Spring 2010

The Impact of Mentoring on Beginning Teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia School District

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The Impact of Mentoring on Beginning Teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia School District

by

JUDY E. JACKSON PALMER

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

The needs of beginning teachers have been addressed both on the state and national level because of increasing concerns about teacher quality and teacher shortage problems. Schools experience high rates of attrition for beginning teachers, more than forty percent in the first five years of teaching. Within the next decade, school districts will have to hire a large number of teachers for grades k-12.

The traditional sink-or-swim induction of teachers contributes to lower levels of teacher effectiveness such as curriculum and behavioral issues and higher levels of teacher attrition. Beginning teachers experience isolation, difficult students, curriculum challenges, and inadequate preparation which cause them to leave the education field in high numbers. More states and school districts have begun to provide mentoring for their beginning teachers in an effort to help them transition into their first years of teaching.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia school district. The study provided important data about the mentoring practices that were the most meaningful to the beginning teachers.

The methodology used to collect data for this study was individual interviews and focus group interviews. Nine purposive sample participants were included for the individual interviews: one from each of five elementary schools and two both from the middle school and high school. The focus group included two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and two high school

teachers. The analysis of the data revealed the following themes: 1) Mentoring provided support for new teachers in the area of curriculum, discipline, and parental communication. 2) Secondly, the time spent with the mentors had an important effect on the success of the mentoring experience. 3) The variation of attitudes both of the mentor and the administration/school played an important part in a successful mentoring program. The results of this study support the positive results of mentoring on beginning teachers.

The data collected correlated with the research questions and supported the idea that mentoring is an important program in the school district. When school districts promote teacher support through mentoring, teacher retention appears to be higher.

INDEX WORDS: Mentoring, Teacher Retention, Teacher Attrition, Mentors.

THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON BEGINNING TEACHERS IN A RURAL NORTHEAST
GEORGIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2010

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Electronic Version Approved:
May, 2010

DEDICATION

This past year has been marked with times of uncertainty for my family and me. Sometimes God has seemed very close but other times he has seemed very distant and I felt very confused and frightened. This year of turmoil began when my daughter was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. Her life was held in the balance as we moved to Durham N.C. for her to receive treatment at Duke Medical Center.

My daughter displayed extreme strength and faith as she went through the grueling treatments. She is and always has been a true inspiration to all who know her. My son was always close, willing to do whatever he could. My sister and her family were there offering support in a magnitude of ways, and my dad, who is the true patriarch of our family, was a never ending source of love and encouragement to us all. My mom always taught me never to give up and I know how proud she would be if she were still here on earth with us.

I affectionately dedicate this work to all of them for the love they demonstrated to me through their encouraging words and their compassionate acts of support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many people for encouraging me throughout this journey. There were times I did not think I would reach the end. I thank my Heavenly Father for his grace and giving me the strength to continue on even through great trials. I want to thank my family and friends for their encouraging words and support. I would never have come this far without them. I could not have completed this without the support of my "guardian angel" whose name happens to be Angel. She has helped me with all of the technical parts of this paper. I could not have finished it without her. I cannot express enough gratitude to Dr. Linda Arthur for agreeing to be my committee chair. She spent long hours with me on Saturdays and walked me through this very long process. She always offered me helpful suggestions. Also, I am grateful to my other committee members, Dr. Cherry Brewton, and Dr. Paul Brinson for agreeing to serve on my committee. All three of you were really great to let me put my life and dissertation on hold for a year. You offered great support and encouragement to me and were always willing to be there for my defenses when my schedule would permit. I thank you all for helping me reach my goals.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others...He had

seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive...and pass away...He knew they

were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is

very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and

experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it (*page 1).*

Margery Williams, The Velveteen Rabbit

Teacher retention has become a national crisis. The U.S. Department of Education

reports that over the next decade, more than two million new teachers will walk into a

classroom for their first day. Unfortunately, according to the National Center for

Education Statistics (2001), over half will not make it past five years (Curran & Goldrick,

2000). One promising practice to address this problem is mentoring, an expert teacher

helping the beginning teacher one-on-one. The heart of a mentoring program is the

mentor/mentee relationship (Ingersoll, 2001).

Because mentoring programs vary so widely, educators and policymakers need to understand

the common components that make up comprehensive mentoring so they can recognize good

mentoring when they see it. Knowing the components of a solid mentoring program can guide

decision makers at the federal, state, and local level about what to require, expect, and fund.

Implementing a quality mentoring program is an important step toward ensuring that every

beginning teacher has the opportunity to develop into a high-quality professional (Saban, 2003).

Background of Study

In recent years school systems have acknowledged the necessity of providing support and guidance for beginning teachers transitioning in their first years of teaching. While the components of such programs vary widely, their goal is to help increase the confidence and effectiveness of new teachers while helping to stem the high levels of attrition among beginning teachers. This attrition level currently estimates to be as high as forty to fifty percent within the first five years (Ingersoll and Kralik, 2004).

Teacher retirement, rising school enrollments, and efforts to reduce class size have all contributed to a shortage of teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Most researchers anticipate that the growth in school enrollment will continue through the next five to ten years (NCES, 2001). The National Commission on Teaching (2000) report suggests that the schools in the United States will need to hire two million more teachers during the next decade in an effort to keep up with rising enrollments (Perreault, 2003).

Increased school enrollment is not the only contribution to the teacher shortage problem. Another factor is teacher turnover. Turnover rates among new teachers are rapidly increasing, particularly in low-income schools (Boyer & Gillespie 2000). According to Breaux and Wong (2003), thirty-three percent of qualified new teachers leave within the first three years to pursue other careers. Of those who quit teaching forty percent said they would never teach again. The factors that influence teachers to leave are the many challenges they face during the time they transition from being a student to becoming a teacher (Breaux & Wong 2003). Darling-Hammond (2003) suggests that some of the challenges facing new teachers are low salaries, poor working conditions, minimal teacher preparation, and lack of support from faculty and administrative staff. Research conducted by Boyer & Gillespie (2000) support Darling-

Hammond's (2003) findings stating teachers' decision to leave are influenced by inadequate preparation, conditions in the school and classroom, salaries and benefits, but most importantly lack of support from peers and administrators. Walker (2003) agrees with Darling-Hammond (2003), suggesting that new teachers leave the profession because of society's attitudes toward teachers, financial issues, time scarcity, workloads, and lack of support. Many teachers report that they are fatigued to the point of exhaustion during their first year of teaching (Walker 2003). Darling-Hammond (2003) also suggests that one-third of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. New teachers recruited under fast-tract programs, designed to attract those who have subject area knowledge but lack a background in education fare even worse, with an estimated sixty percent of those who enter teaching through shortcut programs leaving by their third year. Many of the teachers who entered through the fast track program reported that the lack of support from fellow teachers was a main reason for leaving the field (Brewster & Railsback 2001).

Graziano (2005) found that individual teachers have different expectations and priorities for their work and workplace. Being effective in the classroom is important to teachers (Johnson, 2001). If working conditions such as lack of support make it impossible for them to achieve the intrinsic rewards for which they entered teaching, they are likely to leave the classroom (Costigan, 2005).

According to Saban (2001), research shows that there is an important link between a teacher's sense of being effective, satisfaction with work, and retention. A demanding workload or isolation from one's peers may compromise a teacher's opportunity to teach well and thus succeed with students. New teachers rarely feel successful without some support from fellow teachers and administrators (Rowland & Gillespie, 2005).

Research finds that from 2001 to the present, forty-six percent of newly hired teachers in public schools are first year teachers. Most are recent graduates of state colleges and universities and were employed immediately after graduation. Many graduates of teacher education programs report that, in spite of their formal training, they did not feel adequately prepared for obstacles such as classroom management or student discipline (Koerner & Baumgartner, 2002). Beginning teachers are often assigned to teach the most difficult students or subjects in which they lack adequate preparation and then they do not have adequate support to help them through these situations (Ingersoll, 2001). These situations frustrate the new teachers and cause many of them to leave the profession after only a few years (Nugent & Faucette, 2004).

According to Rowland & Cable (2005), teachers report a lack of support during their transition from pre-service to first year teaching. Many become frustrated because they are unable to implement practices learned at their universities. In order to close the gap between pre-service and classroom realities, researchers have identified a need for more mentoring or induction programs (Rowland & Cable, 2005). Wong's (2001) research supports that of Rowland & Cable (2005) stating that there is a need to recruit talented candidates to teaching but also a need to support and thus retain them once they have entered the classroom.

Selke & Fero (2005) suggest that schools must offer more than a one day orientation for new teachers. Their research suggests that more intense support is needed to ensure that teachers stay in the teaching profession. Ganser's (2002) research defines mentoring as ongoing systematic training and support for new teachers beginning before the first day of school and continuing throughout the first two or three years of teaching. These programs cater to the culture and needs of each unique school or district. It is necessary to provide cooperating teachers for student teachers and mentor teachers for beginning teachers (Costigan, 2005). Stansbury & Zimmerman

(2002) suggest that supporting beginning teachers should be viewed as a continuum, which starts with personal and emotional support and expands to specific task-related support. According to Wonacott (2002), teacher mentoring programs can assist beginning teachers in learning professional responsibilities as well as having a positive impact on student achievement.

In response to the high attrition rate of new teachers, more and more mentoring programs are being implemented across the country (Saban, 2002). Many small or poorly funded schools and districts can not provide mentoring due to lack of financial resources provided by the state (Wilkins & Clift, 2006).

An established teacher mentoring program is an important asset for any educational institution. It helps develop talent, maintain a school's quality standards, ensure its compliance to state or even national benchmarks, and provide high quality standards of teaching for students (David, 2000). Mentoring programs can also improve the quality of teacher personnel and assist new teachers in getting assimilated into the environment (Odell & Huling, 2000).

If mentoring is to assist education reform, it must be connected to a vision of proficient teaching, an understanding of teacher learning and must be infused with professional collaboration (Wong 2001). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) estimate that nationally, about 65% of schools offer some form of support services for new teachers in response to the high attrition rate from the profession. Within those programs, teacher retention is significantly higher when several support systems are provided (Ingersoll, 2006).

Several states require beginning teachers to complete a state sanctioned induction program. Texas has the Beginning Teacher Support System (Fuller, 2003), California has the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (Cegelka & Malley, 2002), and Connecticut has the Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training Program (Young,

2002). All three states have induction programs connected to state certification requirements that have shown higher retention rates due to the use of support networks and trained mentors. Funding for these programs has been generous. Unfortunately such funding is not common in all areas of the state. Rural areas find it increasingly difficult to keep successful mentoring programs afloat due to funding issues (Wilkins & Clift, 2006).

According to the Southern Regional Education Board eleven states have started or are starting state funded induction programs, of which mentoring is a key component. Those states are Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Some districts in Maryland, Mississippi, and Tennessee receive state money for mentoring programs (Bolich, 2000).

Georgia started a state funded teacher mentor program in 2002. The plan provided all beginning and newly hired teachers with trained mentors during their first two years of teaching. A teacher support specialist training program was started to train mentors to work with the beginning teachers. State funds were suspended in 2005 due to budget deficits. The larger school systems in Georgia have continued to locally supplement these programs, but on a very small scale (SREB, 2005). Increasingly, school districts are working with teacher associations, universities, and others to establish mentoring programs to help beginning teachers, veteran teachers in new assignments, and teachers in need of remedial aid (Ganser, 2002).

Mentoring strategies help to transition beginning teachers into the classroom and acculturate them to the specific school and district setting in which they work. The goal is to give intensive assistance to new teachers in meeting their immediate needs as they adjust to the demands of teaching and become socialized to the school organization (Olebe, 2005).

According to Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) both psychological and instruction-related support are necessary to help retain teachers. Psychological support can be provided when mentors create an emotional safety net by acting as a sounding board, assuring beginners that their experience is normal. Mentors can also offer sympathy and perspective by providing advice to help reduce the inevitable stress (Ingersoll, 2004).

Instruction related support helps a beginning teacher navigate his or her way through multiple tasks. This kind of support focuses on the nuts and bolts of teaching (Nugent & Faucette, 2004). Strategies to help meet these needs include weekly one-on-one meetings, classroom observations, lesson modeling, co-teaching, monthly seminars and portfolio development. This intense work with mentors allows teachers to make progress toward their own personal and professional growth (Nugent & Faucette, 2004).

According to Buckley, Schneider, & Shang (2005) the impact of mentoring can be monumental in the support and development of skills of beginning teachers. The highest ranked strategies include a sufficient amount of time to spend with mentors, emotional support, and opportunity to network with other first year teachers, class observations by a mentor, and assistance with organizational strategies (Buckley et al, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

After five years, nearly half of all new teachers leave the teaching field. Helping new teachers become veteran teachers is an important step in addressing teacher shortages. It is essential to understand the experiences and situations that cause many new teachers to abandon the profession early in their careers. It is of great interest to determine the relationship between providing support for new teachers and their decision to leave or remain in the field. Quality teaching is critical to student success and what teachers know and can do is the most important

influence on what students learn. Demands on what teachers must know and do have increased due to factors such as increasingly diverse student populations and pressures of accountability systems. There is evidence that traditional sink-or-swim induction contributes to high attrition and to lower levels of teacher effectiveness.

A growing body of research supports the multiple benefits that occur when teachers are paired with an appropriate mentor for their beginning years of teaching. While research stresses the benefits and components of mentoring programs, there is very little exploration of what actually happens at the local level once a mentoring program is implemented. Georgia started a state funded teacher mentor program in 2002, which provided funds for trained mentors, but funds were discontinued in 2005 due to budget deficits. However, many mentors continue the work to assist novice teachers, as veteran teachers demonstrate expertise and commitment to the profession. It is important to know the relationship between what schools say they are doing with their mentoring programs and what they are actually doing. The researcher desired to provide information about the impact of mentoring programs on beginning teachers.

The overarching research question was: What is the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia School District?

The following sub-questions guided the research:

1. How does mentoring impact the teaching practices and development of beginning teachers?

2. How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to job satisfaction?

3. How does mentoring beginning teachers contribute to teacher retention?

Significance of the Study

Schools in this century are faced with ever growing challenges. Retaining beginning teachers is one of the biggest challenges. The research has identified the challenges faced by beginning teachers as well as what school districts should do to support and retain first year teachers. Demographic and policy trends now lend greater importance to mentoring programs than at any other time in recent history. Many states now require mentoring for entry-level teachers.

This study explored the factors that impact the retention of teachers through a mentoring program. This study showed whether mentoring may be used as a recruitment tool, to improve teacher retention rates, and to help to improve the skills and knowledge of new teachers.

This study can be useful to administrators and mentoring teachers in terms of both format and results. The format involved an interview design and a process that allowed respondents to provide information that is unique to the individual while providing general information about the impact of the mentoring they received during their first few years of teaching. An emerging interview process that collects unique data can be useful in future research to help establish a set of strategies for effective mentoring that will provide the most positive impact on beginning teachers. An interview process can be replicated and used by principals to collect accurate data that will be specific to their own schools.

Research Design

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach in order to understand the mentoring process in place to support beginning teachers in a Northeast Georgia school district. This phenomenological study was conducted using interviews. According to Glesne (2006), the nature of the research problem determines whether the research should be qualitative or quantitative. Some studies lend themselves to research that attempts to uncover the nature of people's

experiences. In this study, qualitative research was used to uncover and understand phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. Qualitative method facilitated an understanding of how experienced teachers perceive their role in mentoring novice teachers and how novice teachers perceive the role of the veteran teacher. This qualitative research approach served to provide a deeper understanding of the mentoring activities that are beneficial to beginning teachers. This process explained the experiences of the participants and allowed the researcher to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions.

Participants

The participants of the study were teachers who were identified as novice teachers with one to three years experience who received mentoring support without regard to grade level. The participants were selected from five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Purposeful sampling will be used to choose the participants. Purposeful sampling occurs when individuals are selected who demonstrate an interest in the study.

Participants were selected from a list of beginning teachers as provided by the principals of the schools in this rural Northeast Georgia school system. The mentoring program of this school district provides a mentor for each first, second, and third year teacher. Each school had the same guidelines to follow for the program; however each school had some latitude as to how the program is implemented. The participants for the individual interviews will include one beginning teacher from each of the five elementary schools, two beginning teachers from the middle school and two beginning teachers from the high school for a total of nine individual interviews. One focus group was also interviewed. The participants of this group consisted of two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and two high school teachers giving a total

of six teachers. All participants had received a four year education degree from an accredited

college as opposed to an alternative teacher training program.

Demographic information was obtained from the participants in regard to years of teaching

experience, the highest degree earned, if they are residents of the county, if they are planning to

leave and if so the reason for leaving. Again, participants were assured of complete anonymity.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

Interviews were the primary means of gathering data for this study. The common use of

interviews in qualitative research allows the gathering of data on perceptions, feelings, and

attitudes toward a topic (Glesne, 2006). The interviews provided descriptions, detail, and

context of the mentoring experiences provided during their early years of teaching. Prior to the

initial interviews, an inventory of open ended questions served to prompt participation from the

interviewee.

Interview questions helped to generate the thoughts and beliefs of the participants regarding

the mentoring strategies both in the school system and in individual schools. There were

questions used to glean additional strategies that can enhance the impact of the mentoring

program in the school district.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

The researcher obtained permission to conduct this study from the County Board of

Education, principal of each school, dissertation committee, and the Georgia Southern

Institutional Review Board. The study was conducted during the 2009-2010 school year.

Participants were sent information explaining the purpose of the study along with a letter of

consent. They were ensured that their names would be confidential and that the data would be

destroyed at the end of the study. Sessions were scheduled during planning times and after school at the participants' respective school sites and at their convenience.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that mentoring has on beginning teachers. An effort was made to identify the mentoring strategies that are the most effective in the support and development of skills of beginning teachers. The information obtained was transcribed to identify themes and patterns. The researcher described the impact of mentoring as identified by the participants by using themes emerging from the data collected. Recurring themes were established to categorize data from the sessions.

Limitations

1. Information was gathered from the schools in one district and may not generalize to other schools.

2. The participant's answer may have been given in a way to appease the researcher and not completely honest.

3. The findings of this study were not able to control completely for other factors that might also affect teacher retention.

Delimitations

1. All data was collected from the schools in one county.

2. This study included teachers who have taught in a public school setting as opposed to private, charter or magnet school systems.

Summary

There is consensus that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of the teacher. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across this nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high-quality teachers. Research has also shown that successful mentoring programs may cut attrition in half and help to develop novice teachers into high-quality professionals who improve student achievement. Through the interview process of both individuals and focus groups, effective strategies that had a positive impact on beginning teachers were identified.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature will provide an overview of mentoring from both a practical and theoretical perspective. This review will discuss the rationale for mentoring programs and will describe how professional mentoring programs provide a viable solution to problems commonly associated with beginning teachers. This review describes research findings that build a foundation for this study and its implications for the necessity for providing strong mentoring programs. This review will focus on the increasing demand and challenges faced by beginning teachers.

Challenges Faced by Beginning Teachers

To reform teacher quality and retention, teacher educators, researchers, professional organizations, and policymakers are seeking ways to better prepare and support individuals who are new to the profession. Extensive efforts have been made to improve teacher training and provide assistance to teachers during their beginning year. New teachers most often find themselves in new school cultures, alone in classrooms with new students, and only a mentor on which to rely. That mentor can help determine the amount of time that the beginning teacher will remain in the education field (Boreen, 2000). Many components must be considered in the development and implementation of a mentoring model to establish rationale, guide structure, and address gaps between the literature and current mentoring practices.

Developing and retaining a strong teaching force is an issue that is receiving increased attention by policymakers across the county, particularly in light of the number of teachers nearing retirement age. One reason formal mentoring programs were established was in response to teacher retention and attrition problems in the United States. These programs were

aimed to ease new teachers into successful transitions from their college preparation to classroom responsibilities (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). The goals of these programs included: improving teaching performance and improved student learning, increasing the retention of promising beginning teachers, and promoting the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers (Griffin, 2001).

Alternative certification programs have been created at all levels in the education profession to help alleviate teacher shortages. State and school districts are mandating mentoring programs. Universities are revising teacher preparation programs. School campuses are pairing new teachers with veteran teachers and new teacher groups are emerging to allow new teachers to share their experiences with their peers. Despite the variations in mentoring programs, the fundamental goal of such programs is to improve the performance of beginning teachers and reduce the high rate of attrition (Zuckerman, 1999).

Projections indicate that approximately two million new teachers will be hired over the next ten years (Moir & Gless, 2001). Attrition rates remain high among beginning teachers due to a lack of understanding about the school culture, difficulty adapting teaching methods to meet the specific needs of the school setting, and the expectation to teach as a veteran teacher (Jorissen, 2002). Other issues that may influence teacher attrition are disruptive behavior of the students and lack of administrative support. Teacher retirement, rising school enrollments, and efforts of policy makers to reduce class size have all contributed to a shortage of teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Most researchers anticipate that the growth in school enrollment will continue through the next five to ten years (NCES, 2001). The National Commission on Teaching (2000) report suggests that the schools in the United States will need to hire two million more teachers during the next decade in an effort to keep up with rising enrollments

(Perreault, 2003). The increasing need for teachers in our classrooms over the next decade is raising questions about how to provide the support they need to enhance professional growth and development (Moir & Gles, 2001). If school systems want to retain new teachers, two things must happen: design good schools in which to teach and employ mentoring (Heath & Yost, 2001).

Teacher recruitment efforts are important; however, the retention of beginning teachers is critical to maintaining an adequate supply of teachers. There is also much evidence that teaching has become a less attractive career than it was thirty years ago among both prospective and new teachers (Boyer, Gillespie, 2000). Turnover rates among new teachers are rapidly increasing, particularly in low-income schools. According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001), twenty-five percent of new teachers quit the profession within their first five years of teaching in order to pursue other careers. Another 25 percent said they were leaving because they either no longer were interested in teaching or were dissatisfied with teaching. Of those who quit teaching, 40 percent said they would never teach again. An alarming nine percent leave before they complete their first year (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). New teachers recruited under fast-track programs- designed to attract those who have subject-area knowledge but lack a background in education- fare even worse, with an estimated sixty percent of those who enter teaching through shortcut programs leaving by their third year (Brewster & Railsback, 2001). Barnett Berry of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future implies that employers in the private sector would not tolerate this kind of turnover (Costigan, 2005).

Several key factors that influence a teacher's decision to leave are inadequate preparation, conditions in the school and classroom, and salaries and benefits (Bolich, 2002). There is a need

to recruit talented candidates to teaching. There is also a need to support and thus retain them once they have entered the classroom (Wong, 2004).

According to Coronado (2007), a successful mentoring program can yield many advantages to beginning teachers. One requirement for a successful program is to set up a structured mentoring program that identifies and addresses individual needs of the beginning teachers. However, it is important to allow some degree of flexibility for school systems to design a mentoring program that will provide the best support for their teachers (Coronado, 2007).

Many beginning teachers report that their confidence about teaching depends greatly on the support they receive from their schools (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). Without guidance and support from fellow teachers, school principals and administrators, many new teachers feel that they are left to drown early on in their careers (Beck-Frazier, 2005). According to National studies, 16 percent of teachers who left the field said they left because of dissatisfaction with teaching. One of the reasons was lack of support and respect from administrators. Many teachers reported that the lack of overall professional support was the primary reason for them leaving the field (Fluckiger, McGlamery & Edick 2006).

It seems that school districts in the United States invest a great deal of money recruiting teachers but invest almost nothing in terms of time and money to keep their teachers from leaving the schools or the profession. Left alone in a classroom full of students, with a lot of self doubt and endless new standards to learn and navigate through, many young teachers quit in frustration after only one or two years (Ganser, 2002).

Research suggests teachers' decisions to remain in their schools and in teaching is influenced by a combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that they receive in their work (Yost, 2006). Intrinsic rewards include such things as the pleasure of teaching children or teaching the

subject matter one loves. Extrinsic rewards include salary, benefits, and public recognition of one's accomplishments. Sometimes the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards interact. Sometimes positive working conditions may compensate for negative conditions, such as lack of materials and supplies, cynical colleagues, or very large classes. However, in some situations the negative may outweigh the positive, leading teachers to leave their schools or teaching (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Individual teachers have different expectations and priorities for their work and workplace. Being effective in the classroom is important to all teachers. If working conditions make it impossible for them to achieve the intrinsic rewards for which they entered teaching, they are likely to leave the classroom or withdraw psychologically (Nugent & Faucette, 2004). It has been shown through research that there are important links between teachers' sense of being effective, their satisfaction with their work, and retention. A demanding workload or isolation from one's peers may compromise a teacher's opportunity to teach well and thus succeed with students. New teachers rarely feel successful without some support from fellow teachers and administrators (Zeicher, 2003).

Research finds that forty-six percent of newly hired teachers in public schools are first time teachers. Most are recent graduates of state colleges and universities and were employed immediately after graduation. Many graduates of teacher education programs report that, in spite of their formal training, they did not feel adequately prepared for obstacles such as classroom management or student discipline (Costigan, 2005). Many first year teachers report that their preparation program did a "fair" or "poor" job of preparing them to deal with the pressures and stress of teaching. Preparing novice teachers to manage the broad array of educational decisions and day-to-day problems inherent in classroom teaching is an ongoing challenge. Beginning

teachers are often assigned to teach the most difficult students or subjects in which they lack adequate preparation (Nugent & Faucette 2004). These situations frustrate the new teachers and cause many of them to leave the profession after only a few years. Part of the problem is a lack of support during their transition from pre-service to first-year teaching. Many become frustrated because they are unable to implement practices learned at their universities. In order to close the gap and strengthen the link between pre-service and classroom realities, educators have identified a need for more mentoring programs (Tye & O'Brien 2002).

According to Wong and Asquith (2002), once a trusting and supporting relationship is established with a mentor, new teachers can focus on their professional development during the early phase of their careers. In the induction period, mentees have the opportunity to improve their teaching skills. New teachers must also be prepared to manage many facets of teaching that university courses do not address

Challenges faced by first-year teachers are different than those of experienced teachers. Many beginning teachers enter the workforce after only one semester of student teaching. Little or no support is provided except for what they obtain themselves and often little supervision is given. First year teachers begin their careers equipped with book knowledge of their subject matter, a few teaching strategies that have not yet been tested, and limited planning skills (Curran & Goldrick, 2002).

In many instances first-year teachers are assigned heavier workloads and more difficult classes than their more experienced peers. However, these new teachers are limited when it comes to instructional strategies to implement in the classroom. They come directly from college teacher preparation programs with minimal pedagogical knowledge and skills (Breaux & Wong, (2003).

Some of the most difficult challenges faced by beginning teachers are classroom management, motivating students, assessment of student work, diversity of students and their learning needs, and maintaining relationships with parents. Beginning teachers need help setting up a new classroom for the first time and teaching with limited resources (Danielson, 1999). Another common problem faced by teachers is understanding new state and district standards and assessments, and seeing how those standards affect teaching strategies. Developing organizational and time management skills, connecting theories, and teaching methods learned in college to classroom practice are also critical areas of need for beginning teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). While these issues intensify the difficulties both experienced and new teachers face, they may also contribute to the number of educators leaving the field within the first three to five years.

Teacher retention continues to be a challenge particularly in schools of low socio-economic status; however, attrition rates of beginning teachers will continue to be a factor in all school communities. Focusing on the beginning teacher/mentor relationship will produce further insight into the significance of that relationship as perceived by the beginning teacher. Learning how to better serve the needs of beginning teachers in all school environments will work toward increasing teacher retention rates (Feiman-Nemser, 2000). Retention rates for beginning teachers might be increased by adopting support strategies that help to alleviate first year trials. When attrition is high students experience a revolving door of teachers which creates an unstable environment for student learning and collegiality among all teachers. Systems that care about their beginning teachers will be interested in strategies to increase the likelihood of teacher retention which could ultimately enhance overall student achievement (Johnson, 2001).

Stable classrooms with confident, high quality teachers will enhance student learning. Research indicates (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), that as beginning teachers gain more experience they will become increasingly more comfortable in their school environment and will relate better to the student population. Retaining beginning teachers and continuing to shape them to become effective teachers will benefit all aspects for the school community (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

According to Stansbury (2002) understanding and meeting the needs of beginning teachers should decrease the number of inexperienced teachers in the classrooms. The continual influx of beginning teachers can drain the energy and resources of the school because administrators and other colleagues will need to continually orient and train these new teachers. School systems would benefit from spending time, energy, and money to retain quality teachers and avoid the need to continually hire and incorporate new teachers into the school environment.

Researchers, professional organizations, policymakers, and teacher educators are seeking ways to better prepare and support individuals who are new to the profession. Extensive efforts have been made to provide assistance to teachers during their induction year and to improve teacher training. New teachers still experience a series of starts and stops, endings and beginnings (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2003).

Historically, very little thought was given to providing assistance to new teachers. It was assumed that a first-year teacher's readiness for the classroom depended on the teacher preparation program that the teacher was enrolled in. However, first year teachers are faced with enormous challenges and overwhelming problems and when there is a lack of support, too many new teachers become disillusioned (Feiman-Hemser, 2001).

Mentoring and Mentor Programs

Every year, beginning teachers across the county enter in to their first full year of teaching. Theses teachers are full of excitement and spend many hours preparing lesson plans, setting up a classroom, developing classroom management plans, and making sure all is well planned for the first day of school. Teachers are in a stage of idealism. Unfortunately, when the first day of school arrives, these teachers recognize the rigors of the day-to-day routine demands of teaching. By December many of these teachers are in the stage of survival. As spring arrives these once enthusiastic teachers most often experience great anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed (Gratch, 2001). New teacher mentoring programs help teachers transition into the classroom and acculturate them to the specific school and district setting in which they will work. The mentor sets the example and guides the protégé to develop into a successful individual in his or her own respect (Bowman, 2002). Mentoring refers to the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools. Over the past two decades, teacher mentoring programs have become the dominant form of teacher induction (Certo & Fox, 2002).

In the research findings of Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) teacher development and support should be seen as a continuum: starting with personal and emotional support, leading toward specific task or problem-related support, and ultimately expanding to aid the new teacher in critical self-reflection on teaching practice. At each stage, different levels of support should be provided to meet developmental needs. It is the role of the mentor to guide the mentee through the continuum. The mentors' teaching experiences are highly beneficial as they offer a practical perspective to dealing with teaching challenges. The mentoring relationship allows for collaboration between theory and practice and brings together university coursework and pedagogy with pragmatic teaching experiences to improve teacher instructional practice.

Additionally, improved experiences early in a career, combined with increased new teacher

satisfaction, can undoubtedly impact teacher retention rates (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

According to Poden and Denmark (2000), the overall objective of teacher mentoring

programs is to provide newcomers with a local guide, but the particulars in regard to character

and content of these programs themselves widely vary. One set of variables are duration and

intensity. Mentoring programs can vary from a single meeting between mentor and mentee at

the beginning of a school year, to a highly structured program involving frequent meetings over a

couple of years between mentors and mentees who are provided with release time from their

normal teaching schedules.

Programs also differ according to the numbers of new teachers they serve. Some include

anyone new to a particular school, even those with previous teaching experience, while others

focus solely upon inexperienced candidates new to teaching. In addition, programs differ

according to their purpose. Some are primarily developmental and designed to foster growth on

the part of newcomers, while others are designed to assess or perhaps weed out, those deemed

ill-suited to the profession (Perreault, 2003).

Mentoring programs are also different in the way they select, prepare, assign, and compensate

the mentors themselves. Mentors can be selected or they can serve on a voluntary basis. Some

receive training and some do not. Programs differ according to if and how they pay mentors for

their services. Some programs devote attention to the match between mentor and mentee

(Danielson, 2002).

The kinds of induction and mentoring programs that exist and the circumstances under which

they help are fundamental questions for the policymakers faced with decisions about supporting

such programs. With the growth of mentoring programs, there also has been a growing interest in empirical research on the variety and effects of these initiatives.

According to Ganser (2002), mentor-teacher programs were developed to meet goals such as providing instructional assistance, helping new teachers navigate through curriculum guidelines, and assisting with discipline problems. In a four year study by Maloy, R., Seidman, I. E., Pine, G. J., & Ludlow, L. H. (2006), mentoring programs varied according to different school systems. In some systems the experienced teacher provided the support that each new teacher needed. In some systems the mentoring consisted of a few workshops and orientation sessions. Some systems offered no mentoring or support programs. The results of this study showed that teachers strongly agreed that mentoring programs were beneficial (Maloy et al., 2006).

A qualitative study conducted by Ilmer, S., Elliott, S., Snyder, J., Nathan, N., Colombo, M. (2005) supported the idea that mentoring is an important part of retaining teachers. One teacher was quoted as saying, "My mentor teacher has 35 years of experience. She has been very helpful. I wouldn't be here today without her support" (Ilmer et al., 2005).

According to Fluckiger, J., McGlamery, S., & Edick N. (2006), teachers who participated in mentoring programs remained in the teaching field at a much higher rate than those who did not. Mentoring is very expensive and requires an enormous amount of time (Yost, 2006). A very successful mentoring strategy is when mentors share examples of their own teaching experiences with novice teachers (Fluckiger et al., 2006).

According to studies conducted by Ingersoll (2001), new teachers who receive no support are twice as likely to leave the teaching field after their first year. The study showed that the best support came from having a mentor from the same field and grade, collaborating with teachers

who teach the same subject, being a part of a network of teachers, and having support in the area of technology (Ingersoll 2001).

Student teachers also reported that the mentoring support they received during their practice teaching encouraged them to continue with their dream to become a teacher. They reported that the knowledge they gained from their mentor helped as they entered their first year of teaching (Koener, M., & Baumgartner, F. (2002). Wong (2004) stated that effective mentor programs offered continuous professional development and opportunities to beginning teachers. According to Wong (2004) these programs provided opportunities for beginning teachers to visit classrooms in order to observe effective teaching practices.

It is of interest to see how intense mentoring programs can help these new teachers find the desire to stay in the education field. It is unacceptable for teachers to leave because they feel they get no support. Every new teacher usually goes through an orientation. This is where all the new teachers come together for a day to learn about the policies and procedures of the school and district. However more intense support is needed to ensure that our teachers stay in the teaching profession (Selke, & Fero, 20005). Mentoring involves ongoing systematic training and support for new teachers beginning before the first day of school and continuing throughout the first two or three years of teaching. The mentor programs cater to the culture and needs of its unique school or district. It is necessary to have cooperating teachers for student teachers and mentor teachers for beginning teachers (Gasner, 2002).

In response to the high attrition rate of new teachers, more and more mentoring programs are being implemented across the country. Current financial constraints, coupled with no systematic way to coordinate resources across schools and state organizations, present a challenge to many small or poorly funded schools and districts (Wilkins & Clift, 2006).

According to Wilkins and Clift (2006) there are five related forms of support for beginning teachers. It is important to enable teachers to learn more about instruction and instructional practices. Assistance should be offered to help beginning teachers learn how to manage the emotions and stresses of teaching. Support should be provided at the individual level. There should be a developing community of support in group situations and arrangements made for support through computer and internet enhanced contexts (Wilkins & Clift, 2006).

Wang and Odel, (2006) note that mentoring refers to a comprehensive program of support that provides both psychological and instructional support and embraces the totality of experience. Totality of experience recognizes that beginning teachers are affected by the impact of all of the elements in their environment during those impressionable years.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future views high-quality mentoring as one of the most effective ways to address new teacher concerns. This organization recommends structuring the first year or two of teaching like a residency in medicine, in which novices continually consult veterans. Veteran teachers can help novices overcome such daily challenges as classroom management, assessing how well students are learning, lesson planning, and understanding the culture of the school. Well funded, comprehensive, developmental mentoring programs that serve all teachers who need assistance are far from the norm in the United States school districts (Ingersoll, 2001).

The roles of cooperating teacher and mentor are prominent for teachers. Understanding and enhancing these roles is critical, because large numbers of new teachers will be entering classrooms over the next decade. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) asserted that the successful professionalization of teaching that started in the 1990's depends largely on the quality of mentoring that will be available to new teachers in the twenty-first century. Beginning teachers

who have mentors that they rate as effective are more likely to remain in the field of education (Nugent & Faucette, 2004).

In order for these programs to be successful it is necessary for the mentors and cooperating teachers to understand their roles and to feel prepared and supported in carrying them out. It is unfortunate that many of them have not received formal training for these roles. Without clear expectations and high quality training, cooperating teachers' and mentors' ability to enhance student teachers' and novices' professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions may be minimized (Certo & Fox, 2002).

New teacher's decision to stay in the classroom seems to be directly affected by their sense of student achievement. The feeling that they were teaching students well strongly affected their decisions to change schools or to exit the profession altogether. Mentoring is a way to help novices develop efficacy and thereby retain them in the classroom.

Mentoring, when carefully designed and implemented and soundly supported by the schools in which new teachers work, have been shown to positively affect the retention of new teachers. The quality of mentoring varies and could in fact have little impact on teacher retention. However with specific interaction and support mentoring and induction can produce very promising effects (Johnson & Birkeland 2003).

The Public Education Network (PEN) (2004) collected data on 200 new teachers through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. PEN (2004) found that most teachers felt that they benefited from having a mentor. There were very positive effects when the mentors for the new teachers taught the same grade and subject and could meet on a regular basis. They were more likely than their counterparts with less engaged mentoring experiences to indicate that mentoring improved their instruction (Justice, Griener, & Anderson, 2003).

Based on a survey of 3235 first-year teachers, mentoring had a positive effect on teacher retention. Findings showed that novices that had mentors in their field were 30 percent less likely to leave the profession at the end of the first year. Mentoring was not as positive when the mentor was not in the same field as the new teacher. During the past decade new thinking about mentoring has emerged nationwide. (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003). There are several promising comprehensive mentoring models (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003).

It is educators that shape the profession of education – its culture, its knowledge base, its standards for practice, and even its future. We can best impact that future in all sorts of positive ways, by nurturing new educators. With intensive support, studies tell us, new teachers consistently demonstrate higher levels of professional competence, greater success in working with children, and increased job satisfaction (Yost, 2006).

The mentoring of new teachers has proven to be an effective strategy in helping novice teachers succeed. Mentoring strategies help to transition beginning teachers into the classroom and acculturate them to the specific school and district setting in which they work. The goal is to give intensive assistance to new teachers in meeting their immediate needs as they adjust to the demands of teaching and become socialized to the school organization (David, 2005).

According to Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) both psychological and instruction-related support are necessary to help retain teachers. Psychological support can be provided when mentors create an emotional safety net by acting as a sounding board, assuring beginners that their experience is normal. Mentors can also offer sympathy and perspective by providing advice to help reduce the inevitable stress (Ingersoll, 2004).

The practice of mentoring beginning teachers emerged in the 1980's as a professional development strategy for achieving a variety of goals. One of those goals focuses solely on

teachers who are just entering the profession, while others extend the benefits of mentoring to other educators in the school and district community (Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

Although the specific needs within education change over time, the theory of mentorship is classical. Mentoring is a clear example of using lessons from the past to improve contemporary practice. Building a knowledge base on which to create a theoretical framework to support the practice of modern mentoring is critical for its success in the contemporary world (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000).

The practice of managing a mentorship program continues to evolve along with education. Teacher development and retention relies upon engagement in the school community. A strong commitment to effective mentorships for new teachers is a critical element in this era of school reform (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000).

In theory, mentors support new teachers by providing them with information, assistance, support, and guidance which will help the new teachers to be successful in their early years of teaching. The support that mentors provide ranges from helping introduce the new teacher to the social system of the school to helping with logistic, planning, and teaching concerns. Formal mentoring programs provide new practitioners with skills and support structures to develop effective teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2000). The mentoring experience also offers experienced teachers opportunities for differentiated responsibilities and roles as they serve in the role of mentor.

Teacher mentorship can be defined as "helping novices speed up the learning of a new job or skill and reduce the stress of transition, improving instructional performance of novices through modeling by a top performer and socializing novices in to the profession of teaching" (Walker, 2003 p. 32). Mentorship is the special relationship that is cultivated between a mentor and

protégé whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both personally and professionally (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The purpose of mentoring efforts range from orientation and induction of new teachers to instructional improvement with intent to change the culture of the school to a more collaborative learning environment (Poden & Denmark, 2000). Heath and Yost (2001) explained that mentorships are developed in schools throughout the nation in an attempt to stem the departure of first-year teachers. Research shows that the first year of teaching has greater correlation to teacher retention than either prior academic performance or the quality of the teacher preparation program (Boreen et al. 2000).

It is also important to focus on the reason that mentors accept the challenge of mentoring. Being a mentor allows seasoned teachers a chance to repay the debt to the ones who mentored them. If the early years of teaching were painful to experienced teachers then becoming a mentor can help them to spare other new teachers of the same fate (Boreen et al., 2000).

Becoming a mentor allows teachers to impact the future of education and how future educators teach. Participating in a mentor role allows teachers to share their professionalism with local, regional, and national colleagues; administrators, parents and students. Teachers do not often have the opportunity to affirm their status as master teachers publicly (Poden & Denmark, 2000). Mentors benefit from mentorship relationships through continued contact with their protégés. Mentors report that this continued contact with their protégés provides some of their richest collegial interactions. This relationship often develops into a peer coaching situation that allows both parties to grow as educators (Brock, 1999).

History of Mentoring

Mentorship has roots that date back to ancient times and has served as a powerful developer of human potential throughout the centuries. The term "mentor" had its origin in Homer's

Odyssey. Mentor was a wise and learned individual who was the friend of Odysseus, a Greek king. Mentor became entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son, Telemachus, to be his guide and companion (Poden & Denmark, 2000). Today, mentors are thought to be guides and companions along the lines of a protégé or an apprentice.

There are other historical figures of noted mentors. Socrates and Plato were paired as mentor and protégé as were Plato and Aristotle. Poden & Denmark (2000) discussed Socrates' mentoring of Plato as an illustration of learning from a master; Plato was considered an actual and professed disciple of Socrates. He developed an aspect of the Socratic educational theory that appealed to him. Because of a mentoring relationship, it was not necessary for Plato to replicate Socrates' work nor was it necessary for Aristotle to repeat Plato entirely. The protégé is led by the mentor to develop his or her own beliefs. Aristotle's view was that some men learn some things by habituation and some by instruction. The mentor sets the example and guides the protégé to develop into a successful individual in his or her own respect (Bey & Holmes, 1990).

Mentoring practices can be traced back to the 18th century, when the laws of Hammurabi of Babylon obligated young apprentices to learn a craft from an experienced artisan. The profession incorporated mentoring in the United States in the mid 1800s (Odell & Huling, 2000). At the onset, mentoring consisted of pairing an untrained inexperienced novice teacher with a practicing teacher who was to provide a model of teaching that the new teacher could replicate. The model began to evolve and by the 1920's teacher education was required by most states. The general perception of teacher preparation underwent a significant change in the 1950s. Colleges and universities shifted terminology to reflect the change in the ways teachers were being prepared for the profession. "Practice teaching" became student teaching," and "teacher training" became known as "teacher education" (Cosgrove, 2002).

The practice of mentoring beginning teachers emerged in the 1980's as a professional development strategy for achieving a variety of goals. One of those goals focuses solely on teachers who are just entering the profession, while others extend the benefits of mentoring to other educators in the school and district community (Davis, 2001).

Although the specific needs within education change over time, the theory of mentorship is classical. Mentoring is a clear example of using lessons from the past to improve contemporary practice. Building a knowledge base on which to create a theoretical framework to support the practice of modern mentoring is critical for its success in the contemporary world (Boreen et.al., 2000).

Historically, very little thought was given to providing assistance to new teachers. It was assumed that a first-year teacher's readiness for the classroom depended on the teacher preparation program that the teacher was enrolled in. However, first year teachers are faced with enormous challenges and overwhelming problems and when there is a lack of support, too many new teachers become disillusioned (Feiman-Nemser, 2000).

Mentoring Programs in the United States

Many first-year teachers will begin to think about the decision of whether or not to return to the classroom the next school year. Bowman (2002) conducted a study of first year teachers in rural South Carolina. Bowman (2002) wrote of one teacher who described her first year of teaching as an experience filled with terror. She decided to leave the field after that first year. In this case very little support was provided to assist this teacher (Brock & Grady, 2001).

Mentoring was not a common educational practice in the United States until about the past 10 years (Davis, 2001). In many cases, educators recognize mentoring as a special, personal, and usually unproductive relationship established between an experienced teacher and one new to the

profession or to an individual school (Davis, 2001). When teachers first join a school, the principal and the experienced teachers would welcome the first-year teacher with introductions at the beginning of school. As the school year begins and work begins the new teachers find themselves alone and in isolation. They lack significant information and understanding about their school and unfortunately about their profession (Davis, 2001).

Today, however policies to establish teacher-mentoring programs have become increasingly popular. Today twenty eight states and the District of Columbia have instituted some type of mentoring program. These programs differ in both the level of financial support for new teachers and the percentage of new teachers served (Moir & Gless, 2001). Some states secured their state departments to specify the services of a mentor as part of licensing requirements for first-year teachers (Moir & Gless, 2001).

Partnerships and collaborative efforts afford teacher educators opportunities to offer new teachers continued support in their first years of teaching, to maintain contact with practitioners, and to spend time in schools. Future teachers need quality clinical experiences in schools and need the support of mentor teachers and program faculty. Teacher education faculty also benefits from classroom experiences that help them stay current with trends in elementary and secondary classrooms (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The University of Southern Maine and six nearby rural school districts formed the Southern Maine partnership to facilitate collaboration between university education faculty and local teachers. The partnership has grown to include thirty-three districts, representing 201 school 6,700 teachers, and 82,000 students. Its staff has grown from one part-time professional staff, and two assistants. The partnership provides teachers in rural school districts with networks of colleagues with whom they can share experiences and ideas. The partnership is also beneficial to

the university. Faculty members learn from their new relationships with classroom teachers and from experiences in schools and sometimes use feedback from teachers in their own classrooms. The partnership provides schools and teachers with critical support (Ingersoll, 2003).

There are several promising comprehensive mentoring models (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003). The New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is leading the way. Their model is one-on-one mentoring by a carefully selected and highly-trained mentor. Additional components include participation by all first-and second-year teachers, a network of support for both new teachers and mentors, mentors being released from teaching duties to assist new teachers, formative assessment, linkages to pre-service education, program evaluation, and other elements. This model promotes the expectation that teaching is collegial and that learning is a lifelong process (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) reported that some individual states such as California offered new teacher support programs. Some local school districts offered their own mentor programs. These successful programs made sure that beginning and veteran teachers were well matched. In these programs the mentors served as a buddy and offered a great deal of emotional support (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

The Educational Testing Service has developed the Pathwise Framework Induction Program, a comprehensive, mentoring and support program for beginning teachers. This program provides training and support for mentors and structured tasks through which beginning teachers, with the assistance of a mentor, can develop, and refine their skills. An online component, including discussion boards, courses, mentor refresher, and resource pages, enhances communication (Ilmer, Elliott, Snyder, Nahan, & Colombo, 2004).

The Teachers for a New Era Project of the Carnegie Corporation of New York is attempting to strengthen K-12 teaching by developing state-of-the-art programs at schools of education. One guiding principle is the establishment of teaching as a clinical profession. Exemplary teacher education programs will consider the first two years of teaching as a residency period requiring mentorship and supervision. During this time, faculty from the higher education institution will confer with, observe, and provide guidance to the new teacher to improve practice (Beck-Frazier, 2005).

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2002), Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia have established formal training for those who serve as mentor teachers. Other states are also beginning to increase efforts to support teachers in their first few years in classrooms. Arkansas' Beginning Teacher Support Program will provide all new teachers with mentors and other assistance (Fluckiger, McGlamery, & Edick 2006). Georgia has a support system in place but is not fully funding it at the present time. The plan of this program was to offer support for new teachers the first two years of their career (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon 2001). There is a Teacher Support Specialist Training Program that is available for teachers in Georgia who wish to become mentors of beginning teachers. Arkansas' Beginning Teacher Support Program will provide all beginning and newly hired teachers with trained mentors during their first two years of teaching. Florida's Mentor Teacher Pilot Program trains mentor teachers to assist inexperienced teachers. Texas' beginning educator support system is implemented over a three-year period. It will provide first-and second-year teachers statewide with local support teams (Bolich, 2005). Each support team will consist of an experienced mentor teacher, the principal at the beginning teacher's school and representatives from teacher preparation entities.

The Oklahoma Residency Program provides each new teacher with a three-member team that consists of a representative from a college or university, a school administrator and a mentor teacher. The team observes the beginning teacher three times a year and provides him or her with guidance and support during the first year and, if needed second year of teaching (Maloy, Seidman, Pine, & Ludlow, 2006). Since 1980, nearly 40,000 new teachers in Oklahoma have participated in the program. Part of the mentoring program mandates how first year teachers are placed. First-year teachers can not be assigned to extracurricular or non-instructional activities. Second-and third-year teachers in some states are allowed two to three extra days to develop their portfolios which are required for the state's performance-based licensure (Johnson, & Birkland, 2003).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

There is growing evidence of the positive impact of induction programs on teacher retention, costs, teacher quality, and student learning. The National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (2002) suggest positive evidence that participation in comprehensive mentoring programs can cut attrition in half. Many smaller studies have corroborated the finding that participation in mentoring and induction programs has a positive impact on teacher retention. In the early 1990's a California study showed that the teachers who participated in mentoring programs used more complex and challenging instructional materials. Those teachers also were more successful in motivating students and setting high expectations for students with diverse backgrounds. Teacher attrition was reduced by two-thirds, and the programs were especially successful in supporting minority teachers (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004).

Though many states require teachers' mentoring programs current state policy leaves much to be desired. Recent studies reveal that thirty or more states have some type of mentoring program. Merely requiring the mentoring does not assure that programs are comprehensive and effective, or that funding is secure. These programs may vary from formal to informal (Wong, 2004), offering comprehensive support of a full-time, highly trained mentor to an informal buddy system from a fellow teacher who receives no release time or training (Walker, 2003). More in-depth data collected, indicated that nine states specified a minimum amount of time for mentors and new teachers to meet. Only eight required mentors and teachers to be matched by school, subject, and/or grade. Nine required mentors to be compensated for their work; and seven required release time for mentors (Boyer, Gillespie, 2000).

States are increasingly holding teacher preparation programs accountable for the success of new teachers. We also need to make sure that induction programs that include active mentoring programs are high quality and well-designed. We need to work toward greater alignment between what is taught in schools of education and what occurs in the classroom. Teacher mentoring programs need to be evaluated according to their effectiveness and quality. Mentoring can bridge the gap between pre-service education and the classroom. (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methodology that was used in this study. It provided and described research questions, setting, and participants. It described the research design of the study which includes the theoretical perspective on which the study is designed and by which interpretations of findings will be guided. Procedures and guidelines for the interviews and focus group sessions were described. The method of data collection and analysis used to determine the research findings and conclusions was be included in this section.

Introduction

Schools in this century are faced with ever growing challenges. Retaining beginning teachers is one of the biggest challenges. The research has identified the challenges faced by beginning teachers as well as what school districts should do to support and retain first year teachers. Demographic and policy trends now lend greater importance to mentoring programs than at any other time in recent history. Many states now require mentoring for entry-level teachers.

This study explored the factors that affect the retention of beginning teachers through a mentoring program and explore beginning teachers' beliefs on the mentoring program in a rural school community. This study attempted to show how mentoring may be used to help to improve the skills and knowledge of new teachers thus helping to improve teacher retention rates.

This study may be useful to administrators and mentoring teachers in terms of both format and results. The format involved an interview design and a process that allowed respondents to provide information that is unique to the individual while providing general information about the effectiveness of the mentoring they experienced during their first few years of teaching. An

emerging interview process that collects unique data can be useful in future research to help

establish a set of strategies for effective mentoring and an idea of mentoring needs. An interview

process can be replicated and used by principals to collect accurate data that would be specific to

their own schools.

The overarching research question is: What is the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers

in a Rural Northeast Georgia School District?

The following sub-questions guided the research:

1. How does mentoring impact the teaching practices and development of beginning
   teachers

2. How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to job satisfaction?

3. How does mentoring beginning teachers contribute to teacher retention?

Research Design

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach in order to understand the mentoring

process in place to support beginning teachers in a Northeast Georgia school district. This

phenomenological study was conducted using interviews. According to Glense (2006), the

nature of the research problem determines whether the research should be qualitative or

quantitative. Some studies lend themselves to research that attempts to uncover the nature of

people's experiences. In this study qualitative research was used to uncover and understand

phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. Qualitative methods

facilitated an understanding of how a mentoring program may assist in the retention of beginning

teachers. This qualitative research approach served to provide a deeper understanding of the

mentoring activities that are beneficial to beginning teachers. This process fully explained the

experiences of the participants and allowed the researcher to gather the data necessary to answer the research question.

The impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia School System was the focus of this qualitative study. Grounded theory methods guided the entire research process from the initial collection of data to the final writing. One of the components of this method is that theory evolved during the actual research. Grounded theory develops theoretical ideas through a series of carefully planned steps. It seemed to be the best method for conducting this research as it sought to ensure that the emerging theory arises from the data and not from some other source. Grounded theory is inductive and based on observation of the data. The researcher was continually involved in the process of data collection, data coding, and data analysis. The researcher discovered gaps in the data that needed to be filled through the ongoing process of analyzing data. Constant comparative analysis was used to collect data, analyze data, and generate theory concerning beginning teachers' beliefs about mentoring.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The participants of the study were teachers who were identified as novice teachers with one to three years experience who received mentoring support without regard to grade level. The participants were selected from five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Purposeful sampling was used to choose the participants. Purposeful sampling occurs when individuals are selected who demonstrate an interest in the study.

Participants were selected from a list of beginning teachers as provided by the principals of the schools in this Northeast Georgia school system. The mentoring program of this school district provides a mentor for each first, second, and third year teacher. Each school has the same guidelines to follow for the program; however, each school has some latitude as to how the

program is implemented. The participants for the individual interviews included one beginning

teacher from each of the five elementary schools, two beginning teachers from the middle school

and two beginning teachers from the high school. One focus group was also interviewed. The

participants of this group consisted of two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and

two high school teachers. All participants received a four year education degree from an

accredited college as opposed to an alternative teacher training program.

Demographic information was obtained from the participants in regard to years of teaching

experience, the highest degree earned, if they are residents of the county, if they are planning to

leave and if so the reason for leaving. Again, participants were assured of complete anonymity

when the results of this study are discussed.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

Interviews were the primary means of gathering data for this study. Individual interviews

were conducted with nine beginning teachers and a focus group consisting of six beginning

teachers. The common use of interviews in qualitative research allowed the gathering of data on

perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward a topic (Glense, 2006). The interviews provided

descriptions, detail, and context of the mentoring experiences provided during beginning years

from the beginning teachers. Prior to the initial interviews, an inventory of open ended questions

served to prompt participation from the interviewee. All interviews were audio taped, with the

participant's permission, for later transcription. Follow-up interviews were conducted if

necessary.

Interview questions helped to generate the thoughts and beliefs of the participants regarding

the impact of mentoring both in the school system and in individual schools. There were

questions used to glean additional strategies that can enhance the mentoring program in the school district.

Data Collection

The researcher obtained permissions from the County Board of Education, principal of each school, dissertation committee, and the Georgia Southern Institutional Review Board. The study was conducted during the 2008-2009 school year. Participants were sent information explaining the purpose of the study along with a letter of consent. They were ensured of confidentiality of their names. Participation in the study was voluntary as was expressed to the participants. Sessions were scheduled during planning times or after school at the participants' respective school sites. Interviews were the main data collection instrument for this study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003) an interview is a purposeful conversation used to generate descriptive data about how participants perceive and interpret the world. The researcher kept a journal to record notes, memos, and reflections of the participants. Interview questions asked during the interview sessions were recorded in the journal. The interviews were the primary source of data. The data collected helped reveal how mentoring can impact the retention of beginning teachers. The journal was used as a secondary source and data collected was destroyed at the end of this study. Comparative analysis was used for data analysis because of its link to grounded theory method.

Data Analysis

The most widely used means of data analysis is thematic analysis. This is a process that involves collecting data and looking for themes for further analysis and description (Glense,2006). Data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables the researcher to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. The researcher discovered what the data revealed by

reflecting and organizing the information and used it to help answer the research questions (Glesne, 2006).

The data collected was analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the mentoring strategies that are provided for beginning teachers. The data from the interviews served as a means to determine the needs of the beginning teachers and the degree to which their needs were met by the mentoring opportunity. An effort was made to identify the mentoring strategies that were the most effective in the support and development of skills of beginning teachers. The information obtained was transcribed to identify themes and patterns. The researcher described the impact of mentoring as identified by the participants by using themes emerging from the data collected. Recurring themes were established to categorize data from the sessions.

Limitations

1. Information gathered from the schools in one district and may not generalize to other schools.

2. The participant's answer may have been given in a way to appease the researcher and not completely honest.

3. The findings of this study were not able to control completely for other factors that might also affect teacher retention.

Delimitations

1. This study included teachers who have taught in a public school setting as opposed to private, charter or magnet school systems.

Summary

Chapter three presented an overview and discussion of the methodology that was used in this dissertation study. There is consensus that one very important factor in determining student

performance is the quality of the teacher. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an

equitable education to children across this nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be

concentrated on developing and retaining high-quality teachers. Research has also shown that

successful mentoring strategies cut attrition in half and help to develop novice teachers into high-

quality professionals who improve student achievement. Through the interview process the

researcher explored the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a Northeast Georgia

School District.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented in this chapter. The purpose of this qualitative study

was to determine the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia

School District. The interview process provided a richer understanding of how mentoring for

beginning teachers occurs in practice. The information and ideas offered by the participants

during their personal interviews provided the answers to the research questions. The sub-

questions that guided the research were these: 1) How does mentoring influence the teaching

practices and development of beginning teachers? 2) How does mentoring beginning teachers

help contribute to job satisfaction? 3) How does mentoring of beginning teachers contribute to

teacher retention? The goal of this study was achieved as the researcher conducted individual

interviews and focus group interviews. All participants were selected from a purposive sample

of certified beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia school system.

This school system has a total student population of around five thousand. The community is

very rural without a lot of industry. Most citizens work in surrounding counties. About forty

percent of the students receive free or reduced meals. Sixty percent of the teachers live in this

community. In conducting some research about the school system the researcher found that

teacher retention is about seventy-five percent. This community is close to a major university

and several smaller colleges. Teachers that leave often do so upon completion of higher degrees

by their spouses.

After receiving approval from Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

and the Superintendent of the school system, the researcher contacted prospective participants

about the research project through e-mail and/or phone or personal contact and extended an

invitation for them to join the research project either as an individual interviewee or as a part of a focus group. The researcher explained to the prospective participants that he or she was selected to participate in the research project to discuss the impact of mentoring in their beginning years of teaching on their decision to remain in the field of education. The researcher set up the interviews with the teachers at a time convenient for them.

The researcher sent through e-mail the cover letter explaining the purpose of the research project (see Appendix A). The researcher conducted nine individual sixty to ninety minute interviews with beginning teachers who were participants in a district mentoring program. In addition to the nine individual interviews the researcher conducted a ninety minute focus group interview with six teachers who were participants in a district mentoring program. At the beginning of the individual interviews and focus group interview the researcher provided the informed consent to be signed by the participants (see Appendix B).

To help protect participant confidentiality, real names of the participants have not been used. The individual interviews and the focus group interviews were audio taped in order to allow the researcher to transcribe the data and to report the findings. The researcher analyzed the interview responses of the participants about their individual experiences with their mentors and identified common themes and categories among them. Two demographic tables of the participants in this study are found in this chapter. Table 4.1 provides demographic data of the participants who were interviewed individually. Table 4.2 provides demographic data of the participants who participated in the focus group. The following charts reveal pseudonyms that are used in this chapter. Chart 4.1 presents detailed information about each teacher that participated in the individual interviews. Similarly, the demographics of the focus group are revealed in table 4.2.

TABLE 4.1

Individual Interviews

Name	Years of Experience	Gender	Race	Nature of Contact	Degree	Resident of County	Return
Annie	1st Year Elementary	Female	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	Lifetime Resident	Yes
Claire	3rd Year Elementary	Female	White	Individual Interview	Masters	No	Yes
Rusty	3rd Year Elementary	Male	African American	Individual Interview	Four Year	Three Year Resident	Yes
Emily	2nd Year Elementary	Female	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	No	Yes
Barbara	2nd Year Elementary	Female	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	Yes	Yes
Mark	2nd Year Middle School	Male	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	Yes	Yes
Tristen	1st Year Middle School	Female	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	Yes	No
Jackie	3rd Year High School	Female	White	Individual Interview	Four year	No	No
Jake	1st Year High School	Male	White	Individual Interview	Four Year	No	Yes

TABLE 4.2

Focus Group Interviews

Name	Years of Experience	Gender	Race	Nature of Contact	Degree	Resident of County	Return
Kim	2nd Year Elementary	Female	African American	Focus Group	Masters	No	Yes
Sara	1st Year Elementary	Female	White	Focus Group	Four Year	Yes	Undecided
Carson	3rd Year Middle School	Male	White	Focus Group	Four Year	No	Yes
Rhonda	1st Year Middle School	Female	White	Focus Group	Four Year	No	No
Reid	2nd Year High School	Male	White	Focus Group	Four Year	Yes	Yes
Jane	2nd Year High School	Female	White	Focus Group	Four Year	Yes	Yes

The chapter is divided into sections and will address each research question according to the interviews and the data analysis. The data offered general information as it relates to the participants' experiences with mentoring. The individual experiences as reported by the participants helped to identify common patterns and themes.

Research Sub Question One: How does mentoring influence the teaching practices of beginning teachers?

The response of the participants revealed very different views of the mentoring program at each of the respective schools. This seemed due largely to the variety of ways in which the mentor programs were carried out at the schools. While some schools had very active programs where mentors and mentees met together as well as individually, several schools had very unorganized programs. Annie, a first year elementary teacher, and her mentor developed a friendship as well as professional relationship during the time they worked together. Annie described the experiences with her mentor in this way:

> I often wondered if I was teaching in a way that reached each child in my class.
> Because this is my first year, I am not very confident about my teaching methods.
> My mentor made time to work with me and allowed me to bounce ideas off of her.
> She even made me feel more confident when she asked me to share some of my plans
> with her. I could not have made it this far without her support.

Most of the participants responded positively to the interview questions, although the responses revealed vast differences at the different schools and at the different grade levels. Elementary teachers seem to work more closely together even without the mentoring component. However, Claire, a third year teacher, expressed some positive and negative results of her mentoring experience.

My mentoring experience has mostly been positive but in the beginning it was difficult for the mentor and I to schedule time to work together. I was having some real difficulties with discipline and desperately needed help. It was the first time I realized that nothing in college could have prepared me for this. My mentor and I agreed to meet some afternoons after school. I was able to get some ideas about different discipline procedures to try. I really appreciated her being willing to stay with me after school to help me. She had already helped me with instruction and my professional duties and general day to day challenges. The issue of discipline was an area that required more time.

Teachers at the middle school level reported that time and support with instruction and discipline were the major issues that they faced. The participants reported that there was time to work with other teachers in the same subject area, so it was not necessary for their mentor to teach the same subject that they taught. They did feel that it was necessary for the mentors to be at the same grade level so that they had common planning time. These beginning teachers were very concerned with their interaction with the students and wished to maintain a professional relationship while portraying a caring attitude. With the standard driven classroom, the teachers felt overwhelmed about preparing students for the Criterion Referenced Competency Test. Also, planning time was taken up with meetings. They reported that it was difficult to schedule uninterrupted time to work with mentors. At the middle school, the mentor coordinator scheduled monthly breakfast meetings for mentors and mentees. These meetings were held before school. In the beginning, most participants attended; and then it seemed that other responsibilities such as morning duties began to disrupt the consistency of the meetings. While the participants felt that the mentoring program was somewhat important to the administration,

they felt that more emphasis should be put on the program and that measures should be made to ensure enough time for the mentors to work with the mentees. One area that the participants felt would help was if the new teachers had more time to observe veteran teachers. Again, the issue of release time proved to be a deterrent for observations. Two very diverse views were obtained from the individual interviews at the middle school level. Mark, a second year teacher had these words to say about mentoring.

> I was assigned a mentor my first year. The experience was a disaster! My mentor made me feel as though I was intruding on her time. It seemed to make her angry that that I needed help and most times she made me feel pretty stupid for asking questions. As a new teacher, I felt overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities. As the year continued I started to question my career choice. It was at that time that another teacher stepped in and helped me make it through to the end of the year. That same teacher became my mentor for my second year of teaching. The experience was wonderful and my confidence really improved. I began to enjoy teaching and to enjoy the students. It is because of my mentor that I am still in this profession.

While Mark's mentoring experience ended up being successful, Tristen's story was not as positive. Here is her story:

> I went into teaching because I love children of all ages. I started having some doubts about teaching when I was completing my student teaching. However I was in an inner city school and for the most part my supervising teacher seemed in control of the students. I convinced myself that with a little time and experience I would be able to do the same thing. I also knew that I would be in a more rural area and I thought that the students would behave better and be more interested in learning. Boy was I wrong!

Let me first say that my mentor has been wonderful and has worked with me every

step of the way. There is nothing else she could have done and actually she is the

reason that I made it without bailing before the year was over. However, I now

know that I have made a huge mistake in career choices. Even a great mentor could

not make me stay in this profession. The interviews of high school teachers revealed

further differences in the impact that mentoring programs make. Both participants

expressed how their mentoring experience provided encouragement and that their veteran

mentors modeled what teaching could be after a few weeks, months, and years. The

mentors at this high school were contagiously energetic and enthusiastic and made even

the bad days bearable. The mentors were assigned according to subject area. All subject

area had the same planning time and there was protected time set aside just for the

mentors and mentees to work with each other at least once a week.

Both Jackie and Jake expressed positive experiences with their mentor. Jackie is in her third

year of teaching high school. She gave the following description of how her mentoring

experiences impacted her teaching practices:

My first year of teaching was very scary because I was not much older than the

students that I was teaching. I was assigned a mentor that was in the English

department. I was impressed at the amount of time my mentor spent with me,

carefully going over county policies and day to day routine chores to complete.

Although the first year was overwhelming, I knew I had someone to talk with

or to vent with. The mentor helped tremendously with the daily stressors of

school such as student discipline, curriculum requirements, parents, and of course

the paperwork the never ends. The surprising thing to me was that the second year

my mentor spent just as much time with me. I was able to spend most of my time

refining my lesson plans and really getting to know my students. By the third year my

mentor still maintained frequent contact with me. I have not been that impressed with my

administrator but it really did not matter because of my mentoring experience. I would

like to one day become a mentor to a beginning teacher.

Jake is in his first year of teaching and expressed his appreciation of his mentor. His main

concern this year has been discipline. He recognizes that high school students need to be

disciplined but not in the same way as younger children. His student teaching experience was at

a middle school in the eighth grade. He felt that his discipline procedure should be a little

different at the high school level. Jake shared the following experiences:

I noticed immediately that high school students don't like being talked

"down to." I especially had to seek out some help when dealing with the girls. I had

been warned about putting my self in a bad situation with the girls at the high school

level. I was very nervous about how I spoke with them. I was always worried that I

might say something that I should not say. My mentor, who was also male, helped me

a lot. Sometimes when we were around situations that required discipline but did not

directly involve me, he would talk me through situation and talk about different ways

to handle things. As the year continued I felt more comfortable with high school

students. At first I thought that maybe I should have started out teaching a lower level

but with the support of my mentor I am looking forward to many years in education.

The interviews with the focus group revealed similar information about how their mentoring

experience influenced their teaching practice. One area that was addressed was that of

individuality. Sara, an elementary teacher in her first year said that while she was grateful for

her mentor, she sometimes felt that she was expected to do things exactly like her mentor. Sara expressed the need to develop her own style of learning how to manage all of the first year challenges. She felt very fortunate that she had someone to talk with and to share her concerns with. She also was glad for the additional help with the curriculum. She said that her mentor even encouraged her to follow her instincts in developing her teaching practices. Sara shared that she realizes that she possesses a certain amount of confidence that some first year teachers do not have and she knows how important the mentoring program is.

Reid and Jane both teach at the high school level and are both in their second year of teaching. They were impressed with the mentor program at their school. They both were very positive about the assistance they had received from their mentor. While Reid was more dependent on his mentor for support with curriculum, Jane sought more help with discipline issues. Carson and Rhonda had differing views about the mentoring program at the middle school, but the differences seemed to be related to the relationship with the mentor instead of the mentoring program itself. In summary, teachers at every level felt that mentors influenced the teaching practices of their first years in the classroom.

Research Sub-Question Two: How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to job satisfaction?

By providing a positive role model for beginning teachers to work with during their first years of teaching, job satisfaction seems more evident and satisfied teachers are more likely to stay in the profession. Rusty and Emily are elementary teachers. Emily has two years experience and Rusty has three years experiences. The information obtained from their interviews revealed information that addressed their job satisfaction. Rusty talked about how his mentor helped him so much in the first year that he ended the year with great enthusiasm. He talked about how

exhausting the first year was, but because he had such great support it allowed him to actually enjoy his work. The following are some of the remarks he made:

It was a real comfort to know that there is someone to go to for help when you need it. I did not know what kind of situation I was going into. It helped to have someone that took an interest and got to know my personality and my style of teaching.

Emily also credits her mentor for her success and job satisfaction during her first and second year of teaching. She shared that she taught first grade her first year and then was ask to move to second grade. She had the same mentor for both years and her mentor had taught both grades also. She said that her mentor was helpful to her as she planned a new curriculum.

The focus group participants also shared how their mentoring experience contributed to their job satisfaction. One idea that the participants liked was the fact that the mentors were not involved in job performance evaluations. Each believed that the mentoring experience was more rewarding because they were not threatened by mentor performance evaluations. Another issue that had not been brought up was expressed by the middle school teachers. They were grateful that their mentors had explained the expectations that parents had for the teachers of their children and how important the communication between teacher and parent is. The participants all agreed that they needed guidance in learning how to communicate with parents. Rhonda voiced her concern about being too negative about the students to their parents. Dealing with parents is a part of teaching that Rhonda does not like because she did not want to hurt their feelings while communicating with them about their children. She was able to observe her mentor in parent meetings and through the observations she quickly learned to always begin parent meetings with a positive comment about the child.

The elementary teachers agreed that communicating with parents is a very difficult skill to learn and that their mentors had been quite helpful in that area. All participants said that part of their job satisfaction had to do with the rapport they had with parents. Again the elementary participants felt this was especially important and they shared how involved most parents are in the early grades. Barbara, a second year teacher, voiced her concern at putting too much emphasis on the mentoring experience. She shared these feelings:

> While I am very aware of how important the mentoring relationship is and how helpful my mentor has been to me, I do not feel that I should blame or credit my mentor for my job satisfaction. I know that having a positive experience with my mentor has certainly contributed to my job satisfaction as much of the stress has been taken away by having someone to support me each day. I do however feel that we as individuals must take responsibility for contributing to our own job satisfaction. We must recognize that as adults everything will not always be easy and we have to learn to adjust. I also feel that facing difficulties makes us stronger.

Carson and Rhonda talked about how the mentors helped with their job satisfaction. Both said that their mentors listened supportively to their questions and concerns and provided helpful instructional feedback that helped to improve their teaching. Kim stated that her mentor made suggestions that did not lessen her self-esteem. She really appreciated the way her mentor made her feel valued and appreciated. The interviews revealed that the participants felt that their job satisfaction was positively impacted through their mentor experience.

Research Sub-Question Three: How does mentoring teachers contribute to teacher retention?

Contributing to teacher retention includes ways in which a mentoring program can impact a beginning teacher to remain in the profession. The participants of this study agreed that the retention of good, high-quality teachers is very important to the success of public education.

With the exception of one participant, there seemed to be a positive relationship between the mentoring experience and the participants' decision to remain in the teaching profession. Even the participant that will not return to teaching stated that she had a wonderful mentor and that her mentor had helped her make it through the year. Annie, an elementary teacher stated that she has plans to stay in education for a long time. She also said that she will go back to school to pursue an advanced degree after she has completed her third year of teaching. Annie said that the challenges of teaching had been made much easier because of her mentor and clearly influenced her to continue her teaching career.

The participants that had been teaching for two and three years also talked about the value of the mentoring experience. The main theme that emerged was that the support they received from mentoring helped to relieve the beginning teachers of the overwhelming stressors that come with the first years of teaching. While the participants agreed that mentoring was not the only factor that convinced them to remain in the teaching field, it was one of the most important aspects of their beginning years. The support they received help make the beginning years bearable. The areas of support that they described related to curriculum, behavior management, and parent communication and induction into their prospective schools. Jake stated that it was somewhat difficult for him to deal with all of the different personalities of the adults. He commented that while he had always been around other people he was able to choose the ones he hung around the most. At work you have to accept all different personalities and learn to get along. He said that

he would have to learn to get along at any job he was in but the teaching profession has so many people to deal with. He said that his mentor had really helped him with some conflicts between other teachers. This one issue could have caused him to choose another profession. As it is, his mentor helped him enjoy learning the art of getting along. The response from the focus group was positive as regards to how their mentors helped them to feel confident enough to remain in the field of education. Kim, an elementary teacher, said the support she received from her mentor made her beginning years a positive experience. She said she had to admit that there were times during her first years that she had to rethink her decision to go into teaching. Kim said the encouragement and support her mentor offered kept her going the first year. Reid and Jane both talked about how their mentoring experience had helped them form a positive attitude about education. They both commented on how having such helpful support gave them an opportunity to grow in their profession. As the participants continued answering and discussing the interview questions it became evident that they felt their mentors had made their transitioning from being a student to becoming a teacher much easier and a key component in their decision to continue in the teaching field.

Claire really summed things up with her answer:

My first year of teaching was terrifying to me. If I allowed myself to think about

everything that was required of me I probably would have quit the first few months.

I was so fortunate to have a mentor that helped me to get organized and helped me

prioritize. Another area she helped me with was in the area of personal time. I was

taking things home everyday and not giving myself time to "get away" from my

job. I was so afraid of getting behind. My mentor helped me to see the danger of

burnout and helped me to understand that some things had to wait until the next

day. There were times that I felt like a fish out of water flopping around on the

seashore. My mentor helped to calm me and guide me. Now here I am in my third

year and I have more and more confidence in my teaching ability. I truly feel that

I am reaching my students and making a contribution to this community. I would

not have come this far without the support of my mentor.

.   The participants experienced many outcomes from the interactions with their mentors that

seemed to have a positive influence on their decision to stay in the field of teaching.

Common Themes

There were several themes that surfaced from the interviews. The themes that emerged are

directly related to how the mentoring program impacted the participants. The first theme that

emerged was that of support. This support included support with curriculum, discipline, parent

involvement, and school culture. Another area of importance was the time allotted for the

participants to meet with their mentors. The participants agreed that the time spent with their

mentors helped them transition into an established classroom. Attitude was another theme that

emerged from the interviews. This included the attitude of the mentor and the overall attitude of

the administration/school.

Support

Support is a broad theme that includes the experiences the participants shared with their

mentors. The findings reveal that as the relationship grew between the mentor and beginning

teacher, the support grew also. Through the interviews it became apparent that having

accessibility to their mentors and receiving personal and emotional support from their mentors

was very important to the participants. The accessibility also impacted the support the

participants received with curriculum issues, discipline issues, and parent involvement issues.

The participants shared how it was comforting to know that they could go to their mentors to discuss issues that they were having difficulty with. The participants who were in close proximity to their mentors seemed to value their presence even more. Claire explained it this way: " By having my mentor right next door, I can go to her immediately when I have a concern that I need to discuss." Emily stated that it gave her confidence when she and her mentor were in meetings together. She said that by having her mentor there they could discuss the agenda of the meeting and she could ask questions that came to mind. She said having her mentor beside her gave her confidence.

Several participants talked about how they often had informal meetings with their mentors like in the hallway or at lunch. These impromptu meetings allowed a more personal relationship to develop. Rusty, an elementary teacher, described these impromptu meetings:

> Developing a relationship with my mentor helped me to develop relationships with other teachers. These relationships help me to feel a part of the school. Feeling a part of the school influenced me to stay in teaching and at the same school.

Several participants talked openly about how the support they received carried them toward professional growth and made them realize that they were capable of making contributions to the teaching profession.

Two teachers from the high school both live in another county. They talked about how their mentors helped them understand the community as well as the school system. They both felt the importance of becoming familiar with the community in order to form relationships with the students and parents. Annie, who is a lifetime resident of this county relied on her mentor to help her develop a professional image. These are the feelings she shared:

> I was worried that the teachers and parents will still consider me as the girl they knew

growing up or in their Sunday School class. I need to establish myself as a professional.

I want them to recognize the talents I have as a teacher. My mentor had very helpful

suggestions for me to accomplish this goal. She suggested that when we are in meetings

I should bring along a lesson plan to share and engage the other teachers in

professional conversations.

Another area where support was instrumental in helping the beginning teachers was in the

curriculum area. Most of the beginning teachers admitted that learning the curriculum and

standards and getting the best materials together was an exhausting job. Some were worried

about the competition among teachers to have the highest test scores. They concurred that the

mentor program really contributed to boosting their confidence in this area. The participants

received information and ideas designed to support the curriculum. Mark, a middle school

teacher, told his experience:

One thing that really helped me was being allowed time to work with my

mentor and other colleagues with the curriculum. My mentor made sure that

I had copies of standards and copies of some lesson plans that other teachers

had found to be successful with their students. I felt like I at least had a place

to start. I quickly saw the importance of being prepared each day. That preparation

begins with the curriculum.

At the high school level Reid liked that idea of being able to observe veteran teachers as part

of his mentoring experience.

It really helped me to observe the different ways teachers taught the curriculum and made

me realize that there is more than one way to teach. I was able to observe how the

teachers made adjustments to their curriculum plans if they felt students needed more

time to grasp ideas. I also got ideas on how to teach to different learning styles and

different learning levels. That is a skill that will take me a while to master.

Each and every participant talked about how they valued the help of mentors with discipline. The one participant that will not return to teaching said that the support she received from her mentor in dealing with discipline really helped her survive through the year. She also said that discipline issues is one of the main reasons she was getting out of the profession. Here is her response:

I have never seen such horribly behaved children in my life. It is almost impossible to

teach because I have to spend so much time on managing my class. My mentor has told

me that the first year is the most difficult but managing the students will get easier as I

gain more experience. We had a discipline plan and I tried very hard to follow it. I also

tried rewarding good behavior but nothing seemed to work. I just don't think I am cut

out for this career.

Two of the focus group participants also taught at the same school, but at different grade levels. I took the opportunity to question them about the behavior of their students and how they handled the discipline issues. Rhonda who is in her first year confessed that the discipline was a big issue for her. She said that she feels she can manage the students and teach them but some days are worse than others. She said that she has one class that is never quiet and her mentor has really helped her with handling them. Also her mentor encouraged her to meet with the other teachers on her team to see what they are doing to combat the problem. Carson who is in his third year feels that discipline will always be an issue and he just had to decide how to cope each year. One thing Carson pointed out is that in his three years of teaching all of the classes have been very different in their behavior. His first year the students were well behaved

and he said he wondered why everyone always talked about behavior issues. Well, the next year

he found out and almost changed fields. His mentor quickly came to his rescue and he survived

the year. He did say that it might have been better to have had the problems the first year so that

he would know better what to expect. But he also said that having well behaved students the

first year gave him an opportunity to work with his mentor on curriculum issues.

   Another area of concern was the issue of parent contact. This was an area where the

participants required a lot of support. Each participant verbalized how meeting with parent was

a very intimidating task for them. Most had heard horror stories of conflict with parents and how

parents called principals and superintendents when they were not pleased with teachers' actions.

The participants quickly addressed with this issue with her mentor. One participant shared her

experience:

> Our system has parent visitation days set aside two times a year. However my mentor
>
> encouraged me to try to contact parent at the beginning of the year with positive things
>
> to share about the students. She suggested that this could be done through notes or
>
> phone calls. She explained that if a parent has an initial positive contact with the
>
> teacher, then it is easier to talk with them about problems that might arise.

   At the elementary level the participants were encouraged to begin sending home papers both

good and bad and allowing the parents an opportunity to speak with the teachers about their

children's work. At the high school level the mentors encouraged the participants to make

contact in the beginning and to try to identify some strength of the student to have something

positive to talk about in the beginning.

Time

One of the most important themes that emerged was the amount of time that the mentors spent with the participants. With the exception of one or two these participants were pleased with the time they had with their mentor but thought that more time allotted would be better. One school kept protected time for the beginning teachers to work with their mentors. This was very helpful for them.

Jane, a second year high school teacher, said that is was good to know when they would meet and they almost always met the same time of the week. She could make sure she had a list of things to discuss with her mentor. She also said that during her first year her mentor often checked with her at the end of the day to see how she was doing. She has the same mentor and they still spend the protected time together. Jane said that she is very glad that this school system provides help for the first three years because the first year is surely the survival year. She also knows that she has a mentor dedicated to help preventing discouragement so teachers will not leave the teaching field.

When asked about the changes that could be made in the mentoring program some of the participants stated that more time needed to be set aside for the mentors even if it meant release time for the mentors and mentees. This theme was really highlighted in the focus group and the participants were comparing how the mentoring program was carried out at the different schools. Sara believes that time is a very critical component of the mentoring program. She said, "with all of the demands placed on teachers, finding time is a real challenge." "Both mentor and mentees can find time to work together if they are both committed to the relationship."

The middle school seemed to have more time because of their planning time; however, they complained that so much of their planning was spent in meetings. They did say that the meetings

with their subject area was very beneficial in helping them with curriculum but would like more time with their mentors because of the relationship that they had formed with them. At the elementary level the participants shared that they really had to work with the mentors on finding uninterrupted time to work with them. Two of the participants in the focus group said that their mentors did a great job in finding time to work with them even if it was after school. They said sometimes they could talk at lunch because they have duty free lunch. Both participants agreed that being close in proximity helps when there is not a lot of time to work with your mentor. "You can at least have a few minutes during the day to ask questions or just vent if you are having a really bad day."

    All participants agreed that more time would allow them to brainstorm teaching ideas One participant offered the idea of coming to school one week early to have time with their mentors. The program is designed for the mentors and beginning teachers to come one day early. When this idea was proposed to the others there were mixed responses. Some were in favor of one or two extra days. Only one other participant, an elementary teacher liked the idea of beginning the school year one week early. This is her response:

> After working through the first year and really fighting to find time with my mentor I can see the benefit of having that much time in the beginning. It would be quiet and many more areas of teaching could be addressed before the year starts. I do realize that some issues will just arise and you may not know what those issues are in the beginning but the major concerns could be addressed before the year begins. Also it would give time to get some lesson plans completed with the help of your mentor. I know that most teachers do not want to give up one week of their summer but I would advise them of the benefits of having that time with your mentor prior to your first year of teaching.

Attitude

Attitude about the importance of a mentoring program often reflects how the administration

within a school responds to the needs of the beginning teachers. The attitude of the

administration of a school is a key component in advocating the importance of the mentoring

program. It is important for everyone to understand the impact mentoring has on a whole school

system, not just one school.

This theme was two-fold. The first area was the attitude of the mentor and the second area

was the attitude of the school/ administration. Some participants were a little concerned that the

participants of the mentoring program and the other teachers were very supportive of the

program, but the administration was not very involved and seemed less supportive. This was a

concern at the Middle School and two elementary schools. The participants felt that if the

administration had been more supportive than more time and attention would be given to the

program. Two participants voiced their concern that the overall attitude of the school would be

more positive about the mentoring program if the administration was more positive. Here are

two separate opinions of how administration made a difference. Jake expressed his surprise at

how the principal made time to meet with the mentors and the beginning teachers. He made

himself readily available to all who were involved in the program. The principal often offered

suggestions to problems that we were facing and even took time to check with us later to see if

things were better. Of course I often saw this principal involved with teachers even if they were

not beginning teachers. He often engaged in conversation with us and he was very visible in the

hallways. I also noticed that he made an effort to know the names of the students. I know that

the support of the administration spilled over to the entire school. I know that his positive

attitude affected the attitude of the other faculty members.   A very different scenario was portrayed from another school:

There were times that my mentor would try to meet with the principal to talk about issues

of the mentoring program. The principal never seemed to want to spend time talking

about the mentoring program. However there were two assistant principals that were

very supportive and gave a lot of their time to work with us. I found it very discouraging

that the head of the school did not set an example for the other faculty members. I was

very fortunate that my mentor did not follow his lead. However, I did become aware that

the attitude of one or two mentors was directly affected by the attitude of the principal.

The attitude of the individual mentor also made a difference in the success of the program. There were only a few cases where the mentors appeared uninterested in assisting the participants. In those cases new mentors were assigned to the participants. This is one account:

My mentor did not seem to want to be bothered with me. I tried several times to meet

with her but there never seemed to be a good time. I began to wonder why she had

agreed to be a mentor. I made it through that year with the help of team members.

the next year I was assigned another mentor and her attitude made all the difference in

the world. She was helpful and informative and I really wished I had worked

with her the first year.

Most participants made very positive remarks about the attitude of their mentor. Several participants commented on how the attitude of their mentor toward teaching highly affected their own attitudes. Rhonda expressed it in this way:

I was having a very bad day and I sent my mentor an e-mail asking if we could

talk, even if it was at the end of the day. She came as soon as the students left.

I was almost in tears. She took time to share some of her beginning experiences and
some were actually funny. She helped me see that like all professions and life in
general, we will have good and bad days. Then she made me tell her two positive
things that had happened that day. By the end of our meeting I was smiling again and
ready to face the next day. This is where a mentor makes a huge difference in the success
of a beginning teacher.

The participants all talked about the willingness of the mentors to work with them and how they
were positive about the beginning teachers and offered a lot of encouragement. One thing that
most of the participants agreed on was that their mentors had positive attitudes about education
in general and felt that we all had very important roles in working with the children. The
mentors also emphasized how teachers can be positive role models for the students.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The findings of this study are presented in Chapter Four. The focus of this study was the
impact that mentoring has on beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia School District.
The research questions were addressed from the results of the interviews of the individual
participants and the focus group participants. The themes were defined and described according
to the response of the participants. The participants were very open with their responses and
seemed to enjoy having an opportunity to express their opinions and ideas. The result of these
findings indicated that beginning teachers experienced and appreciated the value of their
mentoring experience.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

With an increase in teachers leaving the profession after three to five years of teaching, school districts need to implement effective programs to retain beginning teachers. One program that has claimed a lot of attention is mentoring (Colley, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia District. The study was designed to investigate whether certain activities had more of an impact than others in improving the success of beginning teachers. The insight gained through this study offered information to school districts about how the mentoring of beginning teachers impacts their decision to remain in education. The researcher used individual interviews and focus group interviews to gather information for this project. All participants were selected from a group of beginning teachers having one to three years teaching experience. All participants were a part of the mentoring program at their respective school. This project was driven by one overarching research question and three sub- questions. The overarching question was: What is the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia school district? The three sub-questions were: 1) How does mentoring influence the teaching practices and development of beginning teachers? 2) How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to job satisfaction? 3) How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to teacher retention?

Throughout the study the researcher found emerging themes that promote the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers. The analysis of the data revealed the following themes: 1) Mentoring provided support for new teachers in the area of curriculum, discipline, and parental

communication. 2) Secondly, the time spent with the mentors had an important effect on the

success of the mentoring experience. 3) The variation of attitudes both of the mentor and the

administration/school played an important part in a successful mentoring program. The

individual interviews and focus group interviews were held during the 2009-2010 school year. A

series of interview questions explored the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers.

The interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and grouped to establish themes. This chapter will

present the research findings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future

research.

<div align="center">Discussion of Research Findings</div>

The argument has been made that the demand for teachers results from the high attrition rates

of existing teachers, particularly those in the first five years of their careers (Darling-Hammond

and Sykes, 2003). A common strategy for retaining teachers is to provide high quality mentors

for beginning teachers to help them overcome the early challenges of teaching and grow to feel

prepared to remain in the teaching field. Grant (2004) found that the presence of a mentoring

program had a significant effect on teacher retention, depending on the quality of the program.

This was in line with what the participants had to say about the mentoring programs at their

schools. Within this perspective the participants agreed that mentoring programs must allow the

mentees time to form relationships with their mentors. This study also revealed that the time

allotted for the mentors and mentees to work together added to the success of the program. This

concept was supported with Certo's (2002) view that availability of the mentors and time set

aside for mentors and mentees to work together, strengthens the relationship between the

beginning teachers and their mentors.

The relationship between the mentors and participants was stronger when the mentor experience was supportive and not evaluative. This is a distinction that is very important. The mentee needs to trust and be able to confide in the mentor. This is not possible if there is the fear of an upcoming evaluation. Mentoring is an ongoing process and helps to develop self-reliance. According to Ganser (1999), evaluation is incompatible with providing encouragement and support and should be excluded from the mentoring program. Participants of this study reiterated this idea. The research findings also correlated with the three research sub-questions: 1) How does mentoring impact teaching practices and development? 2) How does mentoring beginning teachers help contribute to job satisfaction? 3) How does mentoring of beginning teachers contribute to teacher retention?

Research Sub-Question One: How does mentoring influence the teaching practices and development of beginning teachers?

According to Fishbaugh, (2000) beginning teachers benefit most from trusted allies and need positive role models to guide them in developing their own professional goals. The participants of this study often made reference to the idea that mentors impacted their teaching practice and development. This is supported by Darling-Hammond, (2006), who found that a valued role of a mentor is to help pave the way for beginning teachers by enabling them to become effective practitioners and help them understand how to teach and how children learn.

Consistent with the literature (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002), this study also found that support provided to the participants by their mentors was an important part of the program. This support included helping mentees learn how to be effective disciplinarians and how to cope with parents. Several participants talked about the challenges they had with discipline. Brown (2003) suggests that discipline, classroom management, and parental involvement are topics that should

be addressed regularly. It is recommended that an action plan for these issues be developed at the beginning of the year. Participants noted that classroom management included management of time and student behavior. According to Danielson (2002), mentors may help reduce high levels of anxiety felt by beginning teachers by sharing classroom management strategies and helping model teacher-student relationships through observation. Many of the participants said that their mentors had made a significant impact on how they teach and discipline.

Participants in this study also reported the importance of support received from mentors in dealing with parental problems. This included communicating with parents about behavioral issues as well as curriculum issues. Most participants felt they were not prepared in dealing with the problems that might arise from interaction with parents but that mentors had really helped them in this area. Ganser (2002) concurred with the findings of this study by saying that beginning teachers should receive support and guidance when preparing for parent-teacher conferences.

The emotional support that the participants received from mentors was an area that was valuable. Participants voiced how it was important for them to know they had someone to talk to especially if they were having a bad day. They stated that having a mentor to share ideas with gave them confidence in their teaching ability. This emotional support often provided confidence for the beginning teachers. According to Stansbury & Zimmerman (2000), emotional support addresses the personal needs of the teachers and may impact the quality of teaching. The participants all felt that their mentors had helped support them emotionally.

An effective mentoring program focuses on development. Development focuses on helping the beginning teachers build a personal understanding of the art and science of teaching and learning. This allows beginning teachers to continually refine his/her practice in order to

effectively help students master skills and content (Mutchler, 2000). The issue was addressed in this study as the participants shared how working with mentors helped them improve the instruction they provided for their students. The beginning teachers felt they improved their classroom instruction by learning to plan more effectively and implement instructional programs through the work with their mentors. The participants reported that they received support with instruction, curriculum planning, interaction with parents, and classroom management. The support with classroom management included both time management and classroom discipline. These findings are consistent with the literature that emphasizes the importance of mentors working with beginning teachers to use and understand various curriculum frameworks (Moir & Gless, 2001). In a report by the Education Commission of States (2003), it was reported that accomplishment in teaching was dependent on the support teachers received in their beginning years of teaching. The study reported that with mentoring support, teachers developed the skills they needed to improve teaching skills.

Research Sub- Question Two: How does mentoring of beginning teachers contribute to job satisfaction?

The literature supported the findings of this study that mentoring contributes to job satisfaction for beginning teachers. There are many areas in the field of education that help form contentment with one's job. These areas include working conditions, administrative support, and support from fellow teachers. Tillman (2003) found that mentoring contributed to job satisfaction by assisting the new teachers with individual student needs, classroom management, and understanding the school culture. Further more the findings indicated that mentoring contributed to the success and professional growth of beginning teachers. This indication

correlates with research conducted by Danielson (2002), who found that high quality mentoring

assists new teachers with learning to teach in accordance with professional standards.

The participants shared that job satisfaction was strengthened when they felt they were making a

contribution to the school. Sometimes this was accomplished by sharing their own ideas for

lesson plans or classroom management ideas. The participants indicated that because of the

support they received they were able to be more successful with their students thus contributing

to their job satisfaction. Through the mentoring program the stressors of the job were limited.

This was due largely to the opportunities that were provided for mutual dialogue that lead to the

establishment of shared goals and opportunities for mutual observation and reflection.

    The environment of a school, often including support from administration and fellow

teachers, has been linked to job satisfaction. Lack of participation, poor student discipline and

student motivation, and lack of administrative support are key factors for why beginning teachers

are not satisfied with their jobs (Ingersoll, 2003). The interviews of this study revealed that

schools with supportive climate and teacher participation in decision making were related to their

commitment to teaching and to their current job. The findings indicate that mentoring has an

impact on both and teacher quality and job satisfaction. Mentors often intervene in ways to help

novice teachers develop expertise, and this promotes job satisfaction.

    According to a study conducted by Feiman-Nemser (2003), job satisfaction is another

outcome of mentoring. Beginning teachers appeared to benefit from mentoring, and findings

suggested that planned feedback and exploration under the guidance of more experienced

teachers was crucial for career development. Stansbury & Zimmerman (2003) supported the

findings of previous research by adding that teacher mentoring contributed to teacher learning,

motivation, and empowerment. The findings in this study supported the idea that mentoring

impacts job satisfaction. The participants reported greater job satisfaction and morale because of

the experiences they shared with their mentors. Improved job satisfaction also supports teacher

retention. Moir & Barron (2002) suggests that beginning teachers who spend their first years in

mentoring relationships are likely to have a strong commitment to teaching and the close

interactions between the participants and their mentors made them more fulfilled in their

positions.

Research Sub-Question Three: How does mentoring of beginning teachers contribute to teacher

retention?

This third research question is consistent with the findings of this study which showed that

mentoring had an impact on the retention of first year teachers. Mentoring has had a positive

impact on the experiences of beginning teachers. According to the response of the majority of

participants in this study, the mentoring program provided the necessary tools needed to help

them meet the challenges while contributing to their professional growth. Most of the

participants responded that they would remain in teaching and return to their current positions.

According to Johnson (2002), research indicates that nine out of ten teachers that participate in

mentoring programs remain in teaching at a much higher rate than the national averages. This

study addressed some parts of a mentoring program that promotes teacher retention. The

participants revealed that support, time and attitude all have a role in promoting teacher

retention. Inman and Marlow (2004) suggests that beginning teachers experience reality shock

and mistake the uneasiness they feel as a sign that they have made a career choice mistake.

Researchers have shown that lack of collegiality and support systems contribute to teacher

attrition. Mentors have the ability to provide needed support and collegiality by helping new

teachers gain perspective, and implement strategies to get started. They also help beginning

teachers avoid isolation and manage workloads. All of these are issues that promote teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2003).

Ingersoll (2001) found that effective support for new teachers was strongly related to teacher retention. Interviews with the participants revealed similar findings. Some activities of mentoring appear to be more effective than others in promoting teacher retention. Those activities are having enough time to work with mentors, and collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and just being a part of a support system.

As the participants revealed, there is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and teacher retention. They shared that the support they received from their mentors helped them make the decision to remain in the field of education. According to Darling-Hammond (2001), personal and emotional support provided by mentors played a role in the decision of beginning teachers to remain in the teaching field. This support included positive encouragement and strengthened the relationship between the beginning teacher and their mentors.

In conclusion, the data from this research study corresponded with the research questions and provided evidence that the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia school district provided a positive successful beginning of their career. The mentoring relationship allowed the beginning teachers to over come the many challenges of teaching, and provided a means for teachers to experience positive outcomes.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The findings of this study correlated with the overarching research question: What is the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers in a rural Northeast Georgia school district? The study showed that mentoring had a significant impact on the teaching practices and development,

job satisfaction, and retention of beginning teachers. The support that new teachers received

through their mentoring experience is critical in making sure they stay in the teaching profession.

According to Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) teacher development begins with personal

and emotional support and continues with task-oriented or problem-related support, and develops

into self-reflection. The participants of this study shared that they felt reassured knowing there

was support available through their mentors. Their responses provided insight as to how to

better utilize the mentoring program. The results of this study are intended to be a guide to aid

this school district as it approaches making improvements in the mentoring program. It is known

that mentoring has an impact on the success of beginning teachers. This research project also

served as a needs assessment tool for the researcher in the area teacher retention.

Developing positive relationships with parents, motivating students, assessment of student

work, and classroom management are all challenges that beginning teachers are faced with

today. The participants in this study reported receiving support in these areas and felt they were

better teachers and had more confidence in their classroom abilities. They also expressed how

mentoring influenced their decision to stay in the classroom and believed their mentoring

experiences helped them develop as teachers and to better prepare them for their continuation in

the teaching field.

The research provided support for reducing teacher turnover, ensuring job satisfaction, and

improving teacher practices and development through the use of mentors. However, the research

has also shown vast differences in the mentoring programs. These differences include variation

in length, intensity and structure. Programs can also vary in the numbers and kinds of teachers

they serve.

A very important issue to be addressed is the role of the mentor. There are immense differences in how the mentors are selected, trained, and compensated for their services. Some mentor programs provide compensation for the mentors in the form of release time and monetary compensation, while others depend on the mentors' willingness to perform these duties on a voluntary basis.

Another area that warrants additional research is the quantity and timing of contact between new teacher and their mentors and how this impacts the effectiveness of the mentoring program. These differences also were revealed through the interviews of this study. This study revealed the implications of these findings for school principals and central office administration. The school district must be conscious of the differences that exist in the individual schools and provide assistance accordingly. The local school administration should serve as an instrument to help improve the mentoring programs at each school level. Further research may be needed to identify specific leadership styles and practices of principals who effectively promote beginning teacher and mentoring support. School district may need to focus and explore ways to assist principals as they work to support beginning teachers and mentors. This study will aid the school district in ways to create and implement even more effective mentoring programs. Because of the wonderful experience this researcher experienced with a mentor, it is of personal interest to help develop a mentoring program that is valued by all stake holders.

The current national trend in education is driven by the *No Child Left Behind Act* that makes the effectiveness of instruction a major concern for every school district. This research study revealed how mentoring practices improved the relationship between beginning teachers and the mentor and how this relationship improved the effectiveness of classroom instruction of the beginning teacher, making further study of mentoring practices a worthy pursuit. This study also

demonstrated how the support received through the mentoring relationship has a positive impact on the self-confidence of the beginning teachers.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

This section will discuss the implications for further research and implications for practitioners in the field of education.

The purpose of the study was to investigate how mentoring beginning teachers impacts their success as a teacher. The mentoring experiences in the school district where this study occurred, were largely effective in affecting classroom instruction and providing support in positive ways as revealed by the participants. Based on the information provided in the individual interviews and focus group interview, it is recommended that the school district provide continued mentoring to help teachers learn to deal effectively with the many challenges they face as they enter the teaching profession. The study implied that mentoring was extremely effective in helping new teachers transition into the classroom.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

The findings supported the need for further study of mentoring relationships, with the current focus on job satisfaction, teaching practices and development and teacher recruitment and retention.

As rural school districts struggle to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, additional studies of mentoring practices in rural areas at all school levels would be beneficial. These future studies would add to the small amount of information that exists about beginning teachers in rural schools.

The following are additional recommendations for further research;

1) The researcher could extend the study to include several other rural area school districts that implement mentoring programs for beginning teachers.

2) The researcher could extend the study to include teachers with up to five years experience, given the information that the highest teacher attrition occurs within the first five years. This extended research would provide insight into how continued mentoring might have affected their development as teachers as well as their decision to remain in the profession. It would be interesting to explore the level of mentoring provided at each level of teaching.

3) The researcher could explore the question: Is there a significant difference in the academic gains of students who receive instruction from beginning teachers who have participated in mentoring programs as compared to students who receive instruction from teachers who have not participated in mentoring programs.

4) This study did not include beginning teachers that had not participated in a mentor program. It would benefit stake holders to have some data that compares the impact of receiving mentoring support to the impact of not receiving mentor support.

5) Further research should be conducted to reveal the training and support given to the mentors. Attention should be given to the amount of time provided for the mentors to prepare for their role in supporting the beginning teachers. Careful consideration should be given to providing monetary support for the mentors.

Summary

A summary and detailed discussion of this study has been provided as it relates to relevant literature. Implications of the findings for further research were presented and discussed. This research study extends the knowledge of mentoring, a subject that is widely supported. Changes in our society require beginning teachers to meet increasingly complex challenges. Mentoring beginning teachers is one avenue for advancing the teaching role. Collegial relationships, fostered by mentoring practices, can offer encouragement that support ongoing growth and increase job satisfaction that allows beginning teachers to move through more mature career stages. This study can best be concluded by using the words of Boreen et al. (2000): "by recognizing the complexities in mentoring, we can view collegial relationships as ongoing, reciprocal, and active forms of profession growth" (p. 21).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Dear Research Participants:

As part of my graduate program, I am conducting a study on The Impact of Mentoring on Beginning Teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia District. This qualitative research study will seek to gather information on the mentoring practices that are the most beneficial to beginning teachers.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data to analyze this topic. There is no penalty should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study. Be advised that none of the questions asked in the focus group or interviews will contain information that is personally intrusive or offensive. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential, and research results will be written as a group report. There is no incentive pay and your participation is strictly voluntary. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep with your records.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me: my e-mail address is xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. My mailing address is xxxxxxxxxxxx and my phone number is xxxxxxxxxx. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to Dr. Linda Arthur at Georgia Southern University at (912) 681-0275.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research study. The results should allow me to better understand the benefits of mentoring for beginning teachers.

Sincerely,
Judy E. Palmer
Doctoral Student
Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Educator:

I am a graduate student at Georgia Southern University pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Administration. I am also in charge of the mentoring program in our school and serve on a committee of mentor leaders for my school district.

As part of graduation requirements, I plan to conduct a research project regarding the impact of mentoring on beginning teachers. Due to the current rate of teacher attrition it is important for school districts to find the most effective ways to retain high quality teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore what mentoring practices best supports beginning teachers and encourages them to remain in the teaching field. It is my desire as an educator to share strategies with others in an attempt to improve the practices of mentoring beginning teachers. The results of the study will provide educators with descriptive data regarding strategies to use while dealing with beginning teacher support and will be available upon request.

Your name was listed and you have been selected to participate in a research project. In order to answer the research question, focus groups and structured individual interviews are designed to last approximately thirty to forty five minutes. I will be contacting the participants to logistically determine a timetable for the focus group, and interviews. There will be no information collected that will identify participants or jeopardize confidentiality. Please be informed that all responses are absolutely confidential and cassette tapes and transcribed information will be destroyed upon completion of the project. The research project is voluntary and participants have the right to end their participation at anytime by communicating to the person in charge. Participants may also decline from answering any interview questions that they do not wish to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep with your records. You may also contact the IRB coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs @ 912-681-0843. Thank you for your assistance in this study mentoring practices. Your time and willingness to participate is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Judy E. Palmer

Title of Project: The Impact of Mentoring on Beginning Teachers in a Rural Northeast Georgia School District
Principal Investigator: Judy E. Palmer
Other Investigator(s): None
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Linda Arthur, P. O. Box 8131, Statesboro, GA 30460, 912-681-0697
larthur@georgiasouthern.edu

_____ _____

Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____ _____

Investigator Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Focus Group Protocol

The purpose of this focus group is to discuss the practices of a mentoring program that best support beginning teachers. During the group discussion I ask that you remember to: (1) please talk one at a time, (2) avoid side conversations, (3) actively participate during the course of the discussion, and (4) feel free to respond directly to someone who has made a point.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Describe your mentoring situation here in this school district.

2. What support were you provided by your mentor with classroom management, discipline, instruction, and professional duties?

3. What challenges have you faced in your first years of teaching that your mentoring experience helped you with the most?

4. What part of your mentoring experience assisted you the most with your personal/emotional growth as a teacher?

5. What practices of mentoring have you found to be the most beneficial?

6. What difference has mentoring made on your own teaching practices?

7. Describe current practices in the mentoring program that you believe are a waste of time.

8. How likely is it that your mentoring experience will impact whether you stay in teaching or leave the profession?

APPENDIX E

ITEM ANALYSIS

Interview Questions	Research Questions	Literature Review
1. Describe your mentoring situation here in this school district.	1,2,3	Costigan, 2005 Darling-Hammond, 2003
2. What support were you provided by your mentor with classroom management, discipline, instruction, and professional duties?	1,2	Colley, 2002 Danielson, 2002 Stansbury & Zimmermank 2002
3. What challenges have you faced in your first years of teaching that your mentoring experience helped you with the most?	1,2,3	Fishbaugh, 2000 Tillman, 2003
4. What part of your mentoring experience assisted you the most with your personal/emotional growth as a teacher?	2,3	Ingersoll, 2003 Costigan, 2005 Wong, 2004
5. What practices of mentoring have you found to be the most beneficial?	1,2,3	Breaux, 2003 Brewster & Railsback, 2001
6. What difference has mentoring made on your own teaching practices?	1,2	Rowland and Gillespie, 2005 Saban, 2005
7. Describe current practices in the mentoring program that you believe are a waste of time.	1,2	Johnson, 2001 Walker, 2003
8. How likely is it that your mentoring experience will impact whether you stay in teaching or leave the profession?	1,2,3	Wonacott, 2002 Buckley and Shang, 2005 Yost, 2006

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University

Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Phone: 912-478-0843 Veazey Hall 2021
P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719 IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu Statesboro, GA 30460
To: Judy Palmer
153 Forest Avenue
Elberton, Georgia 30635
CC: Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research
From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)
Date: May 22, 2009
Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research
After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H09253** and titled **"The Impact of Mentoring on Beginning Teachers in a Rural North East Georgia District",** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.
Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.
This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.
Sincerely,
Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer