this program going into a second year!"

It is also noteworthy that one participant expressed a great deal of gratitude for her opportunity to participate in VAPSP. In her closing remarks, she said, "I would like to be able to pay it forward and be considered as a principal advisor myself in a few years." Another person offered that he "would definitely recommend it [the VAPSP] to others to participate." Similarly, in another focus group, one respondent offered this concluding remark: "This entire program has been beneficial; I'm really enjoying where they're going with the program. I'd love to be a future advisor! We know the challenges that we've faced as first-year principals."

Meetings between PAs and ECPs need to be distinct. The discussion continued with principals centered around the schedule and time with their advisors. The majority agreed that more face-to-face time with their advisors would be beneficial as suggested in this statement: "I think the advisors should have to come and stay when we're here. It doesn't need to be separate days to hear the same information twice." Another participant further stated, "Really figure it out about how to utilize a 1-day session, all together, with advisors; frequency is more important than the time. Restructuring the one day would also include the advisors to be here at the same time as we are." In addition, some principals recommended an increase in time to collaborate amongst themselves with one

principal saying, "We get to talk with our advisors at lunch, but there is little time to network amongst ourselves." This was followed by another remark: "Maybe utilize a 'jigsaw' format that would intentionally mix us up; we tend to migrate to the same groups and tables every time."

Pairings of PAs and ECPs is another sub-theme that surfaced during the focus group discussions. In addition to time with the PAs, the principals were largely complimentary regarding the PA and principal assignments/pairings. Some of the discussion included availability and time with the PAs, which in large part worked well. A couple of suggestions centered around coaching. One of the principals thought the PAs received coaching training, and commented, "If the advisors have been trained in some coaching, I would like that training, too, because coaching is so much better for us as principals." Most of the principals agreed that the match of the PAs was powerful; they just want more time with them as part of the structured day(s) when face-to-face meetings are held.

A final area of feedback emerged when each group discussed topics from the sessions. Presentation topics, while timely, could be improved upon. While there was a great deal of compliments given around the inventories [assessments], speakers, and activities, a few suggestions for improvement emerged. Regarding the inventories (StrengthsFinder, specifically) one participant shared that

> The StrengthsFinder assessment really needed more time, and we have never come back to it. I think it is breadth versus depth. So much of knowing the position is knowing who you are at the core. What are my beliefs, etc. that guide me as a leader?

Another widely agreed upon recommendation was the timing for school improvement plans. The principals would have liked this session earlier, with some stating, *"...*our plans had already been submitted." One principal shared, "I realized I had something wrong…but it was too late." In

addition to the feedback about the sessions, some of the participants recommended topics to be considered. One principal suggested, "Ask us what our needs are so we can have topics that pertain specifically to our situation, now." Another suggestion noted was about school vision; the principal said, "Building a vision for a school. Identifying priorities and how to determine what and to do it; include how to go about developing and growing a vision."

Reported Quantitative Results

As a part of the research study, the teacher vacancy rates were collected for each participating early career principal's school at the end of their participating year as shown in Table 3. The school's rate was compared to the previous year and to the overall rate of Commonwealth of Virginia (CoVA). The CoVA vacancy rate of 3.9% was the same for both the 2023 and 2024 academic years. There were 33 different schools whose leaders participated in VAPSP, with one school having two different leaders in 2023 and 2024. Therefore, the ratings for the school that had a different leader participating in 2023 and 2024 are reported for both years.

Table 3

Teacher Vacancy Rates for Each Early Career Principal's School

Commonwealth of Virginia (CoVA) ECP's School	Teacher Retention Rate reported as Vacancy Rate	Year of applicable rate	Change in vacancy rate from the previous year (yr)
State (CoVA)	3.90%	2023 and 2024	same as previous yr
A Elementary School	0.00%	2022	same as previous yr
B Primary School	0.00%	2023	same as previous yr
C Middle School	0.00%	2024	decrease from previous yr
D Elementary School	0.00%	2024	same as previous yr
E Middle School	0.00%	2023	decrease from previous yr
F Elementary School	0.00%	2023	same as previous yr
G Elementary School	0.00%	2024	decrease from previous yr
H Elementary School	0.00%	2024	same as previous yr
I High School	0.30%	2024	decrease from previous yr
J Elementary School	0.40%	2024	increase from previous yr
K Elementary School	0.50%	2025	increase from previous yr
L Middle School	0.80%	2023	increase from previous yr
M High School	1.30%	2024	decrease from previous yr
N Primary School	1.50%	2024	decrease from previous yr
O Elementary School	2.50%	2024	decrease from previous yr
P Middle School	3.00%	2024	decrease from previous yr
Q Primary School	3.60%	2023	increase from previous yr
R Middle School	4.70%	2023	increase from previous yr
S Elementary School	5.90%	2023	increase from previous yr
T High School	6.70%	2024	decrease from previous yr
U Elementary School*	7.1%	2023	decrease from previous yr
V Academy	11.60%	2023	decrease from previous yr
W Academy	11.60%	2023	decrease from previous yr
X Middle School	11.60%	2023	increase from previous yr
Y Middle School	12.50%	2023	increase from previous yr
U Elementary School*	14.00%	2024	increase from previous yr
Z Elementary School	15.60%	2024	increase from previous yr
AA Elementary School	17.90%	2024	decrease from previous yr
AB Elementary School	26.30%	2023	decrease from previous yr
AC Academy	34.60%	2024	first year
AD Elementary School	52.60%	2024	increase from previous yr
AE High School	70.00%	2024	decrease from previous yr
AF Academy	not reported	2023	n/a
AG Academy	not reported	2024	n/a

Note

*Same school with two different principals for each indicated year.

Thirty-six different early career principal participants served as leaders of 33 different schools. One of the 36 ECPs was promoted to a different position within the same school division, while one of the ECPs was non-renewed. For personal reasons, two of the 36 principals

moved to a different school division assuming assistant principal positions at the end of their participating year. Based on this collected data, there was an 88.8% retention rate among the early career principal participants. Among the 33 different schools that early career principals led during this timeframe, 8 schools had an increase in teacher vacancy rates, 19 schools decreased their teacher vacancy rates, and 7 schools maintained their teacher vacancy rates of zero vacancies each year. With 75.5% of the participating schools' teacher vacancy rates decreasing and an 88.8% retention rate for ECPs remaining at their respective schools, participation in VAPSP resulted in positive impacts. Eleven out of 33 (33%) participating schools reported an increase in vacancy rate, thus implying a higher turnover rate for teachers in those schools. Twenty-two of the 33 (67%) participating schools reported a decrease in the vacancy rate, thus indicating a positive effect on the teacher retention in schools among the leaders participating in VAPSP. Finally, 18 out of 33 participating schools had a vacancy rate below the CoVA's reported rate, and 15 of the participating schools had a vacancy rate higher than the CoVA's rate. Among those schools with a rate below the state reported rate, 14 of the 18 schools showed either a decrease in their vacancy rate from the previous year, or their rate remained the same as the previous year. Among those schools with a rate above the state reported rate, 7 of the 15 schools showed either a decrease in their vacancy rate from the previous year, or they were a new school.

In summary, ECP participation in VAPSP had an overall positive impact on the principal's retention rate based on their continuation at the same school following their year of participation. Likewise, the ECP's school reported vacancy rate comparisons indicated their retention influenced teacher retention based on the decrease and/or no change in teacher vacancy at their school during their tenure.

Overall Recommendations and Future Implications for Principal Support Programs

As the JMU VAPSP was customized specifically to meet the needs of the partner divisions, the program co-directors constantly adjust to improve program structure and/or professional learning (PL) delivery, based on the ongoing feedback obtained after the end of every PL session and even during the time the researchers were analyzing the collected data. All pertinent feedback that allowed the researchers, who also served as co-directors for the VAPSP, was considered, and program adjustments were made when it was beneficial for the participants. For example, during the focus groups, the evaluators learned that the participants felt that the school improvement session should be held as early in the year as possible. Thus, this prompted the program directors to include this type of session topic in early October for subsequent years. Other areas that the VAPSP program directors made changes to include the length of days for the PL sessions and matching practices between PAs and ECPs. As a future implication for principal support programs, such as VAPSP, obtaining ongoing feedback from participants allows for continuous improvements in program offerings and ensures that customization is implemented with fidelity to better meet the needs of both principal advisors and early career principals.

As the PAs and ECPs were summarizing their feedback about participation in the program, their concern around the state of public education was discussed. One participant called the education field "an endangered species" with consensus of others concerning recruiting and retaining high quality educators (e.g., teachers, assistant principals, and principals). As one respondent stated, "We are so desperate that we are putting the wrong people in the wrong situations. We are putting a toddler on a ten speed, expecting them to pedal uphill." From that discussion, another participant stated that "Other programs like this one need to be offered to identify and grow Assistant Principals." Further comments about the program included these:

"This program is crucial to fill the gaps in skills, especially with young principals"; and "Use this program as a model." Another respondent quickly followed with this statement:

> If we get this [support] right and have a structured program, then we build a model that will trickle down to APs, teachers, etc., and then we can retain good people. If we don't, we will have unprepared individuals, and we'll lose them.

Overall Conclusion

The discussion topics and quotes embedded throughout this case study are just some examples of how impactful PAs and ECPs believe that the VAPSP has been for advisors and for early career principals. Despite recommendations and suggestions made for further consideration for possible improvement and changes beyond the 2021-2022 pilot year, PAs believed that such a support program is a must, especially during these times of post-pandemic concerns that are prevalent in so many ways within public schools. PAs noted significant benefits and positive outcomes realized, especially for the new principals served by this support effort. One PA noted from the very outset of the interview session that VAPSP has been a "solid pilot support program."

Overwhelmingly, the feedback from principals was positive and focused primarily on building and growing leaders. One principal summed up his experience by stating, "I appreciate the collaboration, appreciate my advisor; we have had a good relationship. The biggest strength is collaboration and not feeling over stressed because of the program. It's not school. It's professional development."

There is significant value in a university/school district partnership that delivers support to new principals and allows for collaboration between experienced and early career leaders. In addition, it was found that the principal advisors benefited from the participation in the program and received just as much support and growth opportunities to improve practice. With positive retention results for both teachers and early career principals, ultimately, a principal support/growth program that focuses on developing participants into the principalship can have impactful influences and result in a strong administrative pipeline. This principal support program could be re-structured and tailored to meet the specific growth needs of assistant principals and be a proactive step in identifying and supporting emerging leaders.

Key Terms and Definitions

Advising: The process of providing individuals guidance and reflective support to assist them in making informed decisions while navigating various aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Early Career Principal (ECP): A licensed public-school administrator who is serving in their first or second year as a building principal.

Principal Advisor (PA): The assigned administrator who is matched an ECP to support and advise for the program year. The PA must have prior experience serving as a principal.

Professional Learning (PL): Professional Learning (PL) events hosted provide all VAPSP participants opportunities to develop and enhance leadership skills regarding the VAPSP Core Competencies.

Principal Supervisor (PS): The direct point of contact for the VAPSP who serves as the division level supervisor of principals, oversees principal professional development, recruits, and enrolls the division's Early Career Principals, recruits, matches, and enrolls the division's principal advisors, and facilitates the division wide implementation of the VAPSP.

VAPSP PL Exit Surveys: A digital document provided to all participants following each professional learning event that is structured to capture the Program participants' event content

assessment, rating of PL event value, overall satisfaction, and areas for content or Program improvement and submitted to the VAPSP.

References

Darlington-Hammond, L., Wechsler, M., Levin, S., Leung-Gange, M. & Tozer, S. (2023). *Developing effective principals: What kind of learning matters?* Retrieved October 31, 2024. Learning Policy Institute and Wallace. https://doi.org/10.54300/641.201

Gabriele, C. & Beaudoin, C. (2020, June 1). In time of crisis, what can we learn about learning time? *Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development*. 77(9). www.ascd.org

Gates, S., Woo, A., Xenakis, L., Wang, E., Herman, R., Andrew, M. & Todd, I. (2020, November 17). Using state-level policy levers to promote principal quality: Lessons from seven states partnering with principal preparation programs and districts. *Rand Corporation.* https://doi.org/10.7249/RRA413-1

Grissom, J. A. & Bartanen. (2019). Principal effectiveness and principal turnover. *Education Finance and Policy*, 14 (3): 355–382. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00256

Grissom, J., Egalite, A., & Lindsay, C. (2021, February 25). *How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research.* Wallace Foundation. https://wallacefoundation.org/report/how-principals-affect-students-and-schools-systematic-synthesis-two-decades-research

Hanover Research. (2021, March 16). *4 strategies proven to increase teacher retention.* https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/4-strategies-proven-to-increase-teacher-retention/

Leithwood, K., Seashore, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning: A review of research for the learning from leadership project.* The Wallace Foundation. https://wallacefoundation.org/report/how-leadership-influences-student-learning

Levin, S. (2020, November 17). *District support is key to principal success.* National Association of Secondary School Principals. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-district-support-key-principal-success

Levin, S. & Bradley, K. (2019, December 16, 2021). *Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the research.* National Association of Secondary School Principals and Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/nassp-understanding-addressing-principal-turnover-review-research-report

Levin, S., Scott, C., Yang, M., Leung, M., and Bradley, K. (2021, March 15). *Supporting a strong, stable principal workforce: What matters and what can be done.* National Association of Secondary School Principals and Learning Policy Institute. https://www.nassp.org/nassp-and-lpi-research-agenda/

Owings, W., & Kaplan, L. (2020) *American public school finance* (3rd ed). Routledge.

Riley, D., & Meredith, J. (2017, October 27) *State efforts to strengthen school leadership: Insights from CCSSO action groups.* Policy Studies Associates. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED580215

Seaman, S. (2019, November 1). *Standards for beginning principal induction program.* Association of Washington School Principals. http://www.awsp.org/docs/default-source/member-support-documents/principal-induction-finalrev2.pdf?sfvrsn=18950c7b_0

Smith, K. (2020, November 1). *Virginia foundation for educational leadership shares findings: Principal attrition, retention and mobility study.* Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership, in collaboration with Virginia Department of

Public Instruction, Virginia Association of Elementary School Principal, and Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals. https://files.constantcontact.com/657c7589001/7a2a3327-f0fe-4bd0-9b9f-68d5a973ed89.pdf

Virginia Department of Education. (2020, December 20). *Joint legislative audit and review commission.* https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2020-special-education.asp

Virginia Department of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher and School Staffing Vacancy Dashboard.* Retrieved October 31, 2024. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/state-board-data-funding/data-reports/statistics-reports/interactive-data-dashboards/teacher-school-staffing-vacancy-dashboard

Wang, E., Gates, S., and Herman, R. (2022). *District partnerships with university principal preparation programs: A summary of findings for school district leaders.* Rand Corporation. 3(4). https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA413-6.html