ABSTRACT

Lori Frederick Collins, THE SWEET SPOT OF MENTORING MINDS AND BUILDING SUPPORT (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello). Department of Educational Leadership, December, 2023.

The Focus of Practice (FoP) of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was to develop mentors' knowledge, skills, and dispositions to identify and implement equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations with beginning teachers. The study examined what happens when mentors shift from essential check-ins with beginning teachers to meaningful coaching conversations around equitable practices. The setting was two elementary schools located in eastern North Carolina. During 21 months, I met with two school-based Lead Mentors who were co-practitioners and conducted three PAR cycles. The goal of each PAR cycle was to employ methodologies from community learning exchanges and engage the Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group in a plan of action that improved what was currently taking place in schools. A new plan was implemented, followed by observations of Beginning Teacher (BT) Mentors and the effect within the context or setting of their classroom. The BT Mentor then conducted observations within the classroom of the BTs they directly supported using the same equitable practices, the Calling-On Tool. Explicitly, each lead mentor invited a BT mentor and the beginning teacher they supported to participate in using the Calling-On Tool. Lastly, both Lead Mentors and BT Mentors along with the BTs they directly supported reflected on their practices and the impact of equitable practices in the classroom, which revealed mentors need (a) knowledge of building safe environments that allow for belonging, (b) skills to implement equitable instructional practices that support learning for every child, and (c) the disposition that demonstrates behaviors impact positive relations. As a result, I developed a framework that

creates a sweet spot for the mentor to support the beginning teacher by providing a sense of

belonging that builds safety and trust in an equitable environment.

THE SWEET SPOT OF MENTORING MINDS AND BUILDING SUPPORT

A Dissertation
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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dad, Lenzy Ray Frederick, who knew when I was 18 years old that education was the right path for me to follow. He taught all of his children to live by the motto of "Learn Something New Everyday". You are missed dearly. I am thankful that I get to make sure that your namesake and my son, Jaxon Lenzy learns something new every day.

And to my husband, James, thank you for your patience and love. Your prayers and support encourage me daily to be the best. Thank you for being who you are and making our home a place I want to be – forever my friend and always my love.

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I deeply appreciate the guidance and support of my mentor and friend, Dr. Matthew Militello. The first training I received as an administrator was through a Community Learning Exchange you facilitated and led. It forever changed the projector of my identity as an educator. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in Project i4 and learn from Dr. Millitello, Lynda Tredway, and Dr. Sandra "Garbo" David. All of you have immensely sown into me through your encouraging words to continue the work and gently nudging me to make it to the finish line. None of this would have come to fruition without your wisdom. I am indebted to the wonderful colleagues I met along the way especially those known as G-Unit.

Thank you to the co-practisioners of this work along with the staff and faculty of Pitt County Schools. I appreciate your dedication to growing and building the capacity of mentors across the district. Tiredlessly you pour into beginning teachers and support them in developing their craftsmanship. You make a difference for those who come after you.

And with a grateful heart, I say thank you to my husband James. During this journey, you served a congregation, the children of our community, and still made sure that our sons, Jaxon and Jordan spent quality time with their dad. You did all of this while allowing me to dedicate time to assignments and writing. You are so amazing and kind. You constantly push me to be great. Thank you to our family for your prayers and support especially, my mom and mother-in-law. It is because of all of you that this milestone was accomplished.

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CHAPTER 1: FOCUS OF PRACTICE

The 2019-20 North Carolina Teaching Working Condition (NC TWC) Survey revealed that 46% of Beginning Teachers (BTs) had no formal time to meet with their mentor during school hours. And 30% stated they never met with their mentor to develop lesson plans. The NC TWC is an online, anonymous survey that assesses teachers' working conditions in key areas. Questions focus on time, facilities, resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support. According to Cynthia Martin, the North Carolina Department of Instruction District and Regional Support Director, whose division administers the survey, the survey is a valid and reliable instrument designed to measure educator perceptions about the presence of the teaching and learning conditions that increase teacher learning and retention. Based on the research, these data points show that mentors are not effectively supporting beginning teachers.

I identified the skills necessary to provide equitable classroom practices to help mentors support beginning teachers. I designed this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study to examine how mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support beginning teachers using equitable classroom practices. Research shows that beginning teachers leave the profession due to a lack of support (Kaniuka & Kaniuka, 2019). The attrition rate of teachers is high nationally; mentoring is seen as one means of retaining those who enter the profession (Flores, 2004; Hong, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001). Meetings with a mentor build efficacy and capacity in BTs as they embark upon a professional career in education. As defined by Wellman and Lipton (2017), mentoring moves are strategies or initiatives with a special emphasis on enabling sustainable development of the beginning teacher that requires craftsmanship. In this section, I

outline the focus of practice (FoP), my motivation for choosing this practice, and describe the assets and challenges within the context of mentoring. I also share the implications this project may have on beginning teachers (BTs) while adhering to improvement science principles and identify the connection to equity classroom practices. This focus of practice (FoP) examined an issue in school and how those charged with carrying out the work can join together with those they seek to serve to impact change (Bryk et al., 2017) by developing craftsmanship and efficacy through mentoring and coaching conversations.

The Focus of Practice

The Focus of Practice (FoP) of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was to develop mentors' knowledge, skills, and dispositions to identify and implement equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations with beginning teachers. Mentors are school leaders; education research, along with communities of practice, agree that school leadership is centrally important to what happens in schools. Effective school leaders serve as the connective tissue in school reform, ultimately influencing teacher practice and improving student outcomes (Rigby & Tredway, 2015).

Mentors initially observed beginning teachers using equitable observation tools and follow up with coaching conversations. Next, all attended a Community Learning Exchange to collaborate and then participate in post-observations starting the 2021-2022 school year.

Rationale, Analysis, and Significance of the FoP

During this section, I share the rationale of the FoP by beginning with why it is important to me, followed by an analysis of the assets and challenges of the FoP. Next, I share the significance of the FoP and conclude with the connection to equity.

With academic discourse and other equitable classroom practices, teachers build relationships and allow students to contribute to the learning process. Too often, teachers are not connecting to the lesson and how it may apply to students. When observing a Kindergarten teacher in a class of predominately Black students, the teacher used the aster as a flower that starts with "a" when no student could give an example. There was no connection with the flower for the children having never seen, touched, or smelled it; nor was there a connection between the teacher and the children in front of them. Aster flowers are not common in the lives of these children or their neighborhoods. She provided no visual and made no application for them.

Rationale

The 2019-20 NC Teaching Working Condition Survey also shows that 25% of the teachers who leave NC teaching positions are beginning teachers. The main reason they give for leaving is the lack of support. I chose this FoP because mentors support beginning teachers directly. During my beginning years of teaching, the aid of mentors built my confidence and improved my craftsmanship. The support of the mentor eases the adjustment of being a new educator while learning the school climate and nuances of the academic content. Mentors influence what beginning teachers sense about their working conditions. Understanding how teachers perceive the working conditions has immediate and long-term effects on student performance and teacher turnover (Kaniuka & Kaniuka, 2019). As a Co-Director of Equity in Excellence and Leadership, I worked with mentors to set up norms and protocols to improve equitable classroom practices and support through the Beginning Teachers Support Program.

To increase equitable learning opportunities for students, equities must be named as a stated purpose of the leadership actions. In the presence of mentors, beginning teachers feel safe and have trusting relationships to engage in conversations about naming the equity. An

expectation of educational leaders is to reframe conversations and actions that promote equitable outcomes while navigating against equity traps. Equity traps, or ways of thinking and assumptions, often prevent educators from believing that students of color can be successful learners (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). When students are engaged in equitable practices such as academic conversations, they improve language and literacy skills, cognitive ability, and critical thinking skills, both socially and culturally (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). These conversations, intertwined with what teachers currently do in their classrooms, fortify lesson plans.

To explore the Focus of Practice, PAR engages insiders, in this case the Mentors and Beginning Teachers. PAR is a reflective process that is different from traditionally isolated, spontaneous reflection done "to or on them" (Herr & Anderson, 2015). A narrative reflection style is used among the co-practitioner researchers (CPR). PAR allows for interventions that constitute a spiral of action cycles that include a plan of action to improve what is already happening and implementation of revised plans. The cycle was followed by observations of the effects of the actions in the context in which they occur and then reflections on the effects as a basis for further planning. Engaging in research cycles linked the practices that inform the next step of actions (Hunter et al., 2013).

FoP Assets and Challenges

Community Learning Exchanges break the isolation that people working toward change often feel (Guajardo et al., 2016). To explore thoughts and ideas, a casual CLE occurred in a safe space with time for two beginning teacher district coaches, three school-lead mentors, and four beginning teachers to engage in deep, meaningful conversations about their work. Safety was established at the beginning of our time together by describing transparency and sharing personal

stories. This version of the CPR group was able to examine common challenges and assets openly. During our time together, everyone collaborated using protocols to examine the impact of our work together and access to equitable classroom practices such as academic discourse. Visits by the mentors sometimes are quick and hindered by schedules, duties, and availability. During this CLE, the coaches, mentors, and BTs converse together without limits or barriers. Oftentimes, the coaches or mentors are viewed as the possessor of knowledge, while the BT is considered the novice based on lack of experience.

During the CLE, an analytical approach was used by creating a fishbone diagram (see Figure 1) to assist with the work of the FoP (Bryk et al., 2017). Being able to map both the assets and challenges of the Beginning Teacher Support Program was an initial step in the inquiry process of change. The assets and challenges managed the group's thinking about coaching processes, mentoring strategies, and equitable observation while considering the conversation tools to support BTs. The system of improvement in the fishbone diagram looked at three levels: macro, meso, and micro. The macro-level is policies and procedures from North Carolina that governs the Beginning Teacher Support Program. The meso level looks at the Pitt County School Board of Education approved BT Support Plan submitted to the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for final approval. At this level, the district supports school-based lead mentors. I interact with this group based on the plan and a signed contract outlining expectations for the support of beginning teachers. The micro-level is at the individual schools. Each school has a program under the guidance of the lead mentor who is in the building daily and collects data on the interaction between the beginning teacher and their assigned mentor.

MACRO
Assets – NC has a policy that governs the Beginning

Regional Ed. Facilitator

Assist w/ Orientation

Unified Training Modules

MESO
Assets – PCS has an approved BT support plan

Planned approved by DPI

Strategic Plan includes mentors' program

Career Path Specialist

MICRO
Assets – Each school in the district has a support program

Every BT has a mentor

Monthly Teacher Talks by paid lead mentor

Supports for self, students, learning, mgmt.

Support mentors to provide equitable classroom practices

Spring /Fall Collaboration

Monitoring Visit every 5 years

Monitoring team varies by district

Coaches do not conduct observations

Lack of equitable classroom practices such as academic discourse

Little equity training

Students are placed based on caste system

Time to develop student relationships

Check in vary by school

MACRO
Challenges – The audit team changes per district

MESO
Challenges – Monthly mentor logs are not consistent

MICRO
Challenges – administrators support vary

Figure 1. Fishbone: Assets and challenges.

Macro Level Assets and Challenges

The North Carolina Board of Education Policy TCED-16 was revised September 2020 to include survey information about beginning teachers' experience at their specific Institute of Higher Education (IHE) and addresses the Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP). The primary and direct goal of the BTSP is to help new teachers improve their skills and build confidence to become successful educators. According to the policy, BTs only reach their fullest potential with support systems from the state, school district, local school, and quality mentors. North Carolina's program includes these components to provide a systematic structure of support for beginning teachers. An asset to this policy is the state-assigned Regional Education Facilitator (REF), who may assist with the required three-day orientation of BTs within each district and offer training to become mentors. Every mentor in the state must complete face-to-face training or online modules of 21st Century Mentor Training to work with beginning teachers. NC published a handbook for mentors that explains the five mentoring standards and the mentoring continuum in addition to the training. Each standard contains elements along with examples of support for beginning teachers. The REF conducts an audit every five years of each Local Education Agency (LEA) within its region. Other Beginning Teacher Support Coordinators assist with the process, which includes monitoring for a timely evaluation or observations through the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES), which is the evaluation instrument for all NC teachers, the assignment of a trained mentor, and evidence that the mentor and BT met regularly. It does not account for the amount or type of support given by the mentor. And because the team of auditors varies by district, the standard is not always consistent, which is a challenge.

Meso Level Assets and Challenges

Pitt County Schools has included the Beginning Teacher Support Program in the strategic plan for the district. According to the plan, Lead Mentors complete a monthly reflection log and a monthly meeting with all beginning teachers. The logs reflect 90% participation of mentors supporting BTs through individual sessions. The strategic plan also reflects that mentors designated as leads complete research-based training beyond the NCDPI requirements by the second year of their annual contract. These mentors complete a contract that outlines expectations and are approved by their principal to serve in the leadership role. This allows relational trust to be built, and they can provide resources and opportunities to support beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers are observed by peers other than their BT mentor. This observation uses the NCESS instrument and does not include equitable observation by their mentor or district support. Beginning teachers do not have academic conversations about the use of discourse in their classes or other equitable practices. As a district, there is little training concerning equity and culturally relevant lesson planning. Not being given professional learning on using academic discourse or other equitable tools and the lack of training on equitable and culturally relevant lesson plans present challenges to beginning teachers' ability to build relationships with students which promote academic success.

Micro Level Assets and Challenges

Every school in the district with at least one beginning teacher has a support program and mentor who receives a monthly stipend that coincides with the number of BTs in the building. Every BT is assigned a BT mentor who may be in their alike grade or content area. Each month, Lead Mentors typically coordinate and often facilitate teacher talks, as outlined by state policy.

These meetings allow for training, fellowship, and Q&A specific to the school or district. Meetings can also be facilitated by Beginning Teachers who wish to take on a leadership role. Relevant topics to the BTs, content, school or district issues, or concerns bought to the attention of the Lead Mentor are discussed and the meetings are held on or off campus.

During the CLE, both beginning teachers and mentors agreed that BTs are supported with self-care, care of students, learning of themselves and students, and classroom management during their interactions. Because the lead mentor and topics conducted by the teacher talks are discussed, the depth and breadth vary from school to school. Another challenge shared by one of the beginning teachers is that classes fall along racial and socio-economic demographics. Wilkerson (2020) describes this as caste or ranking. According to her, caste is the boundaries that reinforce fixed assignments based on what people look like. Throughout the discussion, both experienced mentor teachers and novice beginning teachers shared that they lack time to develop student relationships to help deliver more personalized lessons or to create environments where students freely engage in conversations or discourse to help teachers become more aware of student thinking (metacognition) and background because learning is cultural. When students express their thought processes to their peers, this gives the teacher an authentic look at ideas and values that drive or motivate student learning. However, none of the teachers shared ideas about any type of equitable practices, including academic discourse to build student independence in facilitating learning or building relationships. This deficit, along with the idea of classes based on a caste system, encourages the need for an FoP to examine current practices for change.

Through the information gained in the CLE and the fishbone model, I, along with the CPR group, will offer solutions to address how we can provide support to beginning teachers to employ knowledge, skills, and dispositions to improve how mentors provide equitable practices.

The model's information transforms how mentors have effective conversations, use various coaching stances, and implement observation tools to support beginning teachers.

The fishbone illustration shown in Figure 1 is an adoption and adaptation of the work done by Bryk et al. (2017). It is modified to show assets and challenges to offer the context of how the Beginning Teacher Support Program currently supports BTs. The previous sections detailed how these assets and challenges may influence the PAR's work and outcomes related to supporting beginning teachers. The following section shares the significance of the project.

Significance of the FoP

The significance of developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of mentors to support beginning teachers in identifying and using equitable classroom practices has far-reaching impact. Based on historical reform, legislation in education, and student achievement, there is a deep divide between schools' aspirations and the acceleration of schools. As government and laws move forward, there is a push for all students to advance and accomplish deeper learning with fewer resources (Theoharis, 2010). While schools decide to make quick implementations and then come back later to work on problems, mentors lose opportunities to support beginning teachers. North Carolina allows for 180 days per school year and even less than that to influence children's academic outcomes with testing requirements before the end of the year. So, the strategy of implementing a quick fix later does not work in education. "Change in a complex work system means recognizing that one cannot predict ahead of time all the details that need work nor the unintended negative consequences that might also ensue" (Theoharis, 2010, p. 7). Improvement science uses the results of change to guide the development, revision, and continued fine-tuning of new tools, processes, work roles, and relationships. This study involved equitable observation tools, including academic discourse, coaching stances, and

mentoring coaching conversations between mentors and beginning teachers. By addressing deficits, mentors supported the development of the beginning teachers' craftsmanship which also impact the use of equitable tools. This also built the capacity of schools to produce reliable outcomes for various subgroups.

Context

In Pitt County, as in other districts across the nation, subgroups of students of color are outperformed by their white peers. The idea is to change the traditional language and observations to create better guidance from mentors for novice teachers and improve the work practices to make schools more effective. How schools perform is directly related to the interactions, tools, materials available, and processes that bring people and resources together. Mentors and beginning teachers (BTs) met periodically each month. Most of these meetings are informal. However, changing the purpose of the meeting and being intentional help BTs become more effective. Reliable routines produced quality executions of complex tasks. Addressing organizational complexity requires solving problems of coordination, communication, and system sensing (Bryk et al., 2017). As a district, meeting times are established and through the FoP, we examine communication, and as a district, we sense the needs of beginning teachers.

Significance to Practice

This FoP extended beyond the one-time training that is currently required for mentors to support beginning teachers. The shift impacted mentor practices and interactions with beginning teachers and how BTs receive support. The move from using the traditional instrument to observe all teachers for evaluation to developing the knowledge, skills, and disposition of mentors to conduct observations that are non-punitive and related to support and equitable practices.

Significance to Policy

This FoP has several implications for both state and local policies related to mentor support. Beginning with mentor coaching conversations, mentors build trust and rapport to support BTs. These conversations move from the mentor telling and the BT doing to dialogue around equitable classroom practices and observations. The implication of the research has the potential to add tools and protocols to coaching and mentoring programs to increase their effectiveness on beginning teachers, mentoring meetings, and teacher attrition.

Significance to Research

Mentors provided direct support and played a vital role in helping BTs build efficacy and develop craftsmanship. With the increasing demand for student performance and the increase in attrition, teacher support is imperative. This FoP played a critical role in educational research. It discovered how mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to provide access to equitable classroom practices. Additionally, the study contributed to the equity-based coaching between mentors and beginning teachers. Lastly, the research focused on the role of mentors, their practices, and their interactions with beginning teachers. What do we know about the BTs and equitable delivery of pedagogy? How do we know what support from the mentor works for them? This FoP aims to answer these questions by developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of mentors to support beginning teachers in identifying and using equitable classroom practices.

FoP Connection to Equity

Philosophical and sociological equity frameworks are most relevant to this Focus of Practice. Initially, a review of the philosophical framework of discourse was conducted, specifically on changing discourse in schools, based on Eubanks et al. (1997). Then, an

investigation of how the caste's sociological framework perpetuates a system of inequity among teaching staff. Then, based on the work of Rigby and Tredway (2015), the study focused on building the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the mentors to identify and use to equitable classroom practices.

How teachers talk to each other or share discourse should provide constructive dialogue to positively impact the delivery of instruction and student learning. These conversations are expected to grow and develop as the veteran mentor teacher coaches the BTs. Even with attempts to identify and discuss fundamental issues, serious barriers occur (Eubanks et al., 1997). These barriers can be linked to existing cultural patterns, which may be a part of micro-aggressions, hidden biases, stereotypes, and deficit perspectives. These all prevent discourse that may provide meditative thinking and confidence in decision-making.

Problems continue to exist as long as symptoms are treated as causes. To effectively cause change that persists, discourse conversations that may be uncomfortable must occur about inequities, prejudicial conditions, and school relationships. This includes identifying and addressing equity traps that teachers may be drawn to concerning student learning. Equity traps avert teachers from believing in the success of students of color (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004).

The quality of education may be determined based on geography and the resources given to schools and students in that demographic area. "Reform" measures have the effect of maintaining the schooling advantage for the privileged in the name of choice, freedom, standards, and the American way (Eubanks et al., 1997). Schooling has become educationalized to address social problems. Education has taken on the responsibility to solve social problems while seeking more formal than substantive solutions (Labaree, 2008). When seen as a social problem, racial prejudice can be educationalized by instituting programs for underserved or "at

risk" students. However, the caste system has an embedded ranking of human value that has already made one group superior over all others (Wilkerson, 2020).

The hierarchy of caste is not about feelings or morality. It is about power – which groups have it and which do not. It is about respect, authority, and assumptions of competence – who is afforded these and who is not (Wilkerson, 2020). Throughout education, as in other professions, caste has been an invisible factor that governs policies and adherence to them that sustains the system. Teachers are often ranked based on their schools or the demographics of the students they teach. Though schools are desegregated, attendance areas and student populations' access to resources may still be limited based on the hierarchy of neighborhoods. As a district, there is a responsibility to provide equitable resources to all. In the next section, the Participatory Action Research Design, I share the Purpose Statement and Research Questions. The Theory of Action is explained next, followed by the FoP Description. The section concludes with Proposed Project Activities.

Participatory Action Research Design

PAR is an inquiry done by or with insiders to the organization or community experiencing the Focus of Practice (Herr & Anderson, 2015). PAR seeks to maintain an idea of participation and collaboration while upholding the concepts of activism, social justice, and transformation of theory and practice. Unlike traditional research, where the researcher extracts information in a one-way flow, PAR works with the community. The community finds answers and then applies those answers to the focus of practice (Hunter et al., 2013). The PAR process helped me determine how mentors gained the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to identify and use equitable classroom practices. Specifically, I learn from focusing on the following research questions.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this PAR study is *What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations?*The following research subquestions will be explored during the FoP:

1. To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices?

2. To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?

3. How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?

Theory of Action

Having previously served as a mentor and now as the coordinator for the district's BT Support program, I witnessed the need for this FoP to furnish mentors with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to identify and use equitable classroom practices. The theory of action is: *IF* mentors develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions, *THEN* mentors will coach beginning teachers to use equitable classroom practices.

Project Activities

The FoP is to know the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to identify and use equitable classroom practices. The cycle began with questions related to observations and evaluations, which are crucial to improving beginning teachers' practices. The process entails clarifying the actions of participants and why and to what extent they affect equitable discourse in classrooms. Then as a Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group, we learned through reflecting

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on the actions. The focus was on the behaviors and the directions taken without bogging down the process. As a CPR group, we considered actions and inquiries that foster skills, clarity, and learning. This helped crystalize new beliefs that will we put into practice.

The PAR project occurred in two schools in the Pitt County School System at the elementary grade spans. Mentors and beginning teachers from the two selected schools formed the CPR and I served as the lead researcher. The unit of analysis for the PAR study was the mentors.

There were three PAR cycles that included planning, actions, and reflection/evaluation, as outlined in Figure 2. In the first cycle, the CPR planned and received training around coaching and equitable observation tools. This allows mentors to learn about non-evaluative ways to observe teachers beyond the state NCEES instrument. A specific observation strategy, the Calling-On Tool, used Academic Discourse practices. The second involved the interactions of mentors and their classrooms. I observed mentors and had coaching conversations about the data from using the Calling-On Tool. The purpose was to gauge normal practices that typically occur in their classroom using equitable practices and modeling coaching conversations. A Community Learning Exchange (CLE) followed to engage in the impact of equitable practices such as calling on students and academic discourse. The third cycle involved mentors observing the beginning teacher's use of the Calling-On Tool and coaching around the data from the Calling-On Tool followed by me conducting a meta-coaching of the mentor. An initial CLE reflected on the practice, compared it to the first observation, and examined how it may have changed after the CLE. Lastly, during a second CLE, the CPR group evaluated how the process impacted them and the Beginning Teacher.

Figure 2. PAR cycle timeline.

Confidentiality, Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Maintaining confidentiality and ethical considerations were essential to this project, considering it is being conducted concurrently with educators who are practitioners in the district. I received IRB approval to conduct the study (see Appendix A), completed the CITI certification (see Appendix B) before starting this research, as well as gained approval from my district to conduct this research (see Appendix C). It was also equally important to be transparent about the limitation of the results.

Adults voluntarily participated in this project. Individually, I meet with participants to invite them to participate and explain how their identity will be protected. Upon agreeing to participate, they signed a consent form (see Appendix D) to safeguard the identity of participants. Maintaining and ensuring the security of data collection was vital during the research. More details describing the process of confidentiality is detailed in Chapter 3.

I am the Co-Director of Equity in Excellence and Leadership for Pitt County Schools, where this research occurred. Both district and school employees were participants. It was imperative that I was aware of ethical considerations and address them, both as lead research and as Co-Director. Participants gave informed consent to participate without any sense of obligation or coercion. Additionally, termination of consent did not occur at any time during the study. Before completion of the study, participants reviewed the data and findings to confirm that I correctly captured their thoughts and ideas, as well as the accuracy of the work. Lastly, this small PAR study takes place in two elementary schools in a district of 38 schools. Due to the restriction of the scope and size of the study, the findings and outcomes cannot be generalized to another context. More detailed information regarding confidentiality, ethical consideration, and limitations is provided in Chapter 3.

Summary

Mentors support beginning teachers and meet with them more often than administrators, who may only visit once a quarter. Beginning teachers enter the profession needing support in the areas of transitioning from college students to supervising diverse students, learning content, and implementing pedagogical skills. Veteran teachers have experienced all these milestones and serve a vital component in mentoring BTs before they leave teaching careers. Mentors must coach beginning teachers to use equitable classroom practices to improve student performance. Pitt County Schools have an established program in place to inquire how mentors develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to provide equitable access. Educator preparedness programs do not address the concerns of equitable practices that leave gaps in the readiness of beginning teachers. I designed this qualitative PAR study to specifically research know what knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to support equitable practices, in beginning teachers' classrooms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning." ~ Paulo Freire

Education is experiencing a significant desolation of teachers and teacher attrition, also known as turnover (Flores, 2004; Hong, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001). This phenomenon has substantially impacted schools and requires administrators constantly to find newly qualified staff. Often, these new hires are beginning teachers, also referred to as new or novice teachers in the existing research and literature, entering the profession with less than five years of teaching experience. For the purpose of this research, the term beginning teachers (BTs) is used. This research examined practices and supports of beginning teachers including mentoring and the impact on equitable practices in the classrooms of the beginning teachers. While there has been a plethora of research on the facets of beginning teachers, this literature review focuses on three main categories: Beginning Teachers, Mentor Support for Beginning Teachers, and Equitable Classroom Practices. Each of these main categories is broken down into sub-categories. The Beginning Teacher's sub-categories are Teacher Shortage, Teacher Induction, and Teacher Support. The sub-categories for Mentor Support for Beginning Teachers are Mentoring Professional Development, Mentoring Relationships, and Mentoring Conversations. Lastly, the literature review for the topic of Equitable Classroom Practices includes the sub-categories of Learning Theory and Culture, Rigorous Task and Academic Discourse, and School Leadership That Supports Academic Discourse. This is illustrated in the Literature Bin: Impact on FoP shown in Figure 3.
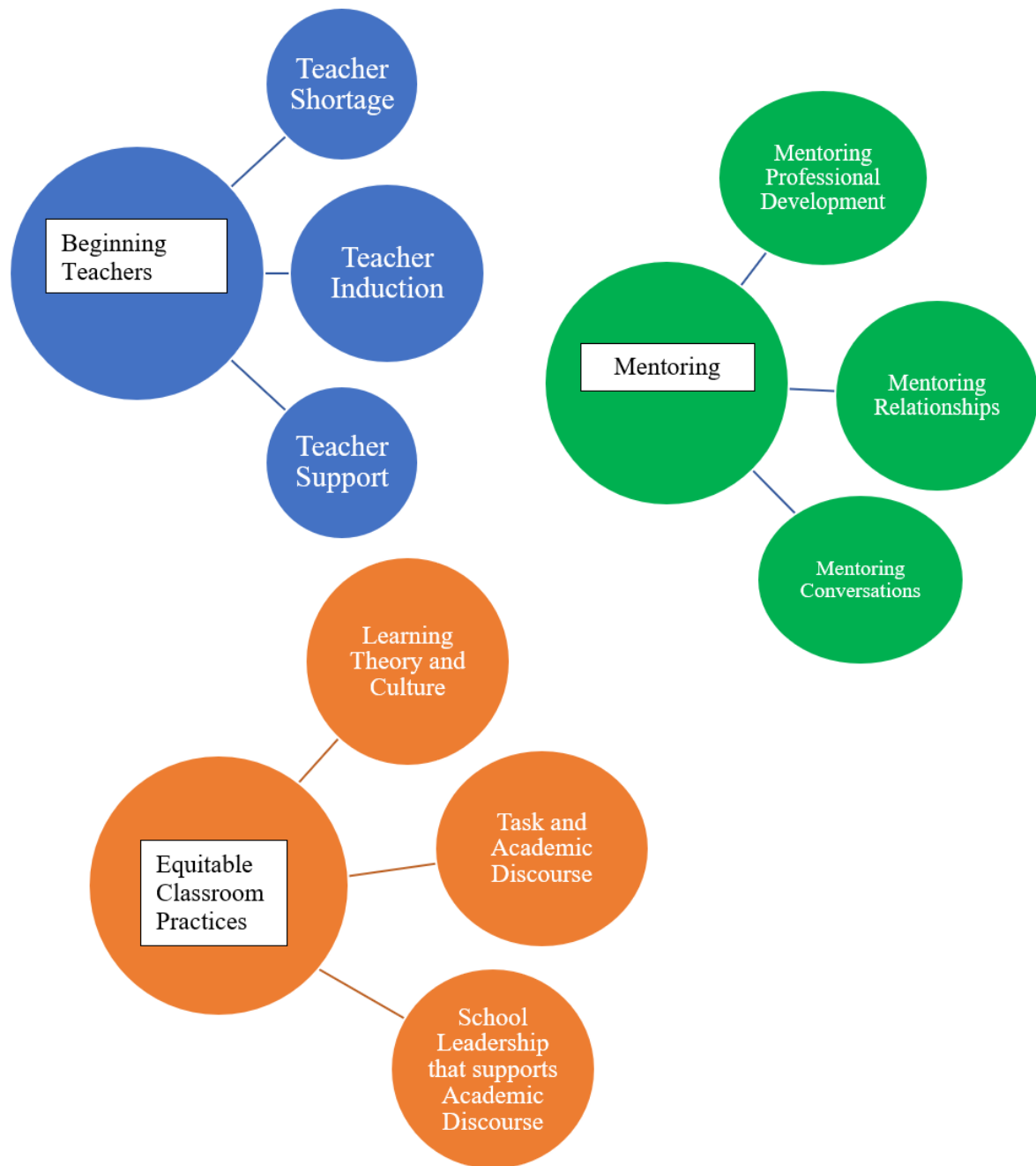
Figure 3. Literature bin: Impact on FoP.

Beginning Teachers

With the legislation of No Child Left Behind, both state and local school districts mandated that teachers solely focus on achievement, which shifted the focus to curriculum that would improve or raise test scores. As beginning teachers enter education, their highest priority is to survive the first year as they transition from a college student or from a previous profession into their new identity. In a survey by Mandel, 50 beginning teachers reported the concerns for the first year included setting up the classroom and getting prepared for school opening, covering curriculum without losing student interest, maintain content pacing guides along with their peers, fair grading practices, and dealing with parents. They also wanted to know how to maintain good mental health (Mandel, 2006). While some EPPs cover many of these topics, too often teachers are finding themselves overwhelmed with being tossed into the newness of the profession without knowing where to find answers. This can cause teachers to move on to other schools or districts that provide the support for finding these answers or to leave the profession altogether within the first five years (Schmidt, 2017). The literature begins by sharing research on teacher retention and shortage or turnover. Next the focus will be on teacher induction programs for beginning teachers and conclude with beginning teacher supports.

Teacher Shortage

Data of beginning teachers in the United States from 1999-2000 compared the retention of 3,235 teachers that did or did not participate in various induction activities. The study revealed that 29% of these beginning teachers left the profession. Using the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), research revealed beginning teachers who were supported by mentors and collaborated with colleagues were more likely to stay after their first year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). As a supplement, the Teacher Follow-up

Survey (TFS) was also used. Each cycle of the survey was a random sample of schools, arranged by state, public or private sector, and school level, and contained questions linked to the administration for random teachers. After leaving the school, former teachers were asked to complete another questionnaire 12 months later (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Some contributing factors to turnover are school climate and culture along with inadequate administrative support and the beginning teacher's limited ability to contribute input on school-based decisions (Flores, 2004). Research by Ingersoll suggests that the imbalance of teacher supply to demand is also related to the excess demand, available organizational resources, and lack of support (Ingersoll, 2001). There is an identity shift for beginning teachers from being college students leaving educational preparedness programs (EPP) to taking on the identity of instructional or classroom leader. The reality of teaching does not always align with the idealistic perceptions formed during the pre-service or college internship experience, according to a mixed-methods study conducted by Hong (2010) that included 84 participant surveys and 27 interviews. Lack of confidence in their self-efficacy to deliver instruction and understand content were contributing factors among teachers that were interviewed in the study who left the profession. This becomes increasingly true for teachers who enter education with alternative licenses or degrees in content areas other than education.

Beginning Teacher Induction

Teacher induction programs vary by state yet typically serve the same purpose of developing beginning teachers with the goal of retaining them in the district and providing additional support as both a professional and a novice educator. Induction can reduce isolation by introducing the beginning teacher to fellow beginning teachers, school staff, and administration, along with mentors with the aim is to increase job satisfaction. Research from

across five countries, Switzerland, Japan, France, New Zealand, and China (Shanghai), all share a common thread about beginning teacher induction. Although varied in approach, they were all highly structured, focused on professional learning, and emphasized collaboration (Wong et al., 2005).

Induction typically begins with an initial meeting a few days before the school year starts and continues through multiple years in order to acclimate beginning teachers to academic standards along with the vision of school district. Though varied by schools or district, a common approach to induction is to include an opportunity to network and build support and leadership within a learning community, strong administrative support, and professional development over the course of two or three years. Induction programs integrate a component of mentoring into the process while modeling effective teaching practices (Katz et al., 2011). The purpose is to treat beginning teachers as valuable contributors and hold them accountable for individual learning while making the entire learning community responsible for gaining knowledge to deliver quality instruction. The Lafourche Parish Public School in Thibodaux, Louisiana, with an enviable attrition rate of only 3.9% over four years, implemented these components and became the model of induction programs for school districts in the entire state of Louisiana. Other school districts with strong inductions programs include the Islip Public School District in New York and the Leyden High School District in Illinois, both with 4.4% turnover rates (Wong, 2004).

Because belonging is a basic human need, induction programs provide a connection to veteran teachers that prepare them for the rigor of the classroom through a sustained intensive structure. In a study of New Jersey beginning teachers who participated in an induction, they acknowledge sharing a strong commitment to improving and commitment to the profession. The

most significant contributing factor that led to job satisfaction beyond the induction was the support of the principal (Katz et al., 2011)

Beginning Teacher Support

Although beginning teachers are tasked with the same goal as veteran teachers – to close the achievement gap and achieve student success – they often lack the tools and skills to accomplish this, especially for students of color. Through education preparedness programs, many teachers learn best practices and strategies to implement a predominately white curriculum. Upon graduating, new teachers are less familiar with culturally responsive teaching practices and how to infuse them into their lessons. Research from Septor (2019) shows that, upon entering the teaching field, professional development shapes a teacher's understanding of competency and how students learn in an environment that reflects their own experiences.

In international settings, there is a lack of courses during the pre-service or as part of preparation programs that address equity and diversity. In response, to address the need for globalization, a local qualitative study was conducted using data from an experienced, accomplished multi-cultural teacher's US-based practices. The research showed that beginning teachers benefit from acknowledging with appreciation and learning from students with diverse backgrounds through engaging in autobiographical reflection. This was especially important as it recognized the disparities in academic success among different demographic groups in America. Most learners today have a goal of becoming 21st century prepared, which is universal throughout all countries. Research in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada all support that teachers in their pre-service training benefit from reflective discourse with local communities to support diverse learners. This led to a "glocal" view of diversity and equity in teacher development. According to SciDev.Net, glocal as an adjective means reflecting on or

characterized by both local and global considerations. It may also mean using or applying global knowledge to local content. As part of the support beginning teachers receive, professional development, is needed to support how they navigate complex personal and societal spaces while learning to teach content that offers less biases toward race, gender, culture, class, or disability (Liu & Milman, 2014).

Mentoring Beginning Teachers

Much of what coaching and mentoring is about involves support through modeling, discussion, and reflection. This requires both teaching and learning on the part of the mentor and the beginning teacher, which impacts working conditions for both. In the 2019 NCDPI report, beginning teachers account for over 25% of all attrition; it is argued that understanding how working conditions affect attrition is of critical importance in North Carolina. Based on research from Kaniuka and Kaniuka (2019), TWC survey conditions decline, or at least are perceived not to be supportive, resulting in teachers leaving for schools where they feel they may be more successful based on receiving greater administrative support, improved relationships, and collaboration with peers (mentoring relationships), along with safer schools and empowerment. While mentors assist with career provision such as salary and career advancement, they also provide the BT with psychological safety based on the value they place on the relationship with the mentor, which requires establishing relational trust. Research supports that professional learning helps the mentor know the expectations of their duties and gives them the benefit of a systemic and focused education about the role (Kyle et al., 1999).

Teaching, when presented as an art form by a mentor, shapes the choices and decisions of novice teachers. Ideas and pedagogy shared by mentors inspire and engage beginning teachers to learn pedagogy and strategies that are not taught during pre-service. In this section, I explore

how mentoring and coaching support beginning teachers. First, I share research on the effects of mentoring relationships, then look at mentoring through professional development. I conclude by sharing the impact of mentoring conversations and reflection.

Professional Development For Mentoring

Professional Development for mentoring BTs begins during induction. According to Soloman, attributes of the mentor who took on the identity of a servant leader led to BTs who were more productive in exhibiting growth and development (p. 138). From this study, professional development for the mentor should include training based on ten attributes including listening, empathy, healing, stewardship, awareness, foresight, persuasion, conceptualization, growing others, and building community (Greenleaf et al., 2002).

Mentors who experience success with BTs offer general support, practical and pedagogical support, as well as personal support. Professional development that supports the mentors' learning aids them in supporting and offering instruction to beginning teachers. The training for the mentors should be comprehensive and cover a variety of strategies that not only benefit the mentor but also the BT, the students, and the school. The five areas where beginning teachers perceived to be supported were emotional support, pedagogical support, planning/collaboration, the gift of time, and advice (Gilles et al., 2013).

Based on the reciprocal relationship between the retention of BTs, BT growth and development, and student success, the professional development of mentors need to emphasize the role and responsibilities of both the mentor and mentee. Research findings suggest that among ways of communication, the training should promote a mutual relationship of respect and trust between the mentor and mentee. Trainings should include means of having positive

interaction between both mentor and mentee and development activities such as format, timing, frequency, and duration for blended learning systems (Denton & Heiney-Smith, 2019)

Effective Mentoring Relationships

Most mentors conduct some form of coaching. Coaching involves engaging in conversations or partnerships that are thought-provoking and create the process of thinking in the coachee to maximize their potential. Coaching sessions typically involve questions to mediate thinking based on performance and may occur periodically. The purpose of the questions is to help the coachee to make important decisions, recognize behavioral changes, and act. Notable outcomes for a coaching session are specific and measurable goals, tangible signs of improvement, or positive change related to performance.

For the purpose of interactions with BTs, this study looked at the relationship of mentors and mentoring. Mentors, in this study's context, have a long-term relationship with beginning teachers. Mentoring requires a holistic approach to career development by helping BTs with content knowledge, pedagogy, student management, and other tenets of education. When mentoring is developmental driven, BTs are encouraged to look beyond their current position and focus on leadership or a shift toward advanced teaching roles. In the mentoring relationship, the mentor is considered the expert, so the BT tends to ask more questions. Goals and meetings may be informal based on the need or request of the BT (Zust, 2021). The relationship may cause the role of the mentor to shift on a continuum from calibrator to consultant to coach and then to collaborator. On the calibration end of the continuum, information and analysis are high and decrease as the mentor becomes a collaborator with the BT (Lipton & Wellman, 2018).

Mentoring can be defined as a growth-enhancing practice that supports human development (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentors have been referred to as growth agents (Lipton &

Wellman, 2018) who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to guide BTs in becoming independent thinkers who can make decisions based on their own understanding and knowledge. As a developmental practice, mentoring supports the individual growth of adults to become leaders in their career.

Beginning teachers supported by trained mentors earlier in the year show increased evidence of developing and sustaining more workable classroom routines, managing instruction more smoothly, and gaining student cooperation in academic tasks more effectively. Students also demonstrated less inappropriate or disruptive behaviors and seemed to have more initial success in schoolwork. Research concluded that not only the presence of the mentor, but the training of the mentor contributed to the growth and development of the novice teacher (Evertson & Smithey, 2000).

Effective mentoring relationships involve open communication, decrease isolation, and build interdependent relationships which help BTs manage change while supporting their growth. This requires a significant amount of time and energy on the part of the mentor. Ongoing training is important so that mentors become skilled at providing instructional support through observations, the use of data to inform team planning and delivery of instruction, and the use of instructional strategies through collegial dialogue aimed at enhancing both student and teacher performance (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Mentoring Conversations

Mentoring conversations are highly structured and unfold in the time and space of activities. The evidence-based conversations are centered around pedagogy, collaboration, dialogic, and can be analytical. When engaging in mentoring conversations, beginning teachers,

as well as those completing the preservice requirements, are able to build a strong practice theory based on classroom exchanges with students, they either observe, experience, or critique.

Conversations that are most effective between the mentor and BT are dialogues based on evidence. The evidence may be disseminated as a third point of communication that is neutral. In this way, the data is visually represented and shifts the rational cognition and emotions away from the relationship of the mentor/mentee into the attention of the items or artifacts. When the data is held to the side and not by anyone, a psychologically safe place is provided to share information, concerns, and possible problems (Lipton & Wellman, 2018). When employing dialogical conversations in a safe place, strengths and weaknesses may be shared along with underlying assumptions about the teaching practices. Being that the mentor is the expert, advice may be shared along with reasoning and inquiries about implementation (Edwards-Groves, 2014).

Mentors are to provide an intersubjective means of understanding how educational practices take place. Effective mentoring relationships help beginning teachers manage new challenges and develop teaching practices through reflective activities and professional conversations. When conversations occur in the moment or during the happenings, strong theory practices connections are made by the BT. Language provides the perspective of socio-political context that helps build the relationship between the mentor and mentee. During the conversation, it is important that, within the language, the mentor uses verbal tools such as pausing, paraphrasing, and posing questions to create an interactive process that energizes both mentor and mentor. The mentee should feel a sense of creativity to think, feel nourished by the new ideas, and consider their growth and development. The ultimate goal is that the language and thinking build capacity in the beginning teacher.

As the novice BTs grow professionally, the mentor facilitates a professional vision. Mentors do turn BTs from novice to expert in a matter of days or weeks around specific topics. Mentors continue to provide support as the BT continues to learn and manage disequilibrium about new questions and novel ideas. Effective mentors continually balance the support by providing appropriate cognitive challenges for growth in the moments of opportunity. At the intersection of attitude and aptitude where the varying ability of BTs differ, it is important for mentors to differentiate the support based on where the BT is at that moment (Lipton & Wellman, 2018).

Equitable Classroom Practices

A qualitative study of seven beginning teachers over a period of six-18 months looked at their perceptions of diversity. While having received training that broadened their knowledge and the implications of diversity, there was still difficulty in implementation. Established pedagogical practices within their schools provided the beginning teacher with an understanding of responsiveness to a learner's diverse needs. This study was conducted in New Zealand, and placed emphasis on the continuing professional support that beginning teachers need beyond their pre-service training, especially when there are no requirements for program completion or graduation. It would be impractical for school leaders to believe that beginning teachers would challenge established practices that are a part of the school's climate and culture (Dharan, 2014).

This section of the literature review begins with learning theory and culture that support cognitive challenges for equitable classroom practices and helps students engage in information processing. Then, I examined research that shows the benefits of student-centered tasks accompanied by academic discourse. Lastly, I explored research where school leaders support

cultural linguistic responsive pedagogy (CLRP). The research reflects that implementing reform that promotes student engagement in academic discourse builds spaces for student learning.

Learning Theory and Culture

Children's initial understanding of the world is based on the environment and systems within their culture. Once they begin schooling, that learning is influenced by the culture of cognitive demand. The process of discovery through problem-solving contributes to intellect which leads to cognitive growth. "Intelligence is to a great extent the internalization of "tools" provided by a given culture" (Bruner, 1986, p. 67). Because of the unique demands of various cultures, the members of that particular society make meaning in different ways. The way in which they choose to negotiate knowledge or use tools is based on their previous learning or how they make meaning. Learning that occurs in a communal setting helps students identify with those of similar cultures, while helping them to make meaning for themselves and the community. The use of language common to the student's culture creates an opportunity for knowledge to be transmitted and for reflection. Allowing for the metacognition of information goes beyond creating and acquiring knowledge; it leads to learning where students see both themselves and others (Bruner, 1986). This study revealed that as teachers engaged in the culture and beliefs of the students, the students gained academic success, cultural competency, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Traditionally, the skill of implementing literacy was a means to understand, navigate, and improve society. Based on the proficiency to articulate reading, writing, and communication abilities, identities and the ability to be critical thinkers were developed. Historically, for people of color and those who have been marginalized, the idea of making sense of text became their identity. Skills for them were based on developing proficiency in their learning. Becoming

smart(er) about what they knew or gaining new knowledge was defined as intellect and the ability to understand power, authority, and oppression is criticality. Because of white centering in public education, it becomes a necessary facet of pedagogy to include criticality as a means of seeing, naming, and questioning injustice and working toward social transformation. These four terms – identity, intellect, skill, and criticality – are the foundation for four-layered approaches to educational equity (Muhammad, 2018). Being mindful of this framework and including it within the curriculum engages the student in culturally responsive lessons that include their culture and humanizes the information. This aligns with the findings of Ladson-Billings (1995), who studied eight exemplary teachers of African American students, which serves as an investigative site in which culturally relevant pedagogical practices were observed and reflected upon.

Three notable intentions emerged in her research – the concept of self and others, social relationships, and the concept of knowledge. When addressing the concept of self and others, these teachers focused on their own identity and shortfalls that may hinder student success. Negative stereotypes or labels that could have been imposed upon the students based on race or socioeconomics were not spoken. The teachers did express a high level of expectations and success for students while honoring their community as a source of pride and culture. Social relationships were identified by the reciprocal respect shown in student-teacher relationships and the connections teachers made with each student. Teachers developed a community of learners that engaged in collaborative learning and held each other accountable. Students were encouraged to share information without the stigma of being a teacher's pet or risk being ostracized for being knowledgeable. This diminished the idea of competition and honored the whole group success. The concept of knowledge as identified by these eight teachers, reveals that knowledge is to be shared, recycled, and constructed with a critical view. It was their belief that

through their own passions for knowledge and learning, teachers must scaffold instruction to facilitate learning for students. Student learning can be demonstrated by multiple forms that demonstrate mastery and understanding of content. This study revealed that as teachers engaged in the culture and beliefs of the students, the students gained academic success, cultural competency, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Enacting cultural connectedness through embracing the traditional heritage language and practices build sustaining pedagogies that allow for a pluralistic society (Paris, 2012).

According to Hammond (2015), culture guides how we process information. The brain is hardwired to be social. This looks different in various cultures. In order to engage students, it is important to determine if their dominant culture is collectivistic or individualistic. Many students of color come from a collectivistic society where value is placed on relationships, interdependence within the community, and cooperative learning. Practices may vary from culture to culture or be expressed in numerous ways. Individualistic societies, such as those in European cultures, heavily stress individual achievement, self-reliance, and independence. Hammond (2015) also shares that students whose culture is collectivist are collaborative learners while learners from individualist cultures tend to compete even against themselves.

Information processing involves cognitive routines that students experience in their daily lives. Culturally and linguistically responsive information processing comes from oral traditions such as storytelling, songs, repetitive chants, or dialogue. According to Hammond (2015), there are three stages in information processing. During the first stage, input, students' attention is captured, and the brain decides if it wants to pay attention. Here the use of oral traditions to deliver content helps students tap into their funds of knowledge and make connections to prepare for new learning. The second stage is elaboration. This is where information moves from short-

term working memory to long term and students become knowledgeable instead of regurgitating facts. During this stage, movement or music can help the brain process and make connection. Dialogue or tasks that involve collaboration can be embedded here as well. It is also important to make sure the information is scaffolded, so that processing occurs in small chunks, allowing time for the information to settle in students' brains. The last stage is application. Students are given the opportunity to construct meaning of the new learning through practice, life application, or taking a call to action. Cognitive challenges through the cycles provides the brain the opportunity to stretch and expand while providing an opportunity to engage in more complex thinking and learning.

Tasks and Academic Discourse

Tasks are instructional or assessment-related assignments that intellectually engage students. They are specifically designed to dedicate class time to the development and assessment of disciplinary ideas or practice. As students learn and process information, they need time to think about the learning through assigned tasks. This also provides an opportunity for students to make meaning and problem-solve using background knowledge and lived experiences from their culture. Tasks are not only assessments that measure proficiency; they are meaningful ways to capture students' understanding of curriculum and instruction. They provide balance between the teacher's direct instruction and student-centered learning. Students' thinking is revealed through task and provides data on what types of support are needed to address any misconceptions or lack of understanding (Tekkumru-Kisa et al., 2020).

When students are given a task with high-level demands it involves cognitive effort and complex thinking. Relevant knowledge and experience help students explore and understand the nature of the content. When given cognitively demanding tasks, that also allow for academic

discourse, students perform at higher levels. Students perceive a greater opportunity to learn when high cognitive tasks are used throughout the delivery of the lesson. They embrace the struggle and enjoy the challenge as it allowed them to express their own ideas. The teacher's selection of the type of task should be intentional and equitable to provide access to rich disciplinary experiences for all students (Hiebert & Wearne, 1993).

High cognitive demand tasks also impact classroom management. Three high school and one middle school beginning teachers participated in a study of academic tasks and classroom management. These teachers were considered highly qualified based on their completion of a five-year program for mathematically talented individuals who are new to teaching. All received competitive scores on the ETS Praxis II Math Content exam and had a strong understanding of math content. When considering classroom management, the focus areas were student engagement and teacher awareness of classroom behaviors; instructional management such as planning, delivery of lessons, assessments, rules, and procedures; and classroom setup, such as ease of movement for both students and teachers as a framework for standards-based instruction. Based on the research, teachers had better or positive outcomes with classroom management when they anticipated responses to a high cognitive task or misconceptions about the material, delivered well written lesson plans that addressed instructional management including rules and procedures, and spatial organization through the setup and implementation phases. Teachers who were able to redirect a single student or small group back on task had more time for instruction and students had more time for engagement of high-cognitive tasks (Barriteau Phaire, 2012).

Research is clear that the use of equitable academic discourse assists in closing the opportunity gap for achievement (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). By implementing strategies to increase academic discourse, the language and thinking of the students become visible as they

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respond to questions from both the teacher and peers. Academic discourse allows students to bring their experiences along with their cultural and social identities into conversations about content without having a deficit perspective (Paris, 2012).

Instructional tasks and classroom discourse relate to the relationship between teaching and learning (Hiebert & Wearne, 1993). When students are allowed time to engage in meaningful discourse, they problem-solve and create alternate solutions or strategies. When students are given the opportunity to engage in this type of cognitive process it allows for reflection along with both group and individual creativity. It is important for teachers to design academic tasks that require both thinking and language patterns that reflect the nature of communication based on students' cultural understanding. Academic skills are developed as students engage in content through their own cultural experiences to learn and communicate. For the teacher, it places the focus on content as well as the social identity and intelligence of the student. Because students come from diverse communities where language may be used differently than at school, giving them the opportunity to engage in academic discourse allows them to communicate in conversations that also includes terms related to the content. This may be done through pair or small group discussions where they are allowed to share ideas, debate issues, defend their opinion, or explain thoughts or ideas, not only about the content but also about social issues that relate to the content. This builds their academic identity while also allowing them to express their cultural identity (Muhammad, 2018; Paris, 2012).

School Leadership That Supports CLRP

According to research, there is a direct positive correlation between leadership and student achievement and teacher turnover (Kaniuka & Kaniuka, 2019). Nationwide, the teaching force does not parallel the student population in most schools. As a result, school leaders are

increasingly offering support to teachers with racially diverse students in their classrooms. Teachers who are more successful at seeing student gains are those who access CLRP. Recognizing students' identity and honoring their diversity allows them to construct meaning from content (Eubanks et al., 1997; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Rigby & Tredway, 2015).

When implementing CLRP, successful teaching avoids equity traps. Equity traps are patterns of thinking and behaviors that hinder students of color from experiencing equity in schools (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions cause teachers to form biases while justifying inequity. Bringing this to consciousness allows teachers to reframe thinking and allows schools to be democratic institutes that promote student learning for all. Moving beyond the deficit view that encourages equity traps, teachers employ strategies that cause them to learn who their students and families are along with their stories. This allows them to include CLRP where students see themselves in literature that mirrors who they are and their culture. This removes the equity trap of racial erasure, where teachers fail to acknowledge racial identity and the diversity of students. As principals identify equity traps and understand them, they are better able to interrupt and remove them so equity can exist. Principals who take strong vocal approaches on equity build a foundational guide that examines the impact and motivation of teacher actions (Rigby & Tredway, 2015). This reveals unconscious biases that prevent the goal of student learning or achievement.

Effective school change depends on school leaders implementing discourse that sustains and accompanies reform. Discourse II are those uncomfortable conversations about inequities within schools. Schools that participate in Discourse II along with ambiguity and change, experience purposeful structure (Eubanks et al., 1997). Student achievement increases, eradicating the parallel relationships between race, class, and gender and low performance.

When changes involve increased cognitive demand for all students, it becomes culturally purposeful in school.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared three literature bins: Beginning Teachers, Mentoring, and Equitable Classroom Practices. After reviewing the literature, there is a clear disconnect between what research says beginning teachers need and want compared to what they receive. I believe the presence of mentors who can provide access to equitable classroom practices eliminate the null that causes teachers to feel they lack sufficient support. This FoP examines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to provide access to equitable classroom practices. As discussed in this chapter, mentors have an opportunity to cultivate relationships with beginning teachers that allow the experience of coaching conversations that increase equitable classroom practices.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

In this Participatory Action Research (PAR) study, I examined the extent to which mentors provide access to equitable classroom practices. As the literature and research show, mentors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to guide BTs in becoming independent thinkers who can make decisions based on their understanding and knowledge. The work of supporting beginning teachers cannot be done solely by the principal, nor can the principal alone create changes needed for school systems to produce equitable outcomes for all students. Hence, effective mentoring relationships are necessary to help beginning teachers manage new challenges and develop equitable classroom practices. The focus of practice for this study explored what knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors needed to provide access to equitable classroom practices.

The study took place within Pitt County School System of North Carolina. There were more than 325 teachers within their first three years of teaching during the 2022-23 school year. These teachers are considered beginning teachers (BT) for the first three years and are in the induction phase. Each BT is assigned a mentor who meets with them consistently until the fourth year. For this study, mentors from two elementary schools were invited to form a Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group, similar to the professional learning communities that currently exist within the district. The mentors are from schools where more than 25% of the teaching staff are beginning teachers. The people in the CPR group work directly with other mentors and beginning teachers and served as support and observers of the challenges mentors and beginning teachers have in supporting students of color and providing equitable access. All CPR members were devoted to creating learning environments for students of color to experience equitable

access and practices to close the opportunity gap while building relationships with students and families.

Based on improvement science, I facilitated the restructuring of how mentors engage in supporting beginning teachers. The theory of action contends that if mentors engaged in using the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support equitable practices, then beginning teachers will increase their use of equitable classroom practices. The mentors observed beginning teachers engaging in equitable classroom practices, including highly engaging academic tasks and academic discourse. Through participating in community learning exchanges and dialogue as part of the methodology, mentors learned and implemented strategies and observational tools that were non-evaluative to increase their craftsmanship and efficacy.

In this chapter, I share the methodology approach to the PAR study, which includes a Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group (Hale, 2001; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Hunter et al., 2013) and Community Learning Exchange (CLE) methodologies and protocols (Guajardo et al., 2016). Next, I explain the guidelines for qualitative research, outline the PAR cycles of inquiry, and present the research questions. I continue with the specifics of the data collection tools and processes for data analysis. I close this chapter with the limitations and validity of the study.

Qualitative Research Design

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the characteristics of qualitative research as an emergent and reflexive practice. A strategy of the qualitative research process is that it is fluid, and as the phases of the process change or shift, the researcher enters into the setting and collects data. The key is for the co-practitioners to learn about the problem or issue from the participants' perspective and address the research questions. This study is well suited for PAR and designed to follow a qualitative design and methodologies.

The methodologies of PAR, improvement science, Community Learning Exchanges (CLE) axioms, and protocols drive the qualitative research of this study. As the inquirer, I was involved in sustaining an intensive experience with the participants in the natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I served as the key researcher and collected data without relying on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. There were multiple sources of data, such as classroom observations, teacher coaching conversations, reflective memos, and artifacts from the CLEs.

Participatory Action Research

Data was collected and analyzed in three cycles of inquiry. With each iteration of a cycle, I adjusted plans. The Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) group included me and two mentors. Through the concepts and analytic discipline of improvement science, we learned together. Using established tools and practical experiences, these educators learned from each other and accelerated improvements by engaging in activities through each inquiry cycle (Bryk et al., 2017). The learning and data from each cycle informed the choices in the cycle that follows. The CPR constructed informed plans, implemented actions based on those plans, and studied the data results before moving forward to the next step to address the focus of practice.

Improvement Science

Faithful implementation of a program assumes that the needed knowledge is "in" the intervention and ignores the role of the system of profound knowledge in producing success or failure. Improvement science, in contrast, treats variation in implementation and setting as important sources of information and provides tools to grasp and learn from variation (in both positive and negative directions) to redesign both the intervention and the system (Lewis, 2015).

The knowledge needed to conduct this study was part of the interventions implemented from the discussions by the co-practitioner researchers. They designed and redesigned strategies by looking at success indicators and made changes in the implementation as warranted. As the data revealed improvements, the tools used, along with both positive and negative variations of the learning, impacted the re-design of the next iteration (Lewis, 2015).

Through improvement science, the Co-Practitioner Researcher (CPR) group focused on the specific task of mentors as they interact with beginning teachers, the process and tools they used to support beginning teachers, and how the school's district structures and norms impacted the way the beginning teacher implemented equitable practices in the classroom. With improvement science, the CPR looked at the details of how proposed changes lead to improved outcomes while examining assumptions about cause and effect.

Improvement science typically happens in a relatively short amount of time. A quick test on ideas guided the development, revision, and refining of tools, processes, and relationships between district support, mentors, and beginning teachers. Analyzing the data revealed undiscovered challenges that improvement activities addressed or considerations for new ideas or directions. With this method and timing, there was an increase in how the group learned by doing as each cycle progressed. Data, evidence, and information from the previous cycle was used to inform practices as we moved forward.

Network Improvement Communities

Network Improvement Communities (NIC), similar to professional learning communities, is part of the foundation of my study. Professional learning communities are an active part of the Pitt County Schools. "A NIC unites the conceptual and analytic discipline of improvement science with the power of networked communities to innovate and learn together"

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(Bryk et al., 2017, p. 7); using established tools and practical experiences, mentors who participated with the Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) group formed the NIC. Figure 4 shows the structure of the CPR in the study. By learning from each other, they accelerate improvements by engaging in activities through each inquiry cycle (Bryk et al., 2017). The learning and data from each cycle informed the choices in the cycle that followed. The CPR group constructed informed plans, implemented actions based on those plans, and studied the results of the data before moving forward to the next step to address the focus of practice.

Community Learning Exchange

A community learning exchange (CLE) provides time and space for deep and meaningful conversations with ordinary people from various backgrounds. As participants, they are no longer working in isolation and are free from outside distractions during the time set aside for the CLE, which allows the participants to deepen their relationships; they can work toward both organizational and community change. Safety and trust is established to allow open sharing of their gifts; together, they can challenge themselves, their organization, and their communities to better meet individual and collective needs by supporting the development, growth, and happiness of others in an equitable manner for change (Guajardo et al., 2016).

Five axioms are at the center of what happens during a CLE. As guiding principles or values, the axioms identify socially lived experiences. The five axioms from Guajardo et al. (2016) are present in my research. They are as follows:

- *Learning as Leadership and Action*, which uses this dual concept as a pedagogical process. As leaders learn, it is a constructive process aided by relationships where people share stories, pose questions, and share conversations to build a productive
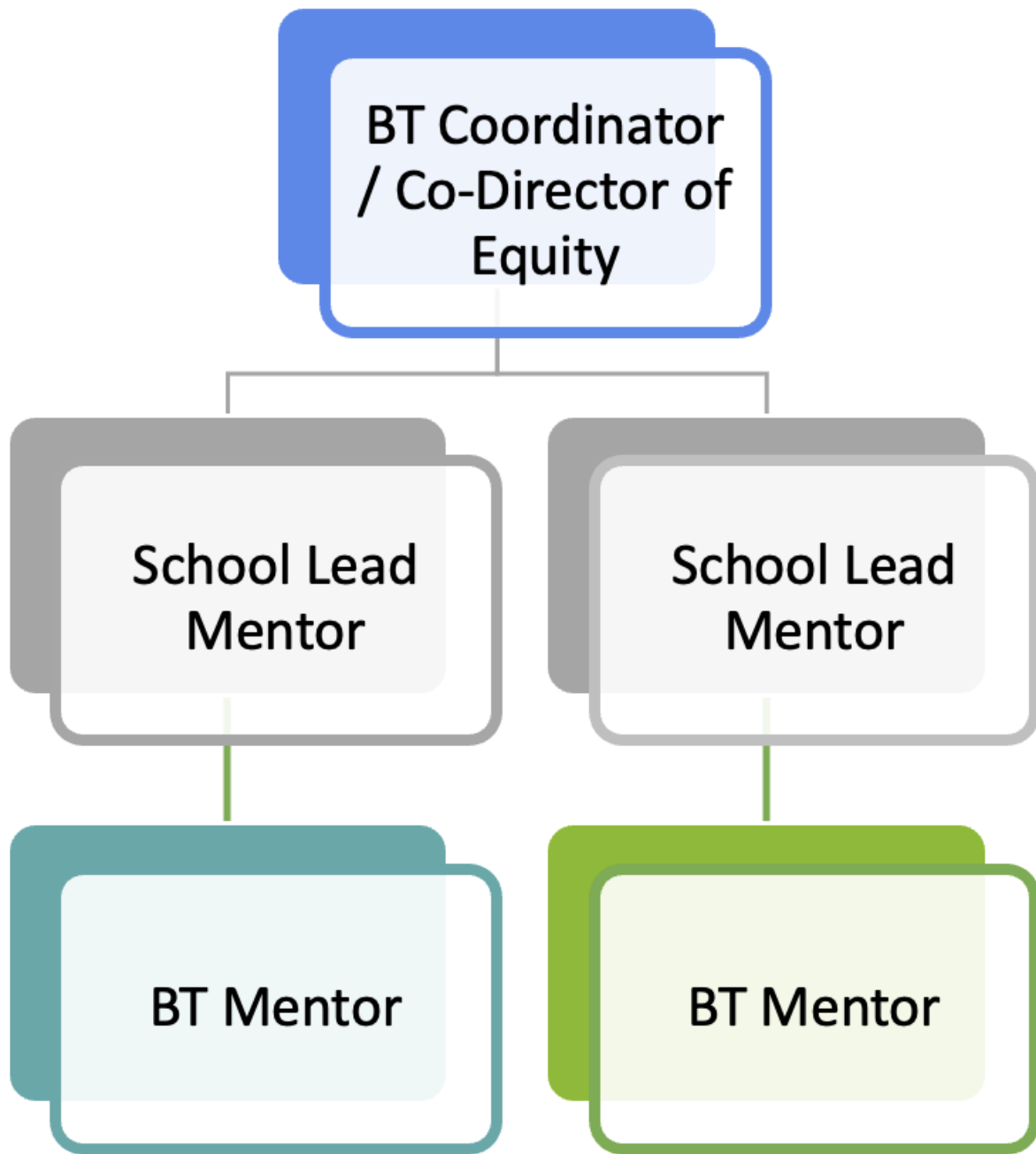
Figure 4. Structure of the CPR.

environment. Relationships are the first point of contact in the learning process. An inviting atmosphere creates a climate that invites learning.

- *Conversations, and Dialogue Are Critical For Relationships And Pedagog*y, relies on a safe environment to engage participants and assist in finding their voice to share, explore, and co-create actionable steps. When participants engaged in full conversation and meaningful dialogue, they developed a greater understanding of the situation within the community to produce positive change.

- *Local Knowledge and Actions* keeps community at the center and is based on the people closest to the issue who are best positioned to answer local concerns. Being a part of the local community enables participants to share first-hand accounts of issues and their impact. After the CLE, participants returned to the community and diverge from previous actions, ready to employ new strategies and ideas with the hope of sustainable change. Their consciousness awakens to a mindset that will allow them to design and nurture the work from the CLE into practice.

- *Encourage crossing borders*, the fourth axiom can become challenging when participants tend to share many commonalities. Borders can be barriers or ways participants identify themselves that hinder getting the work done. However, it is necessary to provide an inclusive gracious space where the stranger is invited to learn in public. The facilitator encourages the crossover by honoring all voices and setting expectations for collaboration.

- *Assets and Hope* opens participants to alternative and multiple possibilities for the future. As storytelling occurs and participants begin mapping out ideas using their gifts and talents, a new outlook emerges that honors the identity, naming, and

construction of assets by members of the community instead of someone with an outsider approach. With the conversion of distress and problematic concerns into hope and anticipation, participants left the CLE with a new perspective of their work and community.

Role of Praxis

The word praxis consists of two elements, action and reflection. Freire (2000) shares that there is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. And to speak a true word is to transform the world. In this PAR, the members of the NIC took actions to examine a focus of practice followed by reflection. Words are not to just exist as verbalism at the expense of action but must take on the commitment to transform, and transformation requires action. When praxis is present, the words become visible or an experience that is transformational. There is a polarity that exists between action and reflection. Both must remain in balance. To take on the action at the detriment of reflection shifts into the stance of activism or acting for the sake of doing without purpose or meaning and negates praxis.

As part of our human nature, we are nurtured by interactions with others and dialogue. This dialogue is to be true words that lead to work or praxis. True dialogue exists between all parties and seeks to transform by allowing persons to name the world around them. As they speak, the words give way to actions that can be achieved. A balance of voices and a shared right to speak exist where there is no presence of one depositing their ideas onto others neither consumption of words from others by a few.

From the actions of the words, there was dialogue between the members of the NIC to reflect on their actions. Through the process of critical thinking and reflection, reality can be perceived as a process of transformation rather than a static object that does not separate ideas

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from actions. With reflection, one can see the transformation of reality and the humanity of man. For authentic education to occur, both parties must impress and challenge each other, giving rise to views and opinions that allow for reflection. As part of this research, reflective memos were generated as dialogue occured throughout the PAR.

By using protocols and following the axioms of the CLE, the NIC explored options to improve the interactions of mentors with beginning teachers. The information from the protocols and qualitative data allowed the NIC to be reflective practitioners. The praxis of using words to analyze and communicate data informs the NIC of the next steps that will be important to answering the research questions.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this PAR study is *"What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations?"* The sub-questions are:

1. To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying and using equitable practices?

2. To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?

3. How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?

Participatory Action Research Cycles

I used action research to explore the research questions, which also align with the district goal of mentors supporting beginning teachers. The study's PAR included a group of participants from across the district to make informed decisions and create actionable next steps. The group

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serves as a source of information to help answer or address the concern of how mentors can coach beginning teachers to increase using equitable practices resulting in students having more access to equitable tools. The group looked at data from CLEs and observations, reflections on meetings, interactions with mentors, and analysis of observations and coaching. Then, based on those things, the group considered new paths of action which yield or suggest further inquiries about what showed positive or negative results. This completed a cycle, and another cycle may begin based on the results. As mentors and district support looked at the evidence of their practices and interactions, they made changes based on findings which means perspectives may change (Cushman, 1999).

The project timeline began in the fall of the 2021-22 school year, as outlined in Table 1. In addition to the three cycles, the Co-Practitioner Researcher group met periodically for check-ins. The mentors also conducted monthly meetings with beginning teachers at their local school to address needs, concerns, and the types of support needed.

Participants, Data Collection, and Analysis

In conducting this PAR research, everyone involved at one point was a beginning teacher who has now become an educational leader that supports beginning teachers. As a community in this research, Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) group and I collaborated to develop supports for mentors who work directly with beginning teachers. Next, we worked with the mentors to understand the mentor's impact on how beginning teachers provide access to equitable class practices for all students. Data was collected and analyzed through qualitative methods.

"Qualitative research methods rely on text and image data using unique steps in data analysis to draw on diverse designs" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 179). The data collection

Table 1

PAR Improvement Cycles

Research Cycle	Time Period	Activities
PAR Pre-Cycle and Context	Spring 2022	CRP meeting, NIC Meeting, Training for Mentors
PAR Cycle One	Fall 2022	CRP meeting, NIC Meeting, and CLE #1
PAR Cycle Two	Fall 2022– Spring 2023	CRP meeting, NIC Meeting, and CLE #2

came from artifacts of the CLEs, agendas, documentation from CPR meetings, and reflective memos. The analysis of the data informed the Co-Practitioner Researchers group of the next steps as we inquired about the focus of practice and answered the research questions.

Participants

This PAR study consisted of three members that formed the Co-Practitioners Research (CPR) group. The CPR group included two lead mentors who supported both mentors and beginning teachers, and me, the Co-Director of Equity and Excellence in Leadership and the Beginning Teacher Support Coordinator. I am also the lead researcher. Two additional mentors and the beginning teachers they supported also participated in this study. The unit of analysis for this study was the mentors. Various other mentors and school personnel participated in CLEs as engaged audience members and were not predetermined. All participants completed a participant consent form (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

Data collection for this PAR project included qualitative data. I collected artifacts from the Community Learning Exchanges (CLEs), documents, reflective memos, and member checks as outlined in Table 1. Initially, broad explanations of the behavior and attitudes of mentors were collected and analyzed for their impacts on how beginning teachers engage students of color. The lens used in this PAR was a transformative perspective that shaped the types of questions asked during coaching conversations which informed how data was collected and analyzed, which then determined the next steps or actions. As themes and patterns surfaced, they were compared to the teachers' and mentors' personal experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These evidence sources informed how inquiry cycles were structured, including training that continues to build the capacity of the mentors. I triangulate the data and coded based on patterns

that emerge (Saldaña, 2016). I also used the data to inform the CPR on the elements that were a part of the inquiry cycle. Table 2 presents each of the research questions along with the responding data that will be collected.

Community Learning Exchange Artifacts

The CPR group met with a regular cadence. This assisted in providing meaning to the work and allowed space to plan the most efficient way to build capacity in the mentors. I provided meeting agendas, facilitated, and took notes. The individual notes from the CPR group and coaching check-ins guided decisions on the next steps. Most of the qualitative data will be informal. Additionally, the mentors met with the beginning teachers to facilitate a CLE after the second PAR cycle. Through coaching conversations, reflections, and exploration, CLE participants individually and collectively generated artifacts. These artifacts included notes, artworks or drawings, journey lines, written reflections, or charted responses that capture whole group's ideas (Guajardo et al., 2016). The artifacts served as data that was analyzed and coded based on Saldaña's (2016) opening coding during the analysis process.

Documents

Each PAR cycle includes regular CPR meetings. These meetings were facilitated using visible agendas and meeting notes; both provided documentation. Protocols guided the interactions of the participants and serve as documentation that showed the thoughts and ideas that the participants found valuable and necessary to share (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The CPR group made informed choices through praxis to adjust to the next PAR cycle while I worked to answer the research questions. Documentation was coded using open-ended coding (Saldaña, 2016). Coding was completed based on patterns that appeared with each research question and then organized based on the evidence. Within each PAR Cycle, the data was

Table 2

Research Questions, Data Sources, Triangulation

Research Questions	Data Sources	Triangulation
To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices?	• CLE Artifacts • Documents • Reflective Memos	• Member Checks
To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?	• CLE Artifacts • Reflective Memos (CPR) • Documentation	• Reflective Memos (self)
How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?	• Reflective Memos (CPR) • Documents	• Reflective Memo

triangulated using level one and level two coding to establish emerging categories. By the end of

the third cycle, the data shifted from themes or patterns to claims based on the evidence collected

in the research (Saldaña, 2016). As the lead researcher, I was responsible for all data collection

and analysis.

Reflective Memos

All members of the CPR group wrote reflective memos at the end of each PAR cycle. As

the lead researcher, I wrote reflections after each data collection. Once the reflective memos

were completed, I coded them to determine what themes or patterns were present within the data

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, reflective memos from the mentors were collected in a

formal process that included the same form due when we next met (see Appendix E).

Member Checks

The data was triangulated using member checks. The participants had the opportunity to

validate the data collected to ensure the themes or patterns that emerge were credible. The CPR

group checked for both alignment of what resonated with their experience and accuracy in the

documentation. As participants engaged with data, they shared comments, ideas, and personal

meaning.

Data Analysis

I collected and analyzed data for the PAR study based on the five-step outlined by

Creswell and Creswell (2018). During the first step, I organized and prepared data by cataloging,

sorting, and arranging it based on types or categories. This included typing or scanning

handwritten notes. Next, I looked at the general overview of the data by reading and taking

notes, and writing additional thoughts and ideas. The next step was to code. Based on Saldaña's

(2016) definition, a code is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient,

essence-capturing, or evocative attribute for a portion of language based on visual data. Thus, open coding applied to the data prescribes meaning. This assisted in the fourth step of the Creswell and Creswell (2018) method, generating descriptions and themes. Themes emerged from the raw data collected after each PAR and displayed multiple perspectives from individuals, which were supported by diverse and specific evidence. Lastly, a narrative passage conveyed the findings of the analysis to represent the descriptions and themes.

Study Limitations

This research will not prove or validate a claim using numbers or quantitative data. Instead, the qualitative data will be coded, and then categories will be noted by themes or patterns. Based on the work of Saldaña (2016), the codes become categories, and categories become themes, themes become assertions or findings that contribute to a new theory. Qualitative research, including this PAR, is validated based on the contingency of the research and the iterations that are presented, the consistency of perceptions and evidence demonstrated, and how the research is coded (Saldaña, 2016).

As lead researcher and Co-Director of Equity, I bring personal bias and positional power to the study. I collaborated with the CPR group composed of two mentors from various schools. This provided multiple perspectives from different backgrounds and experiences to impact each of the PAR cycles. Because of my role as a district leader, I am aware of the positionality and the potential to influence research outcomes of the CPR group as well as the mentors. Because of this positional power, I needed to take additional measures to ensure all participants were comfortable sharing in a gracious space where they were welcome to contribute without fear or intimidation. I completed the Institutional Review Board Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (IRB CITI) certification in January 2021 (see Appendix B). This study received

approval by the Institutional Review Board of East Carolina University (see Appendix A) and my formal request to conduct the study in the district was sent to my direct supervisor and approved during the 2021-2022 school year (see Appendix C).

Additionally, any measure taken to focus on positionality also brings awareness to bias. It was imperative that all participants consented without coercion or a sense of obligation. Also, any participant was able to terminate consent without retribution at any time during the study.

Due to the number of participants and only two schools involved, size and context are a limiting factors. Therefore, the outcomes and results generated may not be generalized to other settings or contexts. However, the processes used throughout the study can be replicated.

The main limitations of qualitative research are time, changes in staffing, participant biases, and uniformity. I managed these limitations and accomplished validity by persistent engagement of the same group of people, consistency in observation, data triangulation, collaboration among group members, and probing and feedback between colleagues. This occurred between the members of the CPR group, mentors, and beginning teachers. The result of the qualitative process validated the goals of the action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Internal Validation

Internal validation has the danger of being misconstrued by the contributors. Reflective memos were also a way of noting the perspective of the lead researcher and analyzing the evidence to support the Focus of Practice. I used triangulation of the data to provide another means of validation by using multiple data sources to substantiate the evidence. Trustworthiness and internal validity of any research study involves establishing credibility, dependability, and conformability, according to Guba and Lincoln (2000). Measures to ensure this research's

validity include prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checks, bias clarification, and extensive descriptions of context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gerdes & Conn, 2001).

Data collection (CLE artifacts, documents, memos, and member checks) provided continuous dialogue during the duration of the study. Having this prolonged engagement allowed me to further explore information and provided time with participants for discovery. This also helped solidify data for correctness and exact details. Additionally, I clarified potential bias by detailing descriptions of the context and the setting in which data was collected. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), this provided imagery of the study to make the results more realistic and add value to the findings' validity.

Lastly, the member checks completed by the CRR group provided the opportunity for comments to be clarified and ensured that I correctly captured the intent of each participant (Gerdes & Conn, 2001). By reviewing the analyzed data from the study, the CPR group ensured both accuracy and evaluated the exactness of the conclusions (Birt et al., 2016). Using multiple data sources, as outlined in Table 2 in this chapter, I triangulated the data. Having these multiple data sources supported the themes and patterns along with other findings from the study to increase legitimacy.

External Validation

This PAR study took place within Pitt County Schools, NC, under the supervision of East Carolina University and Project i4. Therefore, the outcomes and data from this study may be generalized to other districts with similar contexts. However, these outcomes should not be generalized to other organizations or settings with a different context. Given that disclaimer, the processes used to engage the study are methodologically sound and may be replicated or

transferred to any context. Qualitative research is dependent on the description and themes that develop in the context of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

Consent forms (see Appendix D) were obtained from all participants before the study began. Participation was voluntary and at any time could be terminated by the participant without reprisal. Confidentiality, along with data security, were of utmost importance as a priority of this study. Digital documents were stored on a Google Drive that requires two-factor authentication and hard copies of any information were stored in a locked cabinet. To be transparent and for the purpose of reviewing the data to determine the next steps for improvement and reflection, copies of documents were shared with the CPR group. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity; any information that was sensitive or that would reveal identity was removed from the data to provide anonymity to the participants.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach for the PAR to answer the overarching question of "What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support equitable practices, to coach beginning teachers to increase using equitable classroom practices resulting in more students having more access to equitable tools?" Also included in this chapter are the PAR cycles and CLE methodology. I explained the rationale for the chosen methods. Within this chapter is a review of the data collection and data analysis process, the limitation of the research, and ethical considerations. In the chapter to follow, I will present the first PAR cycle along with the site-based CPR group and the first set of data in which I developed a coding system that lead to a set of categories. In later chapters, this same process and data analysis determined emerging themes and findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PRE-CYCLE

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) focuses on the key principles of developing the mentor's knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices. One specific principle is to build the efficacy and craftsmanship of mentors to use equitable academic discourse while collaborating with beginning teachers. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey shows that mentors' relationships are vital for teachers to remain in the profession (Kaniuka & Kaniuka , 2019). Another critical principle of this PAR is for mentors to implement equitable academic discourse conversations within lessons taught by Beginning Teachers (BT). Using equitable classroom practices builds better teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships (Collins, Reflective Memo, April CLE 2022). Additionally, this study aims to examine the extent to which mentors collaboratively learn about a coaching process that includes equitable classroom observations and conversation tools that support beginning teachers.

In this chapter, I describe how the co-practitioner research (CPR) group and I, as the lead researcher, established the group norms, set up outcomes for a Community Learning Exchange (CLE), and collected and analyzed data to support the research questions. I also explain and explore data coding that leads to emerging categories. The data collected during this Pre-Cycle supported the PAR process and the study's content. At the end of this chapter, I describe my learning and how the PAR Pre-Cycle influences the next inquiry cycle, the PAR Cycle One.

PAR Context

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the characteristics of qualitative research as an emergent and reflexive practice. One such characteristic of qualitative research is a fluid process, and as the phases of the process change or shift, the researcher enters into the setting to collect

data. The key to a successful PAR study is for the co-practitioner researchers to learn about the problem or issue from the participants' perspective and address the research questions. This study is well-suited to this approach and follows a qualitative design and methodologies.

The methodologies of PAR, improvement science, community learning exchange (CLE) axioms, and protocols drive the qualitative research of this study. As the inquirer, I sustained an intensive experience with the participants in the natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I served as the key researcher and collected data without relying on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. The research involved multiple data sources, such as classroom observations, teacher coaching conversations, reflective memos, field notes, and artifacts from the CLE.

Data collection and analysis occured in three cycles of inquiry. With each interaction of a cycle, plans were adjusted based on the data. The Co-Practitioner Researchers (CPR) included me, mentors, and beginning teachers. We learned together through the concepts and analytic discipline of improvement science. Using established tools and practical experiences, these educators learned from each other and accelerated improvements by engaging in activities through each inquiry cycle (Bryk et al., 2017). The learning and data from each cycle informed the choices in the cycle that follows. After each cycle, the CPR group studied the data results, constructed informed plans, and decided on actions to implement based on those plans, before moving forward to the next step to address the focus of practice. The CPR group members had a wide range of experience. The group included veteran teachers with over 15 years of experience to novice teachers with less than three years of experience who are just starting their professional career as educators in Pitt County, North Carolina.

Context the Place

This study takes place in Pitt County, North Carolina. It is the largest district in the state's Northeast Region, with approximately 23,000 students and 1,600 teachers. Of those 1,600 teachers, almost 25% are beginning teachers in their first three years of the profession. Forest Elementary School (FES) and Robin Elementary School (RES) are two participating elementary schools. Based on data collected from the district through attendance records, FES serves 800 students in grades PK through 5, of which 81% are Black and 6% Hispanic leaving 13% who identify as White or Mixed Race. It is considered a high-need Title I school with 67% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. The teacher-to-student ratio is about 1:15; about 40% of the staff comprises beginning teachers. The student gender ratio is about 50% male and 50% female based on the district's published demographic information (Pitt County Schools, 2022).

Using the same data resource, Pitt County Schools indicates RES has a student population of just over 650 grades PK through 5 with 42 classroom teachers. The student population comprises 48% Black and 6% Hispanic, with 46% identifying as White or Mixed Race. Although about 42% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, it is not considered a high-needs school but does qualify as a Title I school. The teacher-to-student ratio is about 1:16, and less than 15% of the staff comprises beginning teachers. The gender ratio of students is 51% male and 49% female.

While FES and RES are similar, they are also quite different regarding their student demographics and their school leader mentors. I selected these two schools because the majority population is minority students. While FES has a high number of BTs, RES has a much lower BT percentage. Also, FES is a Title I school while RES is not. Both schools provided me with the opportunity to work with new teachers.

Context the People

This PAR includes me as the lead researcher. I am also the Co-Director of Equity and Excellence in Leadership and the Beginning Teacher Support Coordinator of Pitt County, along with two school mentors, one from FES and one from RES, which are considered to be advanced teaching roles and teacher leaders. The study focuses on building mentors' knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Both mentors are veteran educators with more than 15 years of experience. As lead mentors, they oversee the Beginning Teacher Support Program in their respective schools. This includes interactions with Beginning Teachers (BT) and BT mentors in the school building.

Teachers qualify to be mentors after completing training offered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Each school in the district has a veteran teacher who is assigned by the principal as a lead mentor to support other mentors and beginning teachers. The lead mentor at FES, Ms. Esther East, is an African American teacher who started her educational career path as a Teacher Assistant. After several years, she decided to further her education and became a teacher of record in the elementary setting. When considering her journey into education at our first CPR group meeting in February 2022, Ms. East stated:

> I come from a place of poverty, but they wanted the best for me. I went to a place that was loving, caring, and spiritual and that also wanted the best for me. I am in a place where I am successful; however, I know that the sky's the limit and I can continue to grow.

Ms. East also serves as grade level chair and operates the after-school program at FES. As an African American teacher leader, Ms. East is visibly present for students who look like her. Her socio-economic experiences also allow her to connect with various children on various levels.

Mrs. Patty Patton serves as the lead mentor at RES. She has been a mentor for over six years and is a CARE teacher for lower elementary grades. CARE (Collaboratively Achieving Reading Excellence) is a reading plan based on several research-based instructional principles and best practices through the Title I Service Model. While in college, Mrs. Patton concentrated on Spanish along with Elementary Education. She taught K-6 Spanish previously in another North Carolina district before joining Pitt County Schools in 1999. While currently working with lower grades, she is often asked to translate for Spanish-speaking families at her current school. When reflecting on her identity and education in our February 2022 CPR group meeting, Ms. Patton shared:

> I come from where I was always loved and supported but felt invisible. I was a fish out of the water with a funny accent and silly ways. Acceptance meant being someone else and not being my true self. So, acceptance was an illusion. I went to a place where I wanted to be someone I was not but, at the same time, someone I knew I could and wanted to be. I am in a place where I have or refuse to believe I don't have the strength and gift to welcome all who enter my pull of gravity. I am seeking ways to connect, ways to include, ways to boost others up, so they know who they are and feel seen.

Being involved with the Latinx community, Ms. Patton has worked with students who participate in the English Second Language (ESL) program and helped them find a voice so they may be visible.

All members of the CPR work together to explore strategies, observe beginning teachers, and co-analyze data together. Each participant is committed to improving the experience of mentors and supporting how, as a district, we can bring equitable practices into classrooms to reach all children. This is also in alignment with the strategic goals set forth by the district.

PAR Pre-Cycle Process

In the Fall of 2021, I spoke with potential CPR group members. The conversation involved the aim of the FoP and an invitation to become a participant. They each verbally agreed and I followed up with an email to confirm their commitment. Upon IRB approval in December, we selected a date agreed upon in the confirmation email to meet in February 2022, using the ZOOM platform. As teacher leaders and co-practitioners, the PAR Pre-Cycle focus on individual and collective leadership, mentor skills and dispositions, and hopes for Beginning Teachers to employ equitable tools to support student learning. The PAR Pre-Cycle occurred in two CPR meetings using protocols and CLE methodologies to get to know each other and build relationships. In so doing, we ensured an inviting atmosphere created a climate that invited learning, dialogue, and reflection. The following section details more information about PAR activities and the process. This information is located in the data Table 3.

CPR Sessions

Our initial CPR meeting was held on February 28, 2022; during our time together, we worked on the first axiom, *Learning as Leadership and Action*. As leaders learn, it is a constructive process aided by relationships. Members of the CPR shared stories about teachers who inspired them, posed questions about the expectations, and participated in conversations to build a productive environment. Relationships are the first point of contact in the learning process (Guajardo et al., 2016). The outcomes of the meeting were to build relational trust, establish norms for our time together, and explain the research questions using the What, Why, and How protocol (see Appendix E). The agenda format template (see Appendix F) started with a Dynamic Mindfulness exercise to cultivate the ability to be present with patience, clarity, and strength (Sockolov, 2018). Next, we did an opening circle using Jamboard and shared our

Table 3

PAR Pre-Cycle Activities

Activities	Key Personnel	Output	Impact
February 28, 2022 CPR Group Meeting			
Meeting using CLE	CPR Group	Journey Line	Build Relational Trust
Overarching Questions	CPR Group	Reflective Memo	Understand purpose and set goals / outcomes
Consent to Participate	CPR Group	Consent Forms	Agreement to participate
March 1, 2022 CLE			
Meeting using CLE	Mntrs & BTs	I Come from a place	Build relationships based on identity
Sentence stems	Mntrs & BTs	Small group discussions	Shared ideas on equitable practices
March 22, 2022 CPR Group Meeting			
Meeting using CLE	CPR Group	I Come from a place	Build relationships based on identity
Sentence stems	CPR Group	Shared more dispositions than skills.	Teachers and mentors need to be able to distinguish between skills and dispositions.
Reflection	CPR Group	Closing circle	Shared impact of intentions
April 4, 2022 CLE			
Meeting using CLE	Mntrs & BTs	Personal Narrative based on the poem, A Leader	Mentors shared reflections on their identity as a leader
Brainstorming	Mntrs & BTs	The teacher agreed equity meant different things for different children.	The group shared all should feel a sense of belonging, whether it was external or internal
April 20, 2022 CPR Group Meeting			
Meeting using CLE	CPR Group	Personal Narrative related to the poem, A Leader	Build relationships and make connections to their identity as a leader
Member Check	CPR Group	Corrected assumptions and added ideas	
Review Apr data	CPR Group	Teachers need strategies and support to use equitable tools	Strategies given in the fall to assist with observable tools

meaning of gracious space by looking at the four major components – Spirit, Setting, Inviting the Stranger, and Learning in Public. From this, we formed a welcoming, comfortable space to explore, build community, and listen to the needs of BTs, as expressed by the mentors. We learn by taking risks and feeling a sense of psychological safety. The group agreed this could be accomplished by having the following group norms:

- Stay engaged

- Assume best intentions

- Everyone contributes to conversations

- Avoid equity traps, including:

  o Blaming

  o Silence

  o Overly defend

  o Stereotype others

After opening the circle and establishing the CPR group norms, individually and as teacher leaders, we looked at how we arrived at our current identities based on Journey Lines (see Appendix E). Each member had been asked in the confirmation email to write a Journey Line and be prepared to share since we planned about 45 minutes online to meet as a CRP group. Each member took about five minutes to talk about moving from student to teacher to mentor (teacher leader). Next, I shared information about the research using the What, Why, and How protocol; the meeting ended with the consent form being signed and members completing a closing circle activity to describe skills they need to support mentors. It was determined that we would meet again the following month after the first Community Learning Exchange meeting which included both the mentors and beginning teachers.

The second CPR meeting was held on March 22, 2022, again using the virtual platform, Zoom. The agenda followed the same template as the first (see Appendix F). The purpose of the second meeting was to continue building relational trust and explore data from the March 1, 2022 CLE. I started the meeting by using the ABC method of mindfulness (Bose et al., 2017): Action – stretching and holding a pose, Breathing with coordinating movements, and Centering - focusing on what our bodies feel at present. We cultivated relational trust, during the opening circle. Each member had time to create an Emulation Poem (see Appendix E) to ground us in our work together. The remainder of our time was spent looking at the data collected from the March CLE; more details about the CLE are presented in the next session. In the March CLE, I gave a sentence stem for participants to complete concerning skills necessary for equitable practices. As a CPR group, we noticed several dispositions listed as skills. We determined the next CLE should include a discussion on the difference between skills and dispositions. The CPR meeting ended with a closing circle as a Personal Narrative based on a quote about changing old ideas (see Appendix H). The CPR group completed a Google form to serve as a reflective memo based on Kolb's (1984) experimental learning cycle.

The third and final meeting of the CPR group during the PAR Pre-Cycle happened on April 20, 2022. The meeting followed the same protocol and agenda as the previous meetings. I started the meeting with an inclusion strategy called Check-In, which allowed members of the CPR group to share whatever was on their minds. We followed the inclusion strategy with Dynamic Mindfulness activities, including breathing and stretching. We moved into an open circle where we shared our thoughts concerning a specific stanza of the poem, A Leader. Additionally, to triangulate the data, a member check was done to look at the data and responses to align thoughts and ideas. The member check allowed us to learn Mrs. Patton is of European

descent and her love for language was initiated by a childhood speech impediment that led to speech therapy and developed her desire to help children discover their voices. Next, we moved into our main discussion, which centered on the data from the April PAR Pre-Cycle. The data revealed how mentors and beginning teachers internalized dispositions related to equity. As a group, the CPR team decided which teaching strategies might be helpful for mentors to have equitable practices within the classroom. These strategies include how to actively listen and build relationships that provide a safe environment.

CLE Sessions

Both mentors and BTs attended the first CLE on March 1, 2022. I facilitated the meeting using Google Slides containing four agenda items, including Dynamic Mindfulness, Personal Narrative, a protocol with reflection, and celebrations. The meeting opened with the Dynamic Mindfulness activity, "The Power of the Mind" by Sockolov (2018). Next, participants silently read the poem "Velvet Revolution" by Timm-Ondamitagos Negug. I asked participants to reflect on a line from the poem that resonated with them to answer the question, "How might mentors cause a velvet revolution in teaching with equitable practices?" They shared with a partner and then the whole group. This led to our next agenda item using the protocol, Card Stack and Shuffle. Individually, on index cards, they responded to the prompt: *A skill necessary to deliver equitable classroom practices is____and students benefit by____.* The responses established a baseline for understanding the difference between skills and dispositions. Both are a part of the overarching research questions for this study. Next, I collected and shuffled the cards from the table groups. I then passed the cards to another table. The people at the receiving table read the cards, recorded assumptions about the statements on the cards, and then shared implications about the assumptions on a poster.

The second CLE was held on April 5, 2022. We used the same meeting agenda format as the March meeting. Starting with a Sockolov (2018) Dynamic Mindfulness activity, Who is Listening, the group practiced Action, Breathing, and Centering. The Personal Narrative involved the CPR members' ideas relating to dispositions and assumptions from a quote by Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick (see Appendix H). Participants then responded to the prompt, "What assumptions are you making regarding dispositions needed for equitable tools to be used in the classroom?" After sharing in small groups, several participants shared experiences or themes from their conversations with each other. Following this, the group participated in a carousel discussion based on four dispositions or thoughts that emerged from the March CLE. These are illustrated in the Code Book (see Appendix G). The four dispositions below were posted around the room creating stations:

1. All students need Compassion & empathy

2. All students can see themselves when I differentiate

3. When I know my students, I become a better advocate for them.

4. Equity in my environment means students hear me, have access, and feel belonging.

The group members rotated through the stations and commented on each poster using the same color marker to represent their thoughts and ideas. Participants were also allowed to comment on other people's ideas while moving around the room. In the end, we had a group discussion about how some dispositions resonated with participants and how some statements may impact classroom equity.

Emergent Categories

By using the five-step data collection process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), I collected and analyzed the data for my study. During the first step, I organized and prepared data

by cataloging, sorting, and arranging it based on types or categories. Next, I established a general overview of the data by reading and taking notes, along with writing additional thoughts and field notes. During the next step, coding, I started using Saldaña's (2016) definition of a code. A code is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, or evocative attribute for a portion of language based on visual data. This assisted me in the fourth step of Creswell and Creswell's (2018) method, generating descriptions that emerge after each PAR Pre-Cycle. The data displays multiple perspectives from individuals, and it is supported by diverse and specific evidence from individuals. A narrative passage conveys my findings to represent the descriptions of categories.

During the PAR Pre-Cycle coding, three categories emerged:

- Teacher Behaviors Impact Student Relationships

- Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

- Safe Environments Allow For Belonging

These categories reflect skills and dispositions mentors need to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices and are explored in depth in the following sections.

Teacher Behaviors Impact Student Relationships

During the February and April 2022 CLE, the CPR members focused on classroom skills and dispositions necessary for equitable practice to take hold in classrooms. *Teacher behaviors impact student relationships* emerged as a disposition needed by mentors and teachers. Teachers' beliefs, along with how they interact, build relationships. With enough evidence, it also emerged as a category. One classroom strategy to build relationships is actively listening. When active listening is practiced, students' needs are learned and supported. One teacher stated, "when students know they are being heard, it validates their feelings." Teachers and mentors agreed

student voices were important in establishing equitable classrooms. Building relationships with students is necessary to know what may be the root of problems that might appear as behavior issues. According to one teacher, knowing students means "Knowing my students means knowing ALL about them - their family, interests, dislikes, behaviors, strengths, insecurities, and health" (CLE, April 2022). Teachers can express empathy by modeling appropriate behavior and setting the tone or creating a welcoming environment. As I noted in a reflective memo following a CLE, another outcome of knowing students and demonstrating empathy is being their advocate both in and out of the classroom; as teachers learn and better understand students' culture, they can honor and exhibit advocacy toward students' communities, values, and beliefs (Collins Reflective Memo, CPR CLE, April 2022).

Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

Skills noted during the March CLE were to know students and implement student center lessons that allow for collaboration. "Giving students the opportunity to interact with curriculum or text together with peers is a task that enables them to learn through collaboration" (Mentor, Pre-Cycle CLE, April 2022). In the March 2022 CLE, a teacher noted, "Students learn in a way that fits them." Teachers who employ instructional practices that fit students and allow them to introduce new ideas, explore, and discover new learning. Culturally responsive teaching begins with knowing students. It honors students' backgrounds, prior knowledge, and how they learn (Collins, CPR Reflective Memo, April 2022). Engaging material assists in classroom management and lends more time for teaching and learning. One teacher noted, "Students are more focused on the task than what is happening around them when I differentiate" (CLE, April 2022). This may motivate students and allow them to see their personal growth. For some students, teachers modify lessons to meet their needs and interests. Modifying does not decrease

rigor; it supports learning by helping "students discover their capabilities," said one teacher at the April 2022 CLE. It is important for students to learn in ways that acknowledge their backgrounds and bring relevance and meaning to them.

Safe Environments Allow Belonging

Another category that emerged from the teachers was the importance of a safe environment that allows students to feel belonging and community within the classroom. The participants of the CLE found value in being clear on the definition of equity. Pitt County Schools adopted Elena Aguilar's definition, "Educational equity means that every child receives whatever she/he/they need to develop to her/his/their full academic and social potential and to thrive every day (Aguilar, 2020, p. 6). This means students should see themselves in the printed text and feel safe. One participant noted that "A diverse community exists when students see themselves in print and through visuals and venture off for the joy of reading and learning and not just to meet state standards" (Participant 1, February CLE). While the sense of belonging may be internal or external, everyone should be able to feel comfortable understanding in public and expressing themselves in a mannerly way while being courteous to peers (Particpant 2, February CLE). Both students and teachers must have a voice and be heard and listened to by each other. This also means partnering with parents to learn more about students and their culture to introduce it in the classroom setting and build diversity (Participant 3, February CLE).

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Reflection and Planning

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Upon conclusion of the PAR Pre-Cycle, it was essential to embark on a journey of introspection and planning to pave the way for the following cycles. This process comprises two pivotal components: Reflection on My Leadership and Planning for PAR Cycle One.

In the first section, Reflection on My Leadership, I evaluate my leadership role during the pre-cycle. This critical analysis will illuminate both my strengths and areas where improvements are needed, shedding light on how my leadership style and decisions have influenced the research process and its outcomes.

The second section, Planning for PAR Cycle One, will outline the strategic steps and objectives to ensure a successful research cycle. These plans are informed by the insights gained from my reflection on leadership, ensuring a more effective and collaborative approach to the PAR journey in Cycle One.

Reflection on Leadership

During the PAR Pre-Cycle, I met with mentors and teachers. I learned from the CPR members some of their driving forces as we discovered more about the identities and beliefs we hold as leaders. A commonality we share as educators is that our days as students impacted our decision to go into teaching, and once we made the decision, it was the influence of mentors that helped us stay and succeed.

As a leader, I have the opportunity to share skills and strategies with mentors to build their capacity as leaders in the classroom and for beginning teachers. Ms. Patton, one of the CPR members, said, "I don't think of myself as a leader; I just do what I can to help others" (May 2022). This study aims to build the efficacy and craftsmanship of mentors by examining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support Beginning Teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations. As mentors become aware of their identity as a leader and engage in activities that make their classrooms more equitable for students, then they are able to conduct coaching conversations with the beginning teachers.

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As the mentors grow, my leadership grows, and I can help them take a balcony view of what they do each day and the impact it has on both beginning teachers and students. To be a growth agent is to help them provide a professional vision for the future while offering support. It often requires me to provide a cognitive challenge to push them to make independent choices and decisions (Wellman & Lipton, 2017). During the PAR Pre-Cycle, the CPR group meetings and the CLEs caused me to reflect on practices that build capacity and cause a systemic change in how we interact with mentors. While mentors are left to figure things out because it is assumed they know what to do, they too need support and guidance. The experience deepens my understanding of how as a district, we tend not to work with mentors on professional development. Many mentors have no training beyond state requirements and often do not participate in training related to coaching conversations or equitable practices (Collins, Field Note, February 2022)..

Planning for PAR Cycle One

The PAR Pre-Cycle revealed teachers consider dispositions and skills to be one in the same. The teachers who participated in the CLEs had a clear understanding of a disposition as a thought or belief by which one acts and dispositions impact behaviors. However, when asked to identify skills, most referred to behaviors. Teachers have a vision of equity, and it varies when asked individually. As a result of this finding, for PAR Cycle One, I worked to incorporate the definition of educational equity we use district-wide through opening circle strategies and personal narratives, so the meaning becomes internalized. Then we differentiate between dispositions and skills. The goal is for mentors to understand skills should always be observable and dispositions determine the behaviors we observe; behaviors and skills are not the same. Lastly, I share protocols that build equitable practices within the classroom.

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PAR Cycle One began in the fall of the 2022-23 school year. During the initial training on August 11, 2022, mentors received the definition of educational equity. They cannot know or recognize equitable practices if they are not certain what educational equity means. This training explores leadership and how they are leaders within their school. Beginning with mentors having a vision of who they are and who they need to be to support beginning teachers, and establish an understanding of their role and responsibility. This training also looks at the difference between dispositions and skills. Using protocols and group discussions, mentors connected to the dispositions necessary to build capacity and efficacy to implement skills and establish equitable classroom practices.

CHAPTER 5: PAR CYCLE ONE

Data from the Participatory Action Research (PAR) Pre-Cycle guided Cycle One of the PAR inquiry processes. In this cycle, mentor teachers participated in a Community Learning Exchange (CLE), I conducted classroom observations, and the CPR team met as we continued understanding the emerging categories from the PAR Pre-Cycle. As lead researcher, I conducted the initial observations of mentors to ensure they understood how the Calling-On Tool promotes equitable practice within the classroom. In this chapter, I first describe PAR Cycle One, including data collected during activities at two schools. Next, I detail emergent themes from the PAR Cycle One data analysis. Finally, I reflect on my leadership and actions for PAR Cycle Two.

PAR Cycle One Process

During the Fall semester (August – December 2022) of the academic year 2022-23, PAR Cycle One occurred and included multiple activities. I began by sharing data from the Pre-PAR Cycle with mentors in a district-wide CLE and collecting data based on their insights into the NC Mentor Standard and equity. Next, I contacted multiple mentors who worked with Ms. East and Ms. Patton at their respective schools by attending an opening-year meeting. This provided another opportunity to share data from the Pre-PAR Cycle and gain mentors' insights. At the meeting, a mentor from each school agreed to participate through observation. Other activities were similar to those in the Pre-PAR Cycle, including a CPR meeting (see Table 4).

Data collection began with a CLE attended by over 30 mentors to continue exploring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for mentors to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices. During the CLE, I shared the meaning of educational equity based on the district's definition. Mentors individually wrote examples of equitable practices; the

Table 4

PAR Cycle One Activities and Data

Meetings	Date	Activities	Data Collection
Mentor CLE	August 11, 2022	• Personal Narrative • Chalk Talk • Reflection	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo
Mentor Meeting @RES	August 24, 2022	• Personal Narrative • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo
Mentor Meeting @FES	August 30, 2022	• Personal Narrative • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo
Mentor Observation @RES	September 29, 2022	• Calling-On Tool Observation	• Observation Data • Field Notes • Reflective Memo
Mentor Coaching	October 7, 2022	• Coaching	• Selective Verbatim Tool • Reflective Memo
Mentor Observation @FES	October 27, 2022	• Calling-On Tool Observation	• Observation Data • Field Notes • Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting	November 9, 2022	• Personal Narrative • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo
Mentor Coaching	November 10, 2022	• Coaching	• Selective Verbatim Tool • Field Notes

individual practices were then paired with the mentor standards provided by the NC Department

of Public Instruction. The mentors quickly noted practices related to each of the standards and

often found it difficult to see the connection between the practice and how it provides equitable

access. They pondered on the relationship of equity and how it related to ensuring students were

receiving what they needed to be successful (Collins, field note, August 2022). After writing the

practices and pairing them to the appropriate standards, most comments from mentors related to

Standard 2 of the NC Mentor Standards– *Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Establish a*

Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students. This included balanced

participation, student-to-teacher positive interactions, collaborative grouping, and student

centered inclusion activities.

As the lead researcher, I attended mentor meetings at both schools at the beginning of the

school year. I shared the data from the Pre-PAR Cycle held in the Spring and the Calling-On

Tool. The CPR group decided to use this tool as a way of collecting data based on the data from

the Pre-PAR Cycle. Both groups of mentors were interested in using the Calling-On Tool to

develop relationships and as an equitable practice. Mentors want to provide support, especially if

it helps teachers help students. Mentors volunteered to allow me to observe the Calling-On Tool

strategy in their classroom beginning in late September after they had an opportunity to learn

more about the students who would be in their classroom. I observed one mentor from each

school for 30 minutes and followed up with a coaching conversation on the data collected. The

Select Verbatim Tool captured the coaching conversation (see Appendix H). Mentors were

interested in learning more about how to positively impact BTs and support building their

capacity to offer students equitable resources. This was a new level of support, given that

mentors usually do not observe the BT they are assigned to support. When BTs are observed, it

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is done using the North Carolina evaluation instrument. However, there was some reluctance and questions about how to share with BTs the notion of building safe learning environments, as mentioned in the Pre-PAR, while many BTs are still learning content and classroom management. I challenged the notion that learning and delivering content impedes implementing classroom management and building safe environments. When students feel a sense of belonging there is safety that allows for appropriate behaviors within the classroom. And classroom management means there are little or no distraction from off-task behaviors so content delivery becomes smoother for the teacher.

I observed one mentor in the middle of the marking period and the other at the end of the marking period. Both mentors used equitable practice in their classrooms. The teachers provided a seating chart and demographic information about the make-up of their respective classrooms, including gender and racial identity, noting Students of Color (SOC), including black and Hispanic, and non-SOC.

Near the end of September 2022, halfway through the first marking period, I observed the mentor at RES, Ms. Ringer, a third-grade general education teacher. I entered the classroom for the post-observation coaching and noticed she had arranged the class for students to work together in pairs or trios. Ms. Ringer acknowledged not using any collaborative grouping at the time of the observation because she was still learning about her students and wanted to make sure she knew them better. Since then, she has established groups and rearranged her room to reflect groups. Most of Ms. Ringer's students were called on using hand raising ($n=38$) followed by cold calling ($n=26$). Roughly 57% of the students were students of color and they were called on 64% of the time. Students were eager to participate, and one student blurted out. Ms. Ringer

acknowledged it and continued to move forward with teaching without pausing. I observed no discipline issues that interrupted learning as Ms. Ringer used the Calling-On Tool.

I then conducted an observation with the mentor at FES, Ms. Willie, a Kindergarten general education teacher toward the end of the first nine-week marking period. She used the Calling-On Tool during whole-group instruction, collaborative pair work, and small-group instruction with her students. Given she had spent more time with her students, she was more aware of grouping at the time of my observation. I shared data from the observation before our coaching conversation. Ms. Willie's class was very engaged; students were called on randomly using a cold call ($n=41$) and an equity strategy ($n=12$) during the 30-minute observations. Ms. Willie called on all students at least twice. When students were called on as a redirect, it was also paired with praise. This class had no White students. One student identified as Hispanic, and one was multiracial. Unlike Ms. Ringer's class, Ms. Willie used the hand raise strategy very little ($n=3$). Instead, students were called on using the cold call ($n=41$), and equity sticks were used ($n=12$). There were no observable discipline issues that interrupted teaching and learning.

Students of color were the majority in both classes, with Ms. Ringer having 57% and Ms. Willie with 100%. Both classes had no discipline issues, and students needed little to no redirection. Students were excited about learning and demonstrated an understanding of the content during both observations, and the students' voice was honored. Both classes had 100% participation. This supported the data from the first CLE with mentors that place value on Standard 2 - *Mentors Support Beginning Teachers to Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students.* The data revealed that mentors were more concerned about diversity in the classroom through inclusive practices such as those in the Call On Tool than helping beginning teachers know the content they teach (Standard 3). This is different from what

they typically report when having conversations about support. They are usually more concerned with supporting through developing content knowledge or classroom management. And based on the data from the Calling-On Tool, building a safe environment that includes all students minimized or eliminated discipline issues in both classrooms (Collins, Reflective Memo, December 2022).

The data collected during the CLE, mentor observation data from the Calling-On Tool, and mentor coaching conversation were reviewed during the initial CPR meeting for the Fall 2022 Semester. By triangulating the data with the CPR group through member checks, the data analysis of PAR Cycle One revealed alignment with the Pre-PAR Cycle's emerging categories. Specifically, mentors shared that inclusion activities were the best strategy for equitable practices in multiple ways. In the next section I share the data collected through activities conducted in PAR Cycle One as supporting evidence.

Emerging Themes

During the PAR Pre-Cycle coding, three categories emerged. These categories include:

- Teacher Behaviors Impact Student Relationships

- Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

- Safe Environments Allow for Belonging

These categories reflect the skills and dispositions mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable practices. As I continued into PAR Cycle One, mentors provided additional data that elevated the emergent categories into themes. During our CPR meeting, a member check confirmed our emerging themes (see Figure 5). In this section, I provide evidence to support these themes.
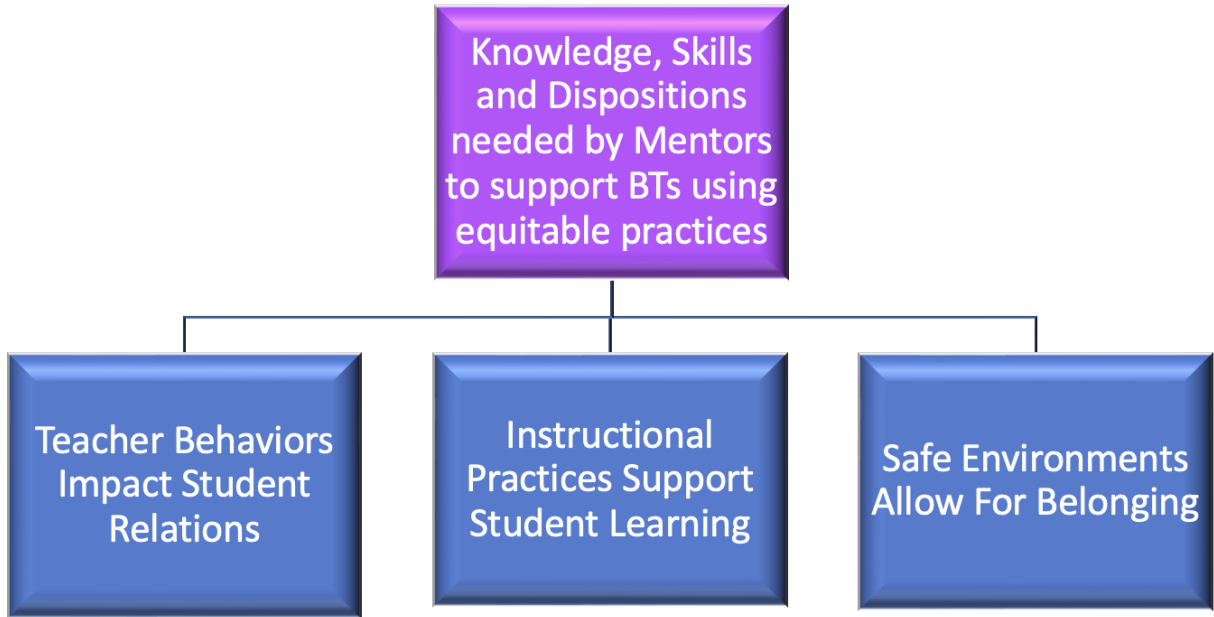
Figure 5. Emerging themes.

Teacher Behaviors Impact Student Relationships

During Pre-PAR Cycle, an emerging category was Teacher Behaviors Impact Student Learning (*n*=32, see Table 5). After the CLE and observing the mentor teachers, there are three primary categories of teacher behaviors that impact the mentors' knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The categories are awareness, receiving and giving feedback, and building relationships with students. Figure 6 is a visual diagram of the themes, categories, and supporting codes. Next, I discuss the category and provide evidence to demonstrate the theme as an outcome.

Awareness

For mentors to support equitable classroom practices, there is an awareness (*n*=15) of what it means, and then share the meaning during their monthly Beginning Teacher talks. This is also an opportunity for mentors to provide BTs with a choice of topics and share valuable information for growth and development. At the beginning of this research, it was important to establish a standard definition of equity. Many mentors had various ideas about defining equity personally and for students in their classrooms. Establishing meaning helps to provide clarity and awareness when developing a mutual understanding through conversation or coaching beginning teachers. During the Pre-PAR cycle, there was some discrepancy between skills and dispositions, which also impacted awareness. The CPR group determine that mentors need to know that dispositions are the behaviors we demonstrate as a result of knowledge and skills. After sharing this information with over 30 mentors in the first CLE, mentors determine awareness influences the decision about monthly BT talks and meeting the BTs' needs through providing choices.

During the mentor post-observations coaching in September 2022, Ms. Ringer shared, "It definitely made me more aware of how I'm going to balance between my subgroups." For

Table 5

PAR Cycle One Emerging Theme 1

Emerging Theme	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Teacher Behavior Impact Student Relationship (n = 32)	• Awareness (n=15)	• BT Teach Talks / Topics (n=13) • Teacher Choice (n=2)
	• Feedback (n=9)	• Stop and Note Strategy (n=3) • Observation (n=2) • Reflective Check-ins (n=2) • Anonymous Feedback (n=2)
	• Relationship (n=8)	• Greet students (n=4) • Culture Tree (n=1) • Know students background (n=3)
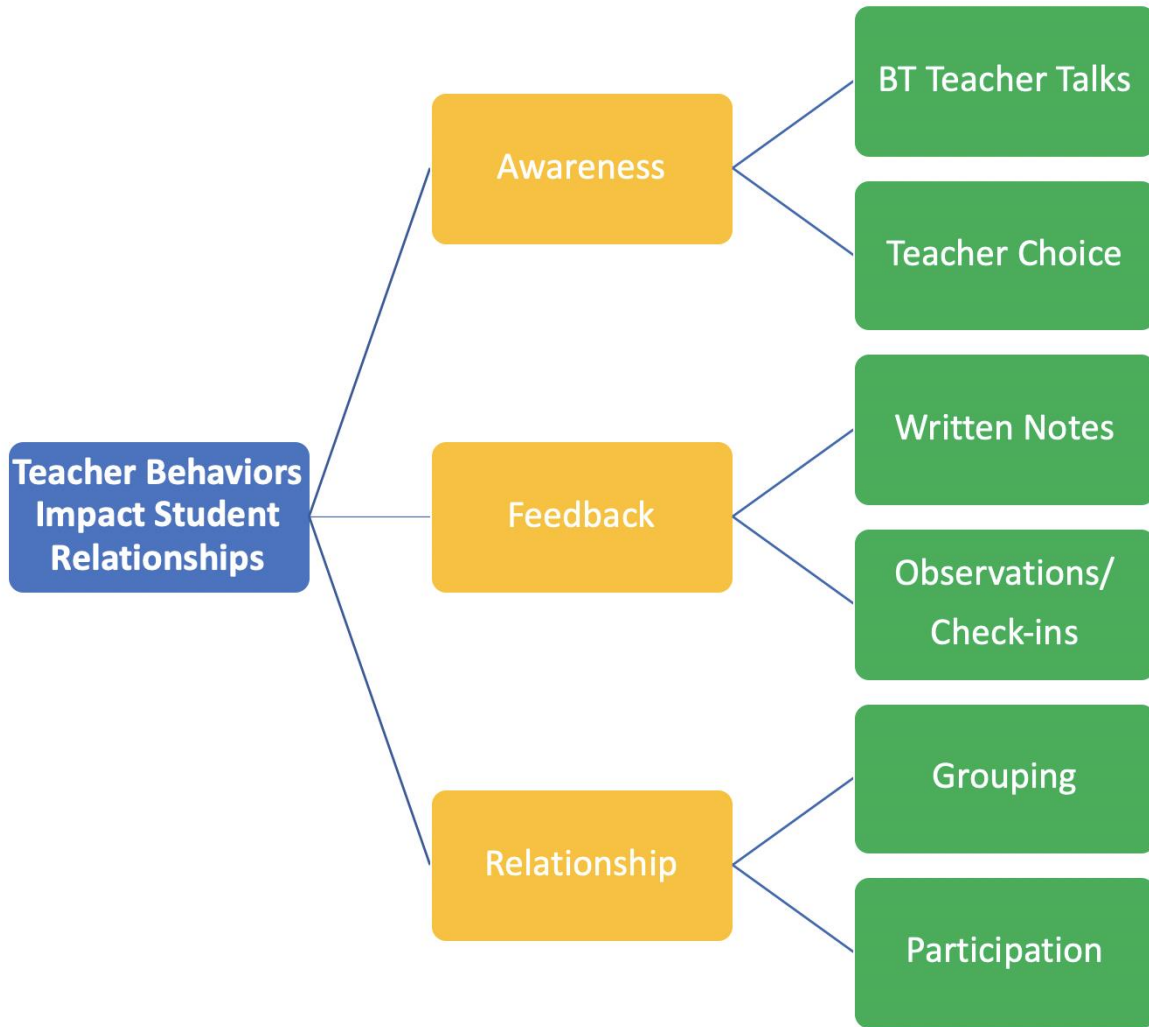
Figure 6. Teacher behaviors impact student relationships.

mentors to support teachers using equitable practices, it requires awareness of student engagement and content understanding. The Calling-On Tool data provides a matrix for mentors to share with BTs and raise their consciousness around equitable classroom practices.

Feedback

Mentors must give the beginning teacher feedback (*n*=7) to support equity in the beginning teacher's classroom. This could also be an equitable practice in the classroom when considering student's voice. Mentors shared that feedback allows BT to reflect on their learning, growth, and development. This may be accomplished through observation with a stop-and-note strategy where the mentor stops in the classroom and leaves a quick note or a reflective check-in with a coaching conversation. Feedback could also be collected anonymously during whole group meetings with the BTs. When used as an equitable tool, the skill of feedback through observation and coaching allows mentors to model for teachers how to build student relationships where students' voices are heard, and their input is valued. During my coaching with both mentors, they each shared feedback that using the Calling-On Tool assisted them in knowing individual students and providing insight on how students were making sense of their own learning.

The Calling-On Tool provides mentors feedback about student voice and the equity in making sure all students are heard. During my observation in Ms. Willie's class, she called on the girls 72% of the time, the same percentage of girls in her classroom (72%). This feedback was helpful for her to understand whose voice was heard. She also shared during the post-observation coaching that Celine, a Multi-Language Learner, was called on five times so she would have a sense of success, since she often misses instruction to receive services related to English Language Learners. The awareness of knowing her students and their individual needs were

reflected in the Call On Tool. Ms. Willie shared during a post-observation conversation that she did not want to leave her out and wanted her to "feel a part of the classroom" even though she goes out for ESL (English Second Language) services.

Relationship

The continuum for NC mentors addresses mentors providing support for beginning teachers to establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students (Standard 2). Building relationships (*n*=8) helps teachers understand the diverse backgrounds of students' cultures. During our CPR meeting, Ms. Patton shared, "being heard provides the opportunity for them [students] to have a sense of belonging, and it starts with developing relational trust so students have someone they can feel safe to ask for help" (Patton, CPR Meeting, 2022). Teachers' behaviors, such as greeting students in the morning, sets the tone for their interaction for the rest of their time together during the day. It is also important to learn about student culture and backgrounds, and this is most helpful when developing groups and being mindful of group dynamics. During the Pre-PAR and PAR One cycles, mentors and Beginning Teachers expressed that building relationships are a valuable part of equitable practices. Ms. Ringer and Ms. Willie shared that they spent time at the beginning of the year just getting to know more about their students, and at times this was done outside of covering content.

Ms. Ringer used her beginning of the day opening activity to build relationships and promote Social Emotional Learning (SEL). She was able to learn more about her students, including their learning styles, by providing space for them to reflect on something important to them and not content related. Ms. Ringer stated, "And honestly, I like to hear about them. There is so much rushing through our day, so sometimes it is nice to start with the SEL focus, but also

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so I can get insight" (Ringer, Post Observation, 2022). Ms. Ringer acknowledged that moving from SEL into the content made students eager to share.

During my observation of Ms. Willie's class, she had a comfy corner, and after simply noticing a student's body language, she invited him to move over to the comfy corner. As the observer, I only heard Ms. Willie's invitation to the student and did not notice any misbehavior. The student did not disrupt the whole group's learning and remained in the class. Ms. Willie stated, "building relationships is also essential for the students because they help each other, and it is carried out throughout the classroom and various types of engagement" (Willie, Coaching Conversation, 2022). Ms. Willie established both partners and groups before my observation. She noted that "partners help them to build positive relationships together" (Willie, Post Observation, 2022).

Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

A second emergent theme is Instructional Practices Support Student Learning (*n*=79, see Table 6). Mentors want beginning teachers to thrive as they deliver content for students' achievement, which is accomplished by helping beginning teachers implement instructional practices. The three categories that mentors shared are inclusion practices (*n*=30), student-centered (*n*=26) and the teacher preparation (*N*=23). Figure 7 visually describes this theme, categories, and codes.

Inclusion

The knowledge of inclusive practices helps mentors support beginning teachers in building more cohesive and balanced classrooms (Collins, Reflective Memo, November 2022). Inclusion provides student output, and students share in the responsibility of learning. Teachers implemented inclusive practices throughout the class from beginning to end. When used at the

Table 6

PAR Cycle One Emerging Theme 2

Emerging Theme	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Instructional Practices Support Student Learning (*n*=79)	• Student Center (*n*=26)	• Student Grouping (*n*=4) • Student Output (*n*=15) • Student Responsibility (*n*=6)
	• Inclusion practices (*n*=30)	• Whole Group (*n*=5) • Participation (*n*=6) • Small Group (*n*=10) • Collaborative Grouping (*n*=9)
	• Preparation (*n*=23)	• Teacher Planning (*n*=12) • Teacher Resources (*n*=11)
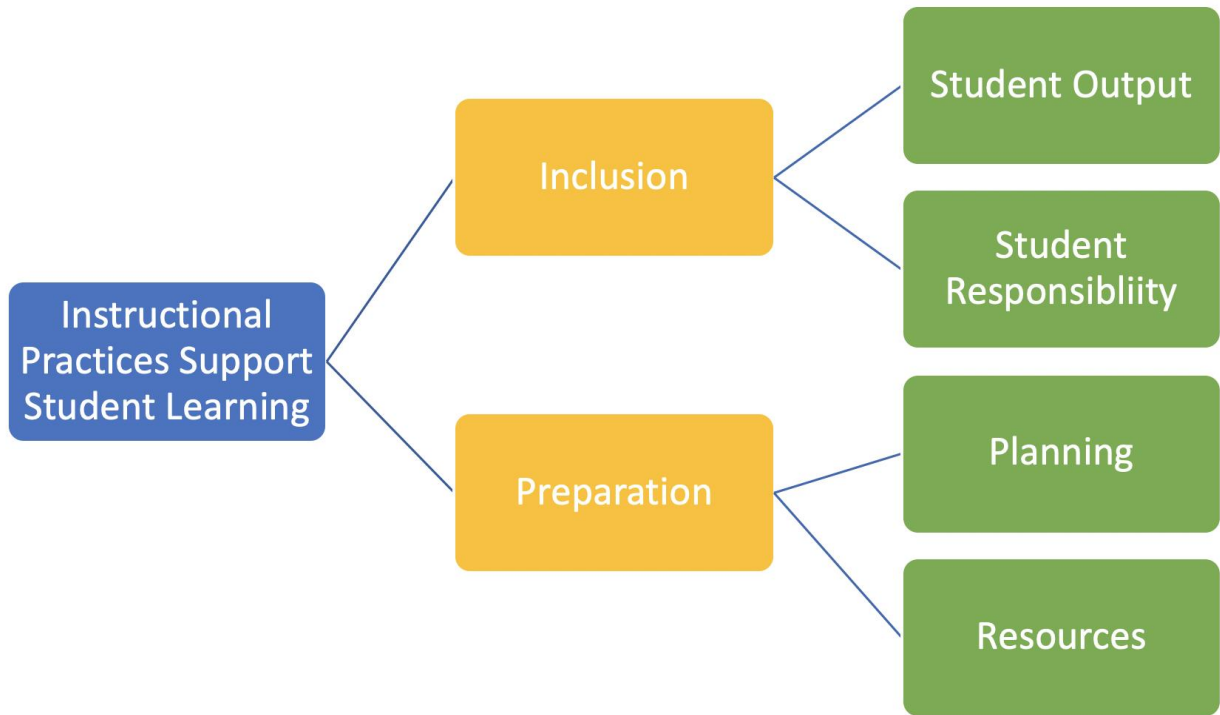
Figure 7. Instructional practices support student learning.

beginning, it is an opportunity for the student to become grounded in the space (CLE, August 2022). It allows for balanced participation, and teachers can choose to use instructional content or random topics to build inclusivity. "And honestly, I like to hear about them. There is so much rushing through our day, so sometimes it is nice to start with the SEL focus so that I can get insight" (Ringer, Coaching, November 2022). Inclusion activities during class also give the student who may not contribute a voice and help teachers monitor student comprehension. "In the past, not all students raised their hands My goal was to get everybody to work, listen, and participate" (Willie, Coaching, November 2022). Inclusion allows for connection to the content and peers. Students pay attention and are present to share in the learning. When using the tool of inclusion strategies, randomizers have been very useful (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). "It keeps them focused during my lesson because they know I may call their name, and they want to be prepared to respond, just in case" (Willie, Coaching, November 2022). Inclusion practices are used with partner assignments and during group work. Students are assigned roles or given individual tasks so that they are responsible for contributing their input and leading by demonstrating their strengths and knowledge. This helps provide equitable access to learning so every child contributes to the teaching. An inclusion activity at the end of class, such as a summarizing activity, helps teachers know how or what to prepare moving forward based on student needs.

Preparation

The disposition of preparing for student learning is demonstrated as mentors provide support with lesson planning ($n=12$) and sharing resources ($n=11$). During my observation of Ms. Ringer and Ms. Willie's, both had well-prepared lessons that allowed students to contribute. Ms. Willies' Kindergarten class allowed students to teach each other as they learned sight words.

Mentors increase capacity when supporting the development of instruction that is student center. Mrs Patton stated:

> When you are in leadership spaces (putting your all in as a mentor), then at some point, the hope is for them (BTs) to become better by paying it forward. Taking on the role (of mentor) in a merciful way that says I don't evaluate but give mercy and support while they struggle and the struggle is not in vain (Patton, Reflective Memo, November 2022)

It takes time to build lessons where students see themselves or can make a real-life connection and/or implement critical thinking skills. This often requires vertical planning and cross-curriculum alignment. With the assistance of mentors, craftsmanship develops that helps navigate time management and appropriate resources.

Safe Environments Allow for Belonging

The third emergent category is safe environments that allow for belonging (n=173, see Table 7 and Figure 8). During the Pre-PAR cycle, mentors and beginning teachers described safe environments as providing equitable access. I am focusing on two elementary schools; the term equity is not used to describe environments that provide access for all students. However, teachers expressed that every child wants a sense of belonging, whether external or internal (Collins, Reflective Memo, August 2022). When meeting with mentors in August 2022, it was stressed that safe environments allow for communication and balanced participation.

Communication

As stated by one beginning teacher during the PAR Pre-Cycle, beginning teachers need a sense of belonging, whether it is internal or external, from someone within the environment (Beginning Teacher, CLE, PAR Pre-Cycle). Communication and being heard (n=18) provide a sense of belonging. Mentors may provide communication in either digital or physical form.

Table 7

PAR Cycle One Emerging Theme 3

Emerging Theme	Categories	Codes and Subcodes
Safe Environments Allow for Belonging (*n*=173)	• Communication (*n*=5)	• Emails (*n*=3) • Setting Goals (*n*=1) • Monthly encouragement (*n*=1)
	• Being Heard (*n*=13)	• Addressing parking lot concerns (*n*=4) • Space to Listen and Connect (*n*=9)
	• Balance Participation (*n*=9)	• Using randomizers for engagement (*n*=9)
	• Calling-On Tool(*n*=143)	• Equity Method (*n*=28) • Hand raised (*n*=41) • Cold Call (*n*=71) • Calling out (*n*=3)
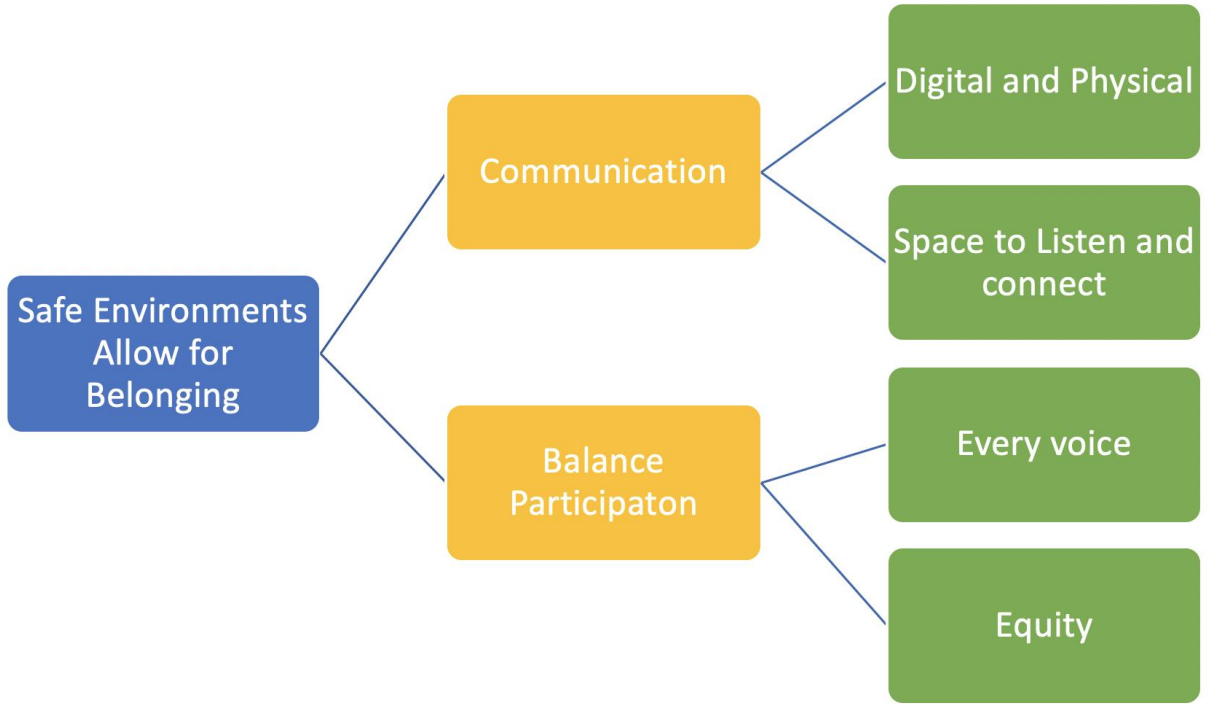
Figure 8. Safe environments allow for belonging.

Mentors need to provide space for the beginning teacher so they can be heard and listened to without fear of being evaluated. The space allows beginning teachers to bring their authentic selves to the public space and be transparent. This can also be done through reflective conversations or coaching. While most beginning teachers and mentors have an interdependent relationship, the space to reflect with beginning teachers helps to build their confidence and allows the beginning teacher to develop a professional vision.

Digital communication, such as emails or anonymous surveys, allows for quick check-ins and represents the presence of support. All teachers are busy; mentors and beginning teachers have classes to teach and students to support. This requires skillful time management. Along with the mindset of being a growth agent for the beginning teachers, mentors are to be flexible in their choice and decision-making as to how to interact. Teachers may engage in non-evaluative observations and provide refined and rough data to support growth in the beginning teacher. Physical communication may be a parking lot poster, plus and wishes poster, or other organizing and integrating strategies at the end of meetings. It may also be a "stop and jot" note randomly placed in the classroom or teacher's mailbox to encourage them. Communication is an opportunity to process how strategies are implemented that can support student collaboration and equity in calling on students and continuing to build student relationships. When teachers use the Calling-On Tool, it is more than just raising hands and answering questions, it is a form of communication that shares student knowledge while providing equitable access and revealing student content knowledge (Collins, Reflective Memo, November, 2022).

Balance Participation

Every voice has value, from the novice teacher to the most experienced. Beginning teachers appreciate dedicated time for their concerns to be heard and possibly to move toward a

positive outcome. Mentors who used the Calling-On Tool (*n*=143) practices noted that it was

important to balance participation (*n*=9) whom they called on during instruction time in their

classroom. Both mentors demonstrated this during my observation (see Table 8). Numbers

represent the number of times I witnessed the mentor calling on students during the observation.

Ms. Willie called on her male/female students to align with the proportion of students. She built

relationships with students during the first marking period. Moving beyond what you think you

know and learning students allows teachers to see things differently and possibly move beyond

the stereotype or historical belief that may limit how they interact (East, CPR Meeting,

November 2022).

Equity provides everyone with what they need to thrive and be successful; this is the

definition used by Pitt County Schools. Mentors practiced the equitable practice of calling on

students and realized the data helped them gauge participation and reflected established

relationships. When considering the tension of delivering content and managing classroom

behavior, it is also notable that both classrooms lacked any discipline issues during my

observations. With the use of the Calling-On Tool, teachers delivered content without

interruption from off-task behaviors, and every student engaged in academic discourse. During

the coaching conversations, Ms. Ringer and Ms. Willie both felt the CallingOn Tool data

reflected their beliefs about the student (Collins, Reflective memo, Fall 2022). The data was a

confirmation and not new learning because they knew their students and their needs. Ms. Ringer

noted that she had already been working with a student who would become distressed when he

was not called on after raising his hand. The same student had the highest number of markings

for hand raises (*n*=7). Ms. Willie noted that she called on her only ELL student more often

intentionally because she wanted her to practice her speaking time. Equity doesn't always mean

Table 8

Mentor Observation Calling-On Tool Data

Teacher	Male in Class	Female in Class	Called on Males	Called on Female	Called on SOC	Called on White	Hand Raised	Cold Call	Other
Ringer	9	7	41	31	46	26	38	26	8
	57%	43%	57%	43%	64%	36%	53%	36%	11%
Willie	5	13	16	41	18	0	3	41	13*
	28%	72%	28%	72%	100%	0%	5%	72%	23%

Note. *This number includes one student blurt out for a response. The other 12 are from Ms. Willie using equity sticks as a call-on strategy.

all students should get equal speaking time. Equity is centering student voices without silencing others. Students can share their experiences when the classroom centers on them because their contributions matter.

Leadership Reflection and Action Steps for PAR Cycle Two

From Pre-PAR Cycle to PAR Cycle One, I notice that what beginning teachers need mirrors student needs. Mentors build capacity in the beginning teacher by building relationships through awareness and offering feedback. Mentors model best practices and assist the beginning teacher with preparing lessons. Lastly, mentors provide a safe environment for the beginning teacher to gain a sense of belonging within the school.

Based on the data of PAR Cycle One, I shifted in how I supported mentors during PAR Cycle Two. While the goal of mentors is to ensure teaching and learning are occurring in the classroom of beginning teachers, it is also the goal of mentors to build the beginning teachers' efficacy, so they can be self-reliant and make decisions supporting student learning. This became my focus for PAR Cycle Two; continuing to conducting research on how mentors support beginning teachers to provide equitable classroom practices. A recurring theme through PAR Cycle One focused on what beginning teachers need, not mentors. During PAR Cycle Two, the focus was on mentors' needs as they support the beginning teacher. Mentors work to help beginning teachers survive, often to the neglect of their own learning or professional development. My leadership has moved to coaching conversations with mentors around the support they need to be a more impactful mentor and not solely the needs of beginning teachers. As a research practitioner, I developed my ideas to focus on the questions and not the people. As research, the attention becomes more on the practice of the mentor and the outcome. In the case of my problem of practice, the work and disposition of the mentor have not exceeded the needs

of beginning teachers. Traditionally, schools continuously poured attention into beginning teachers, and, just as trends are observed nationwide, there is a tremendous number of attritions. This leads me to think that our energy would be better spent on developing a mentor who works directly with beginning teachers to build efficacy and knowledge. Mentors need skills and professional learning in order to accomplish this.

My next step was to work with the mentors and their beginning teachers in PAR Cycle Two. The mentors observed the beginning teacher during this cycle using the same Calling-On Tool and collected data. Then mentors conducted reflective coaching conversations with the beginning teacher to provide feedback on the data. I then meta-coached the mentor. Data was collected during the observations, the coaching conversations between the mentors and BTs, and during the meta-coaching between me and the mentors. Next, we had a CLE that both mentors participated in to share the experience of observing and coaching. The PAR Cycle Two allowed me to continue to explore the relationship between mentors and BTs as they engaged in how to support BTs in providing equitable access to students. Based on the reception of the mentors, I was eager to learn from the perspective of the beginning teachers after their mentor observed their classroom. I believed that this would also help build a trusting relationship that is not punitive. It also helped me learn more about the skills, knowledge, and dispositions mentors need to support BTs in providing equitable student access. I continued to host CPR meetings and conduct member checks throughout the cycle.

Conclusion

I analyzed the codes based on the CLE of mentors from around the district, mentor observations, and coaching conversations with mentors. The categories that were present in Chapter 4 became emergent themes after completing PAR Cycle One. During the next cycle, I

collected data from the mentors' observations of the beginning teachers they directly support, the

coaching between the mentor and beginning teacher, and meta-coaching between the mentors

and me. I continued hosting CPR meetings and completing reflective memos and member

checks. There was also a CLE for CPR members and mentors to attend.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

Those who become new teacher leaders are often developed by experienced teacher leaders known as mentors. Veteran teachers mentor those who begin their careers as educators by supporting the novice learning a new profession while maintaining their classrooms and leadership positions within the school building. Mentors support novice teachers in building classroom culture while knowing (and sometimes learning) content and implementing pedagogy. Often the beginning teacher is in survival mode to keep pace with their peers and the demands of the school, district, and state mandates. This leaves little or no time to consider how relationships may be developed while teaching lessons through equitable practices. Interest in new teacher support and induction programs is growing as they report to yield increased teacher retention, improved practice, and increased student achievement (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006).

When I was a beginning teacher entering education through a non-traditional teaching program, my mentor's efforts provided guidance that enabled me to make decisions about my teaching practices and classroom management. Later, I became a mentor and realized that my ability to mentor came from what I learned from my mentor. I did not consider if the delivery of content included equitable practices that allowed every student to be seen or have a voice in my classroom. North Carolina provides training for veteran teachers to become mentors, and beyond that, mentors are to build capacity in beginning teachers mainly through their own personal experience. This Participatory Action Research (PAR) study examined how mentors develop their identity as mentors to support beginning teachers using equitable practices. The Co-Practitioners of Research (CPR) team was comprised of me and two lead mentors, each with nearly twenty years of experience. With their assistance, I delved into what knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to support equitable practices in beginning teacher classrooms

through coaching conversations. Over the course of a 10-month school year, two school-level lead mentors (Ms. East and Ms. Patton) and I met every six to eight weeks to collaborate and learn about how mentors build efficacy and grow the capacity of the mentors. During the Fall semester of the 2022-23 school year, I met with BT mentors within their respective schools. During the Spring, I observed those same BT mentors support their assigned beginning teacher by engaging in equitable practices for student learning. Given that mentors rarely receive professional development in the school district, this PAR study examined the following research question and several sub-questions.

- What knowledge, skills, and dispositions *do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations*?
  - To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying equitable practices?
  - To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?
  - How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?

After three PAR cycles, three emergent themes are revealed that: Mentor Behaviors Impact Relationships, Instructional Practices Modeled by Mentors, Support Beginning Teacher Learning, and Building Safe Environments Allow For a Sense Belonging. In this chapter, I describe the PAR Cycle Two process, including the activities of the CPR group, data collection, and analysis, and how the data from all three cycles fit together to support and answer the

research questions. Then, I present the overall findings from this PAR project and the data. The chapter finishes with a conclusion to the third cycle of inquiry in this PAR study.

PAR Cycle Two Process

PAR Cycle Two occurred in late Fall 2022 and early Spring 2023. There was a slight shift in the focus of PAR Cycle Two to address the research questions on mentors' ability to have coaching conversations with beginning teachers. PAR Cycle Two involved the beginning teachers that mentors, Ms. Ringer and Ms. Willie, directly supported through coaching conversations. Table 9 shows the activities, dates, and participants for PAR Cycle Two. In this section, I explain PAR Cycle Two activities, data, and analysis. I present the combined data and analysis from all three PAR Cycles.

PAR Cycle Two Activities

PAR Cycle Two began in the Fall and concluded in the Spring of the same academic year. I continued with the same data collection format to analyze responses to the research questions. I held two CLE meetings throughout this cycle. The CPR group completed reflective memos after the two meetings. I attended a mentor meeting and a beginning teacher meeting. I also completed two observations of the mentors (Ms. Ringer and Ms. Willie) coaching the beginning teachers they directly support using the Calling-On Tool. After I observed the mentors having coaching conversations with the beginning teachers, the mentors and I had meta-coaching sessions. In a meta-coaching session, I shared with the coach (the BT mentor) my observations of them coaching the coachee (BT). In the meta-coaching, I inquired about some of the mentor's decisions to ask certain questions and what they learned about themselves and the experience. The mentors attended the final CLE meeting at the end of the Spring semester. Everyone

Table 9

PAR Cycle Two Activities and Data

Meetings	Date	Activities	Data Collection
Ringer Mentor Post-Conference / Meta Coaching@ RES	November 18, 2022	• Calling-On Tool Post Observation Coaching • Meta Coaching	• Observation Data • Field Notes • Reflective Memo
Mentor Meeting @RES	January 12, 2023	• Inclusion • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Personal Reflective Memo
BT Teacher Talk @ RES	February 16, 2023	• Inclusion • Instruction Models • Protocol • Reflection	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Personal Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting @FES	February 20, 2023	• Personal Narrative • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo •
Willie Mentor Post-Conference / Meta Coaching@ FES	March 28, 2023	• Calling-On Tool Post Observation Coaching • Meta Coaching	• Observation Data • Field Notes • Reflective Memo
CPR Meeting	May 2, 2022	• Personal Narrative • Reflection • Protocol	• Agenda • Field Notes • Group Reflection • Reflective Memo

completed reflective memos. The final CLE discussed reflections on the process, lessons learned, and the next step toward supporting mentors.

Community Learning Exchanges (CPR Meetings)

During PAR Cycle Two, the first CLE consisted of just the CPR members and took place at Forest Elementary School (FES). The focus was to review the research questions and to do a members' check-in. We also looked at the data from the observations of the two mentors and their use of the Calling-On Tool. I consistently planned the meeting using the Project i4 agenda format throughout this PAR study (see Appendix F) and included CLE pedagogies. Both the participants and I completed reflective memos. The final CLE, conducted at Robins Elementary School (RES), included the two BT mentors who participated in the coaching during PAR Cycle One and their assigned beginning teachers as participants. After participating in Dynamic Mindfulness, everyone shared a personal narrative based on a quote from Sherri Mitchell's Sacred Instructions (see Appendix E). The closing activity was a protocol summarizing the learning from the experience of the study. All but one attendee completed reflective memos at the end of the CLE. I collected and coded into categories using the previous coding method from PAR Pre-Cycle and PAR Cycle One.

Reflective Memos

All attendees completed reflective memos at the end of both CLE meetings held during PAR Cycle Two. Reflective memos served as a means for participants to reflect on data and consider how engaging in the experience might inform the next steps. I also captured field notes and wrote personal reflections. Attendees completed reflective memos using a Google form that included four prompts related to the following.

1. Engaging in the Experience (What happened?)

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2. Reflecting on the Experience (What did you feel?)

3. Conceptualizing the Experience (What concepts/generalizations apply to you?)

4. Plans for the Future (What is your next step?)

I downloaded and coded the memos from my electronic folder in Google Drive. I also wrote memos during my visit to Robins Elementary after participating in mentor-only and beginning teacher meetings.

Post Conference and Meta-Coaching

In PAR Cycle Two, BT mentors conducted post-conferences with the beginning teachers they supported. I modeled a coaching conversation for each BT mentor during PAR Cycle One. Both mentors received the Selective Verbatim Tool to consider questions they might pose to the beginning teacher. This allowed them to process the collected data from the Calling-On Tool and then follow up with coaching conversations around the data. After observing the BT mentor's coaching conversations with the beginning teacher, I followed up with a meta-coaching conversation with the BT mentor. This was an opportunity for me to engage in how the experience supported them as mentors and what helped them make choices about the type of support offered.

Data Collection and Analysis

I coded data collection for PAR Cycle Two using the same coding methods (Saldaña, 2016) from PAR Pre-Cycle and PAR Cycle One. Table 10 shows how the data was generated and collected during this study.

The PAR Pre-Cycle included two CPR meetings using protocols and CLE methodologies to get to know each other and build relationships. The second axiom, *Conversations and Dialogue Are Critical For Relationships And Pedagog*y, relies on a safe environment to engage

Table 10

PAR Study Data Collection

Cycle	Key Personnel	Input	Output
Pre-PAR Cycle (Spring 2022)	• Beginning Teachers • Mentors • CPR Group	• CLE Protocols • CPR Group Meeting / CLE	• Field Notes • Agenda • Reflective Memo • Member's Check
Cycle 1 (August – November 2022)	• Mentors • CPR Group	• CLE Protocols • CPR Group Meeting / CLE • Mentor Meetings • Mentor Observation • Coaching Conversation	• Field Notes • Agenda • Reflective Memo • Observation Transcript • Member's Check
Cycle 2 December 2022 – June 2023)	• Mentors • Beginning Teachers • CPR Group	• CLE Protocols • CPR Group Meeting / CLE • BT Observation • Mentor Meetings • BT Teacher Talk • Coaching Conversation • Meta-Coaching	• Field Notes • Agenda • Reflective Memo • Observation Transcript • Member's Check

participants and assist in finding their voice to share, explore, and co-create actionable steps. When participants engaged in full conversation and meaningful dialogue, they developed a greater understanding of the situation within the community to produce positive change. In so doing, we ensured an inviting atmosphere that created a climate that invited learning, dialogue, and reflection. The dialogue included reviewing data collection from two CLEs that were held with both BT mentors and beginning teachers. In the March 2022 CLE, I gave a sentence stem "A skill necessary to deliver equitable classroom practices is….and students benefit by…….." for participants to complete. One participant noted "Teachers should provide equitable learning experiences for all students. This means the implementation of classroom practices that include building relationships with students" (CLE, March 2022). As a CPR group, we noticed several dispositions incorrectly listed as skills. We determined the next CLE should include a clarifying conversation on the difference between skills and dispositions. For the April 2022 CLE, participants responded to the prompt, "What assumptions are you making regarding dispositions needed for equitable tools to be used in the classroom?" In a reflective memo, one participant shared:

> Classroom equity happens when all students are respected and included, regardless of their background or abilities. Each student should be given the tools needed to achieve academic success, and the unique talents and abilities of each individual should be celebrated and encouraged. (CLE, April 2022)

PAR Cycle One participants were all mentors, either Lead Mentors who worked with both mentors and BTs at their school or BT Mentors who directly supported a BT one-on-one. Data collection began with a CLE attended by over 30 participants to continue exploring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for mentors to support beginning teachers in

implementing equitable practices. During the CLE, I shared the meaning of educational equity based on the district's definition. Mentors individually wrote examples of equitable practices; the individual practices were then paired with the mentor standards provided by the NC Department of Public Instruction. A common theme that showed up in all five standards is to honor the teacher's voice. During monthly teacher talks at individual schools beginning teachers attend, one mentor noted, "I give space for all feelings and voices to be heard" (Mentor 1, CLE, August 2022). This aligns with what teachers described as a skill that is needed in an equitable environment that feels safe. Another mentor stated that the monthly teacher talks provided a "calm and safe space for personal reflection" (Mentor 2, CLE, August 2022). The CPR group discussed the correlation between PAR Pre-Cycle and the data collected from the mentors' CLE. After reviewing data, the CPR group decided to use the Calling-On tool as a way of collecting data about the skills mentors need to support teaching and learning. Both groups of mentors at each school were interested in using the Calling-On Tool to develop relationships with the BT and as an example of an equitable classroom practice. Mentors want to provide support, especially if it helps beginning teachers help students. Mentors volunteered to allow me to observe them using the Calling-On Tool strategy in their classroom beginning in late September.

PAR Cycle Two data collection remains consistent from previous cycles. The BT Mentors from each school who participated in PAR Cycle One observed their BT in PAR Cycle Two. Data collection included recording observations using the Calling-On Tool followed by coaching conversations using the Select Verbatim Tool. The coaching conversations were recorded and scripted using Otter.AI.com and password protected. I coded the data from all three cycles and entered the codes into the codebook. Then I identified the codes' frequencies, as shown in Figure 9.
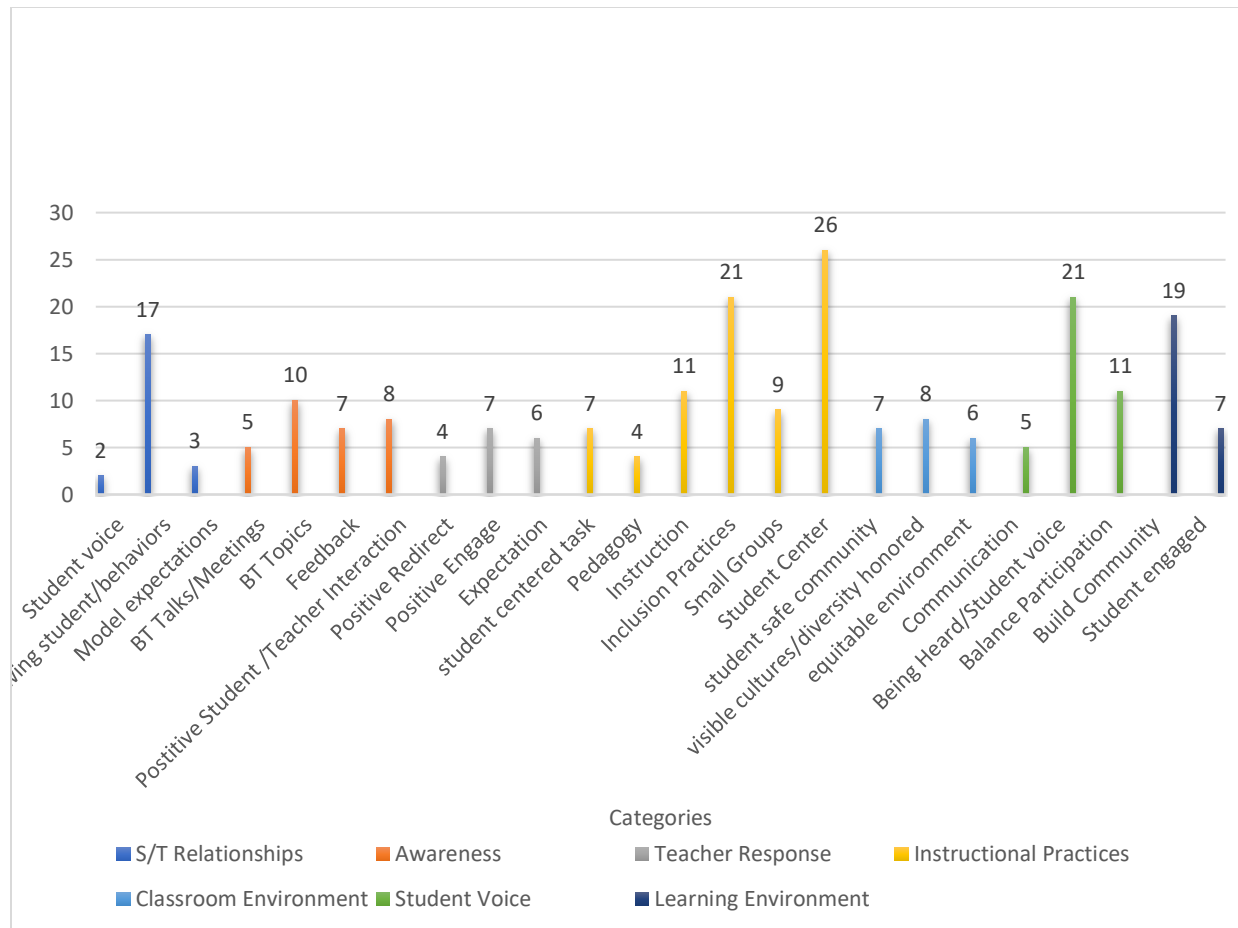
Figure 9. Frequency of codes by categories.

After sorting the data by frequency, codes from PAR Cycle One were re-affirmed. The mentors expressed in the reflective memos and through meta-coaching conversations that they desired to provide a safe space that allowed for BTs to feel a sense of belonging and free with communication. In PAR Cycle One, it emerged as the need for equitable spaces to support beginning teachers in having inviting and welcoming classroom environments for diverse students. Therefore, mentors need the knowledge of building inclusive environments. Ms. Wille, one of the BT Mentors in this study shared, "My goal was to get everybody to work with me normally, listen, and participate in my lesson" (Willie, Post Observation, October 2022). This is an example of a mentor knowing how to building a safe environment.

In this study, for the BT mentors working with their BTs, the communication was collaborative and provided an opportunity to be reflective practitioners. Although this is similar to what mentors shared in PAR Cycle One, it is from the perspective of having coaching conversations, peer-to-peer interaction, and self-reflection on equitable practices. Through my study, mentors need the ability to collaborate.This also signals that, at a deeper level, the knowledge and skills of mentors to communicate are the ability to provide feedback through coaching (Collins, Reflective Memo, November 2022).

The data from PAR Cycle Two aligns with data from the previous two cycles of the study and confirms the emerging themes. This cycle, however, involved the mentor and beginning teacher interaction and the shift to how the mentor supports the beginning teacher through coaching and reflection. During the January 2023 mentors-only meeting at RES, a mentor stated, "We just need time to talk to them and do it in a quick and meaningful way so that they (BTs) know we are here to offer guidance and support." The mentors were concerned that being supportive was taking away time from their own classes and wanted to ensure that BTs did not

feel neglected or offended. It is also important for the mentors to build the capacity of the BTs to become decision-makers (Collins, Reflective Memo, January 2023). This led me to consider the codes from PAR Cycle One and the meaning of communication, specifically the communication between mentors and BTs. Time is essential, given the duality of their role as mentor and teacher of record for the students in their classroom. After looking at the frequency and data, I noticed that feedback appeared in the "Teacher Behavior Impacts Learning" category. Communication in the form of feedback from the mentor offers support based on data from observations that are non-punitive or non-evaluative and helps BTs learn more about their practices. Often, BTs are evaluated based on the state requirements that offer dichotomous feedback – either it is shown during the observation or not. After a BT Mentor gave feedback, her BT commented, "Using the Calling-On Tool, I learned there are multiple ways to call on students and engage them in participation" (Song (BT), Post Observation, Fall 2022). Each mentor had coaching conversations that lasted less than 8 minutes, and the BTs reflected on their behaviors. Mentors are challenged with the leadership role of guiding BTs while supporting the learning of the children they teach with no additional time.

At the April 2022 CLE in the PAR Pre-Cycle, a beginning teacher shared, "Classroom equity happens when all students are respected and included, regardless of their background or abilities" (BT, Reflective Memo, April 2022). This statement from the PAR Pre-Cycle coincides with what a mentor shared in PAR Cycle Two regarding a need for mentors to engage in conversations about equitable practices to build safe spaces for BTs. Mentors need the skills to collaborate and provide feedback to beginning teachers. During a CLE in this study, one mentor expressed,"It felt like we were in a safe place to voice our opinions and ideas. Our facilitator would pose another question about what support builds capacity in our mentors and help them

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support equitable practices in the classrooms of BTs" (Ringer, CLE Reflective Memo, May 2023). There is congruency between what the mentors describe as a need for equitable practices for students and what they need to support BTs in becoming equitable reflective practitioners. Figure 10 illustrates the three findings and data that support knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable practices through coaching conversations.

Findings

During this PAR study, I conducted three cycles of inquiry to answer the primary research question: What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations? At the end of this research, three findings emerged from the data analyses. First, mentors need specific dispositions that are essential for an effective mentor/mentee relationship and to model these practices for BTs to exhibit with their students. Second, mentors need skills to implement instructional practices that support beginning teachers implementing equitable practices. Lastly, mentors need the knowledge of building safe environments that allow beginning teachers a sense of belonging.

These findings work in concert to build agency for the mentor to support the beginning teachers. And, when employed together, they develop the capacity of the mentor to establish leadership ability that supports the novice beginning teacher. While all three have a significant impact on the role of mentoring, the combined impact of possessing these skills blends to create a sense of belonging and confidence in the beginning teacher. At the nexus of these findings lies the sweet spot of what mentors need for themselves and to develop positive relations with the BT.

Figure 10. Three findings.

Data collected from three PAR Cycles support the findings. The PAR Pre-Cycle included

mentors and beginning teachers providing feedback on their understanding of knowledge, skills,

and dispositions of mentoring. It also focused on defining equitable practices to establish a

common language. It was initially challenging for mentors and beginning teachers to distinguish

the differences between the three. Therefore, the PAR Pre-Cycle concluded by defining terms to

gain specificity around observations and data collection. In PAR Cycle One, I focused on

mentors implementing a strategy that would provide equitable spaces based on how it was

defined in PAR Pre-Cycle. In this cycle, I only collected data from mentors. Mentors

implemented the strategy, and I modeled a coaching conversation with the mentor. In PAR Cycle

Two BT mentors shared the strategy with the beginning teacher they supported and follow up

with a coaching conversation as modeled for them by me. This cycle was important to address

mentor coaching about equitable practices based on data collection. Figure 11 shows the

frequency distribution of codes collected from all three PAR Cycles.

Mentor Behaviors Impact Positive Relationship

Mentors need a disposition that models the impact of positive relationships for beginning

teachers. As mentors build relational trust with beginning teachers, it demonstrates for BTs the

impact of positive behaviors they also need to have with their students. After observing BT

Mentor, Ms. Wille, teaching her class and then observing her coach, her beginning teacher, there

was a common theme of community in both classes. During the coaching, her BT stated, "if they

(students) don't understand or say the wrong thing, I can correct them or get another student to

help" (BT, Post Observation Coaching, Spring 2023). When teachers exhibit a sense of caring

for students in the classroom, it builds a community that allows students to interact positively

and engage in content. The mentor's disposition sets the tone that builds a safe learning

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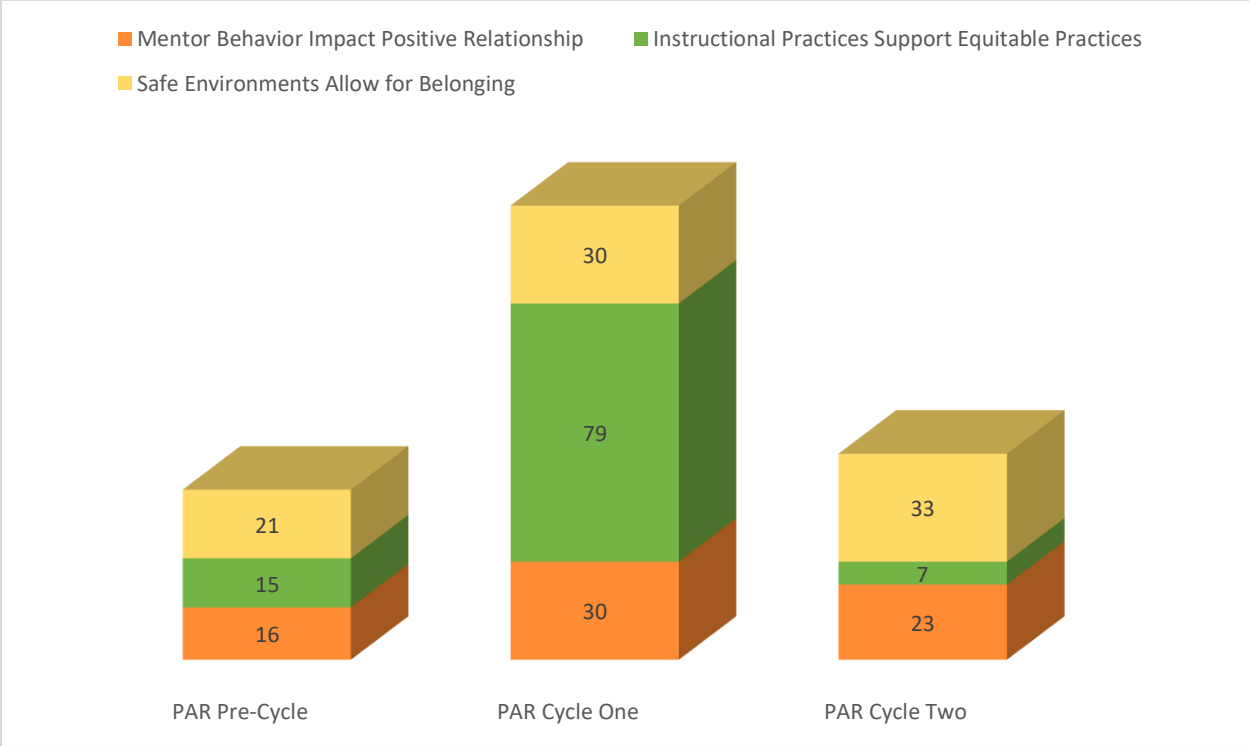
Figure 11. Frequency of codes based on findings.

environment culture for BTs to feel seen and valued. Modeling this builds the craftsmanship of the beginning teacher to impact their relationships with students. The data from the three PAR cycles indicate several ways teachers' behavior impact student relationships (see Figure 12). According to the data, the most significant factor is how the teacher responds to students' behavior (*n*=39%), followed by the relationship the teacher develops with the student by getting to know them (*n*=25%). As Mentors get to know BTs and learn more about them and their teaching style, it builds a positive relationship for them to engage in conversations aound content and pedagogy

Mentor Response to BTs

The disposition of the mentor carries over into the beginning teacher's response to student behavior. Data from the findings indicate that beginning teachers' responses can be a positive redirect and/or an interaction concerning content (see Figure 13). As one mentor stated, "knowing your students is understanding the why of their actions and then showing you care" (Mentor, CLE, March 2022). As mentors build relationships with the BT, they are able to better respond to the BTs need and support accordingly, Teachers who build relationships with students recognize student needs even when it is not verbalized. During the observation of a mentor I noted that a simple facial expression prompted her to redirect a student without removing the child or causing a distraction for the other learners (Collins, Reflective Memo, March 2022). Just as mentor responded to the student, I also noted her response to the BT during the coaching. She directed questions to the BT after noticing the BT nonverbal communication of shifting in her chair. The disposition of the mentor led to a deeper discussion based on the BT response.

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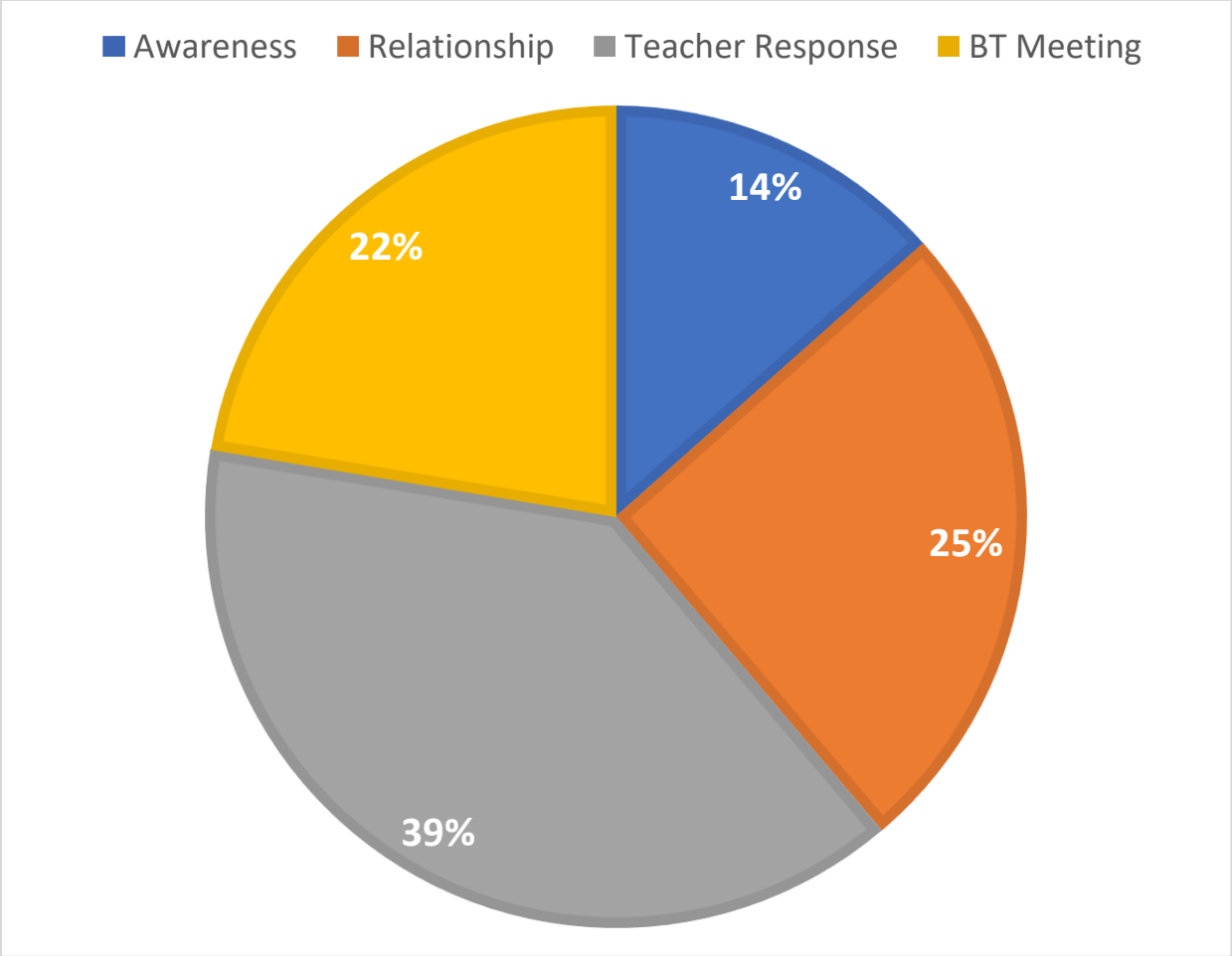
Figure 12. Positive relationships.
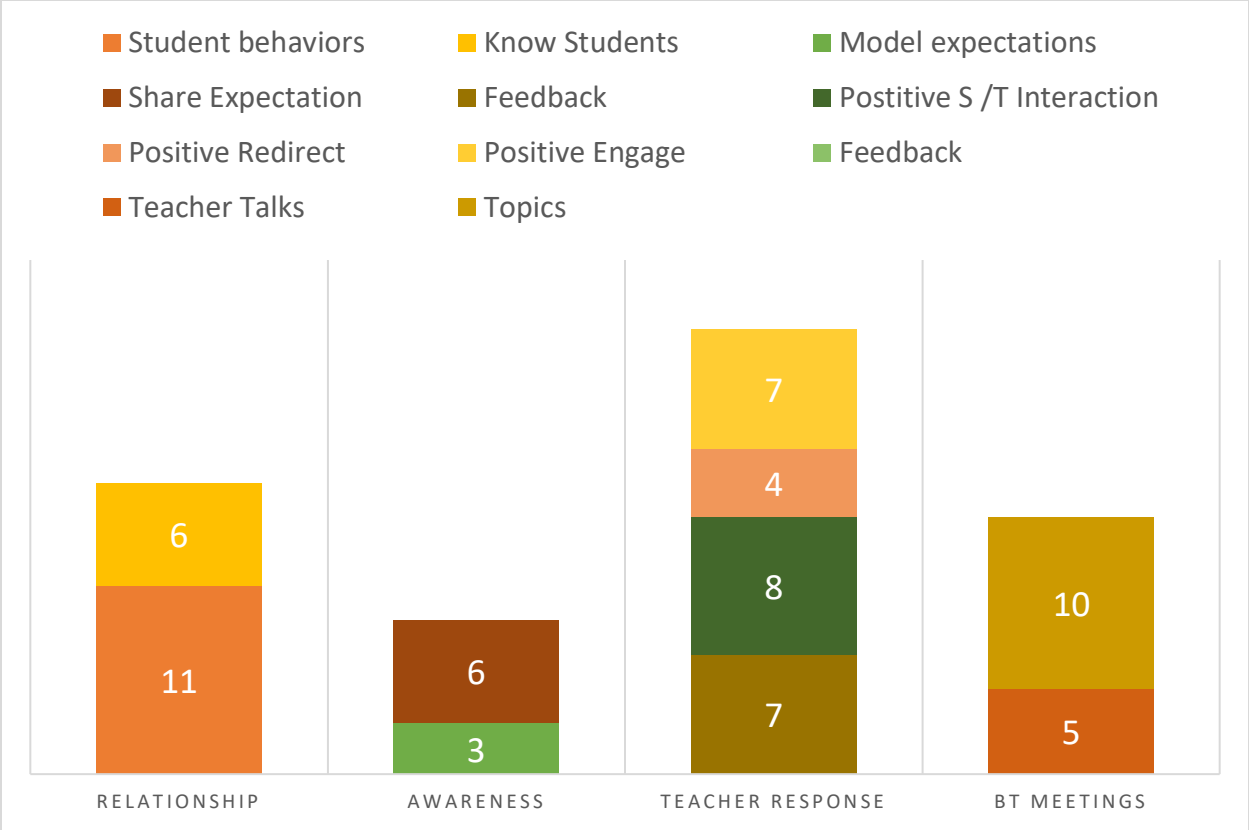
Figure 13. Frequency of codes for behavior impact relationship.

Positive Relationships with BTs

Teachers should provide equitable learning experiences for all students. This means the implementation of classroom practices that include building relationships with students. (Beginning Teacher, CLE, March, 2022). A positive relationship with BTs begins with knowing them beyond their name on the door, grade span or content they teach. Just as a positive relationship with students ($n=25$) creates confidence for students, creating a positive relationship with BTs allow them to feel part of a community of educators. Mentor behavior impacts relationships by holding space for learning content and engaging in academic discourse around pedagogy between the BT and mentor. It creates an environment where BTs are welcome to learn, and mentors are aware of the needs, assets, and abilities of the BT.

BT Meetings

Each month in the school district, mentors host a meeting for the beginning teachers known as Teacher Talks or BT Meetings. During their time together, mentors demonstrate care and concern while interacting with beginning teachers. The BT Meetings ($n=22$) give mentors agency in building psychological safety while being flexible in navigating a continuum of interactionsn that range from calibrating the needs of BTs to being a consultant or acting as a collaborator; the other end of the spectrum is engaging in a coaching stance as the BT grows (Wellman & Lipton, 2017). One mentor stated that, "Hosting the monthly BT Meetings allow for sharing feedback" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). The behavior mentors display while facilitating these meetings build relational trust that establishes a foundation for the beginning teacher to expand their capacity and gain more efficacy (Collins Reflective Memo, January 2023). By conducting meetings mentors build their agency in developing skills and knowledge to support beginning teachers.

Awareness of BT through Feedback

Both mentors and beginning teachers agree that awareness is essential to building positive relationships. "When I exhibit appropriate behaviors, then I am modeling expectations for my classroom" (BT, CLE, March 2022). For mentors, awareness was displayed when sharing feedback. Feedback is important from both the mentor and the BT. While mentors share feedback from observation, it is equally important to them that they give beginning teachers the opportunity to share during the monthly teacher talks to be aware of the BT needs or areas in which they need support. One stated that "Feedback helps me plan my monthly meeting and present topics important to beginning teachers" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022).

The data collected from all three cycles support the importance of building a positive relationship (*n*=27) as an initial step to implementing equitable practices (see Figure 14). In Pre-PAR Cycle One, both mentors and beginning teachers described equitable classrooms. Pre-PAR Cycle was about setting the foundation and building rapport with those I would continue to work with in PAR Cycle One and Two. It was important for me to model strategies during our CLE meetings for mentors to gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositon to work with BTs.

I worked only with mentors in PAR Cycle One. The strongest area of interest for them was building a positive interaction with the beginning teacher (*n*=15). Mentors shared that they build positive relationships with beginning teachers by sending emails, leaving positive notes, and providing small gestures of kindness like treats such as candy(Mentor, CLE, August 2022).

In PAR Cycle Two, only two BT mentors and the BTs they directly supported were included in the data set. The Positive Teacher/Student interaction was demonstrated during the observation of a BT classroom and post-observation coaching conversation conducted by the mentor. "I'm noticing with the cold-call discipline that they are positives throughout with each
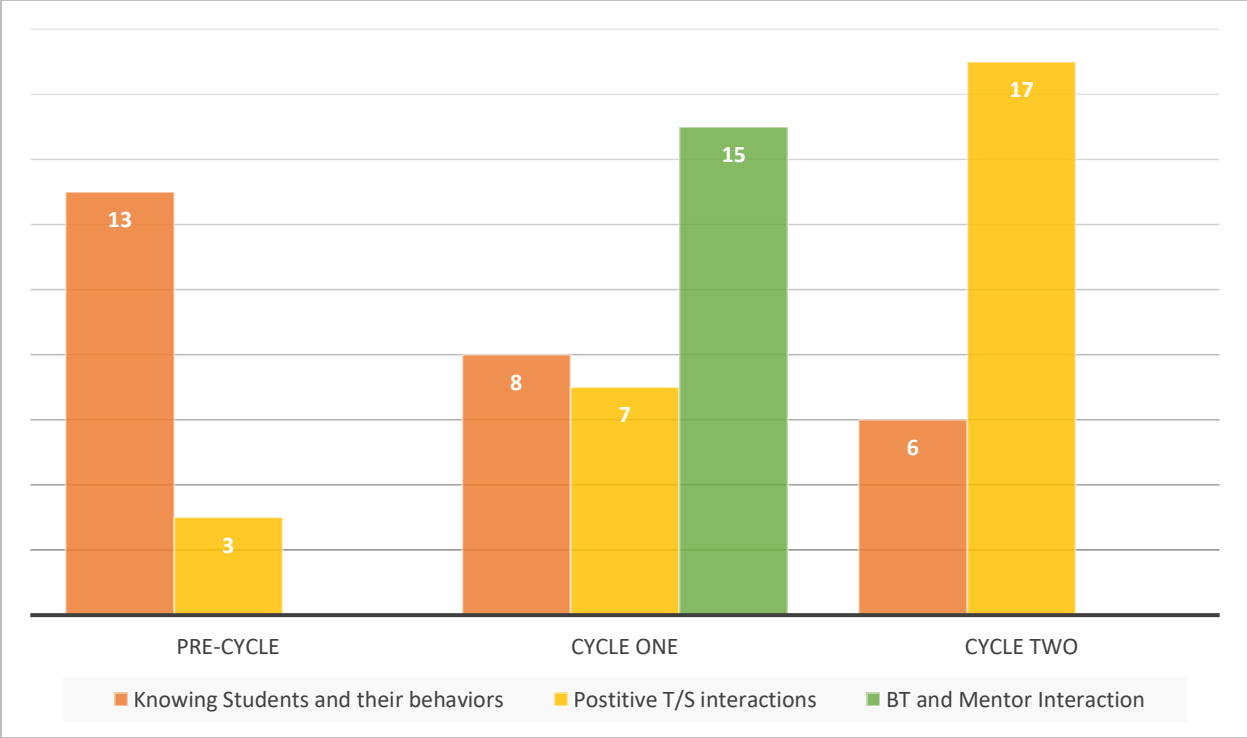
Figure 14. Frequency of codes across three cycles.

student and that's a good thing….each child had something positive and not negative" (Ringer, Post Observation Coaching, Fall 2022). Ms. Ringer's awareness and feedback to her BT, Ms. Song was visible in how Ms. Song engaged students, This is an elevated skill for mentors.. Ms. Song continued to talk about instructional practices. "They knew not to raise their hand…..they knew I would call on them eventually (Post Observation, Fall 2022).

Instructional Practices Support Learning

Once teachers have established a positive relationship with students, the next step is for teachers to use inclusive instructional practices. The second finding is mentors need skills to support beginning teachers implementing instructional practices that support student learning. The data from the study shows three important skills both mentors and beginning teachers use to create equitable classrooms: instructional practices that are student-centered, teacher strategies that honor diversity, and engaging instruction that is inclusive and allows for academic discourse (see Figure 15).

Teacher Strategies

Inclusive teacher strategies can be incorporated throughout a lesson from start to finish. During our CLE, I modeled this for mentors by engaging them in dynamic mindfulness and personal natratives at the beginning of the meeting. During the meaning we used protocols to engage everyone in discussion, and at the there was a closing activity that included all voices to be heard through reflection. Inclusion practices ($n=30$) bring all the voices in the room and balances the participation. Lesson preparation considers student center practices ($n=26$) that allow students to connect to the content. This leads to student centered tasks such as the task card activity used by Ms. Song, "It allows each student to be in charge of their education and it is also a good collaboration activity" (Post Observation, Fall 2022). The strategies during CLEs were
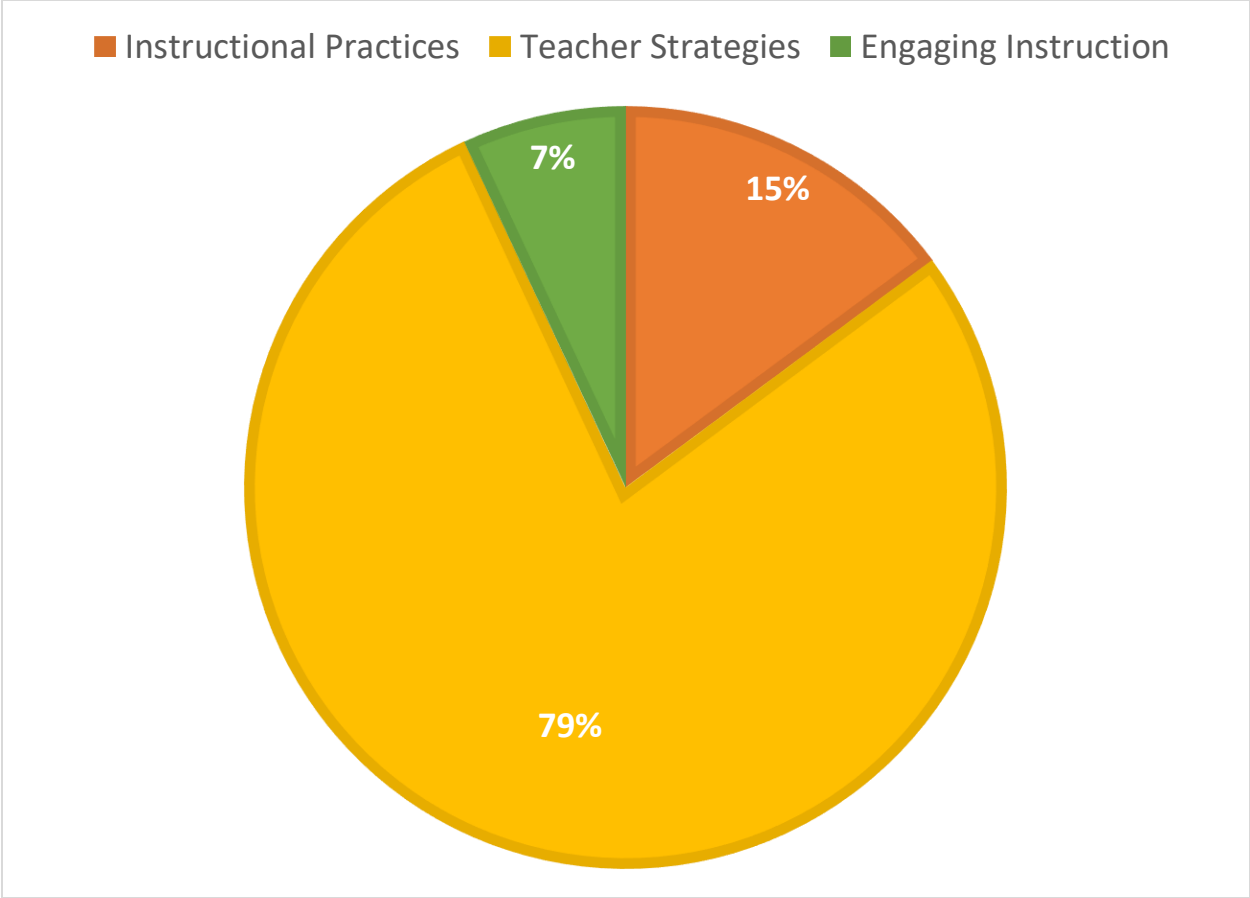
Figure 15. Instructional practices support learning.

also used during the BT Meetings conducted by mentors and allowed the BTs take ownership in learning that they can then apply in their classroom (Collins, Reflective Memo, Spring 2023). In this way, the meetings are BT centered so mentors needs the skill of implementing inclusive strategies.

Data from this PAR research shows that teacher strategies begin with preparing the lesson, executing the lesson with appropriate pedagogy, and assessing student knowledge by having them engage in academic discourse around the lesson (see Figure 16). This requires mentors to have the knowledge and skills to support beginning teachers as they prepare lessons that intentionally recognize quiet students or students who may be a part of marginalized communities. "I mainly use the equity sticks to hear from students who normally are quiet or don't often raise their hands so I can make sure they are with me" (BT, Post Observation, February 2023). It extends beyond a check-in for understanding to help students process the information to building student confidence and helping them make meaning of the content.

Instructional Practices

When delivering content, instructional practices (*n*=15) must align with the audience. Mentors need the skill of supporting BTs knowledge of addressing students' need of understanding directions to engage in the concepts being taught (BT, CLE, March 2021). Classrooms, where instructional practices are student-centered, demonstrate equitable practices by making connections with the students. Mentors with the skill of developing BTs' ability to use instructional practices that allow students to see life application helps the student add meaning to their learning:

Carpet time can be somewhat of a distraction. When students raise their hands that means they are volunteering for what they feel confident in knowing. I used cold call to engage

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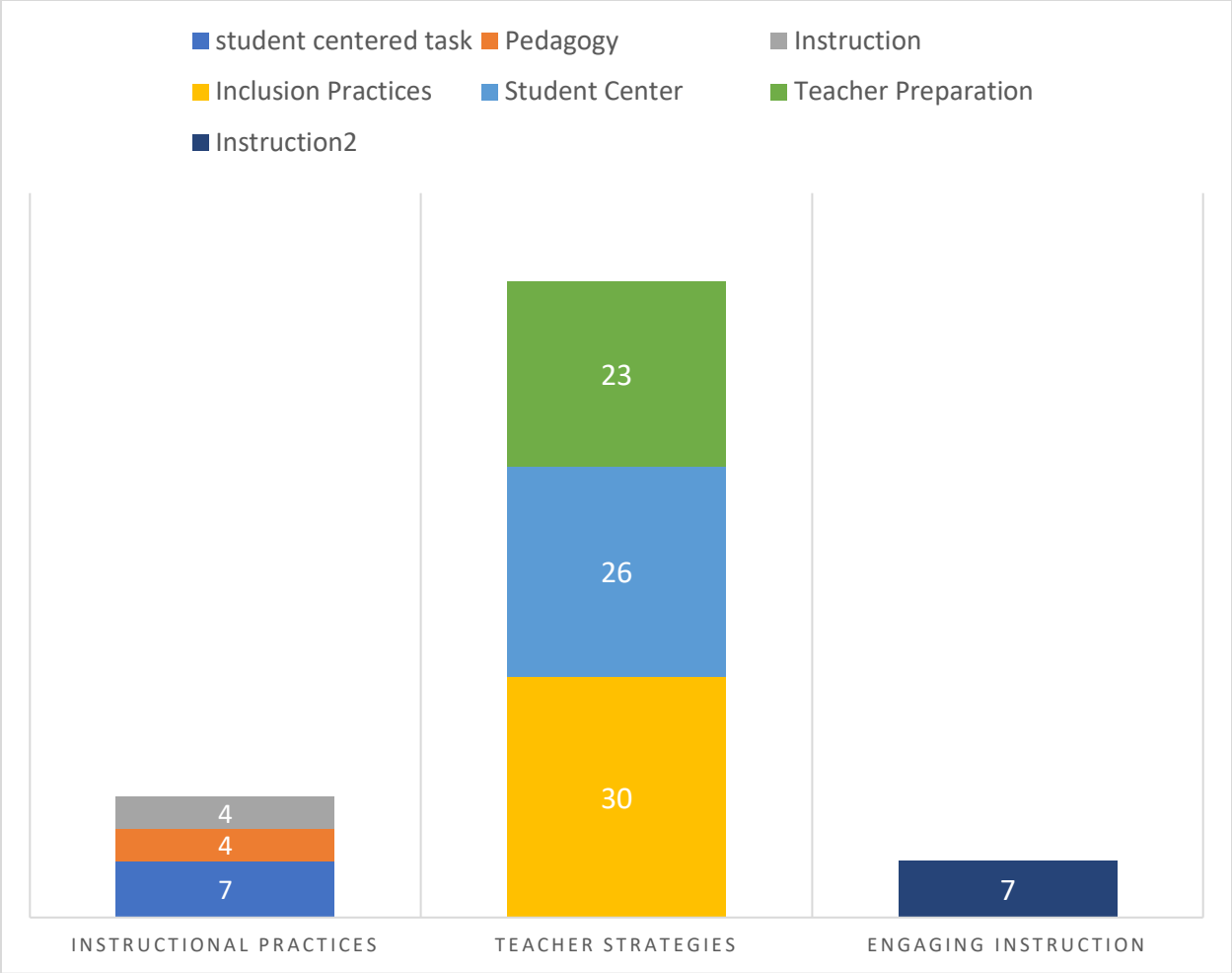
Figure 16. Frequency of codes for instructional practices support learning.

all students and make sure those who are quiet understand. (BT, Post Observation, Spring 2023)

This study allowed mentors to receive training on implementing equitable instructional practices such as the Calling-On tool, collect data on the use of the tool, and then follow up with coaching conversations with beginning teachers about the data. This training allowed mentors to have a non-evaluative, supportive observation to build their efficacy around mentoring and leadership

When mentors employ skills that support BTs writing and planning relevant lessons with equitable instructional practices students engage in discourse around their experiences or knowledge. As described and supported by Drago-Severson (2009), the training provided the mentors an opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills so that they in turn could provide instructional support to their beginning teacher. Without professional learning about equitable practices, mentors will continue to employ what they know often without considering other ways of teaching or learning. "I never knew there were so many ways to call on students" (BT, Coaching Conversation, December 2022).

Engaging Instruction

All three PAR Cycles revealed that mentors need the skill to provide instructional practices for student learning (see Figure 17). As mentors demonstrate an exemplary equitable classroom with engaging instruction, it allows students to see themselves in lessons. Beginning teachers are then able to replicate that within their classrooms. Mentors need the skill of differentiating that is necessary in a classroom for learning, and modifications help mentors discover their capabilities. An example of this was observed with BT Ms. Ringer, "Task cards give students the opportunity to take break time; it's functional, fun, and it's engaging" (BT, Post

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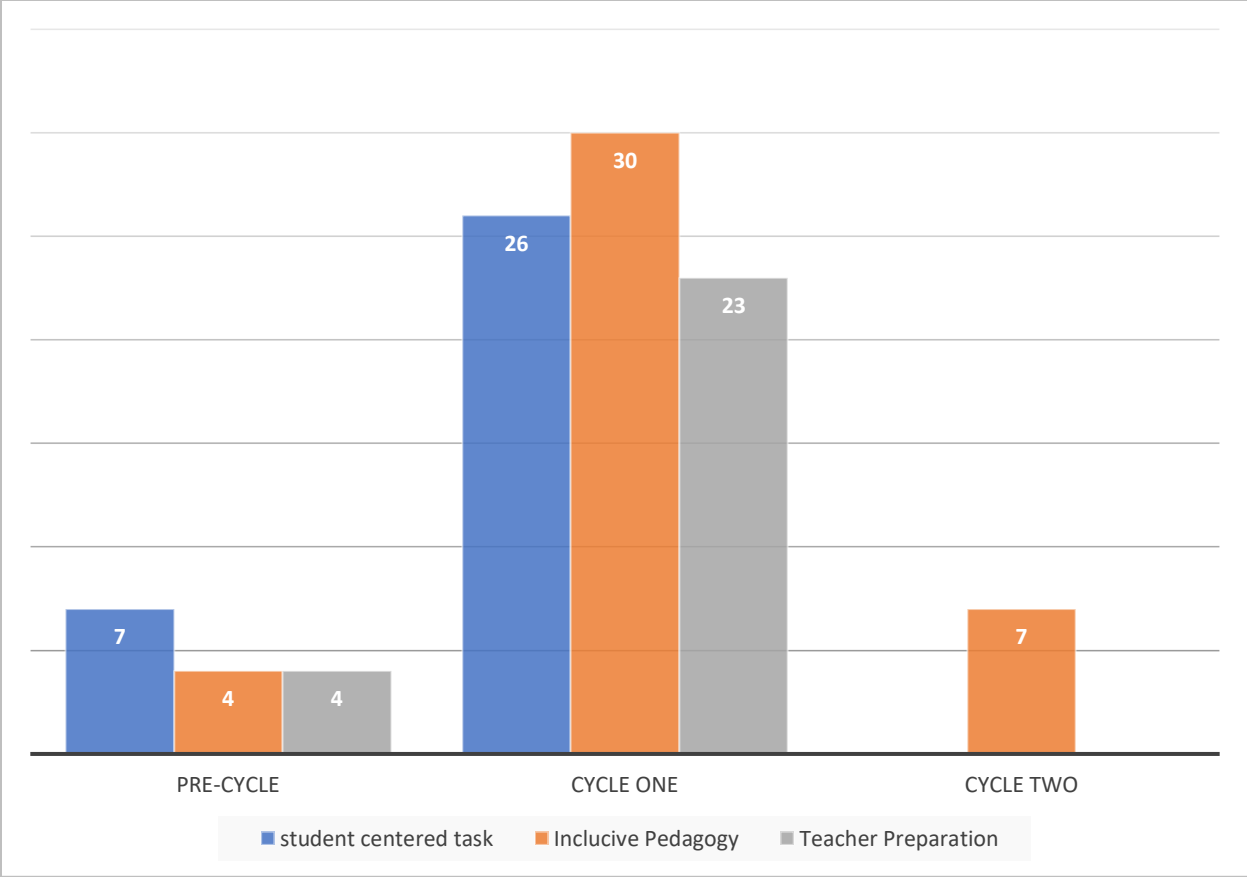
Figure 17. Frequency of codes across three cycles.

Observation, Fall 2022). Giving students tasks or asking whole group questions followed by peer

discussion moves away from banking education to developing critical thinkers (Freire, 2000).

Safe Environments Allow for Belonging

The third finding is that mentors provide a safe environment that allows a sense of

belonging. The safe environment consists of the classroom environment, the presence of all

voice, and learning (see Figure 18). After mentors display the disposition of knowing beginning

teachers and demonstrating the skill of implementing teaching strategies by supporting beginning

teacher to prepare and implement inclusive and engaging lessons, it is knowledge of safe

enviroments that mentors need.

Both mentors and BTs almost synonymously used the term safe community (n=7) with

equitable environment (n=6) to describe welcoming spaces for that provided belonging. Figure

19 shows the frequency of what mentors and beginning teachers describe as spaces that provide a

sense of belonging.

Classroom Environment

Mentors need the knowledge of building safe environments within classrooms

environments in order to support beginning teachers in doing the same, "Each student has their

own experience they are dealing with, and they need to know their feelings are validated in my

classroom" (BT, CLE, April 2022). Mentors use the knowledge of building environments to

validate the prior experience of beginning teachers regardless of how little experience or if the

experience was gained from non-traditional educational pathways. Both mentors and beginning

teachers expressed the importance of allowing students to be in an inviting space that provided

belonging and permitted them to share. "I use a variety of ways to greet students (handshakes,

high five, fist bumps) when entering my classroom" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). A safe
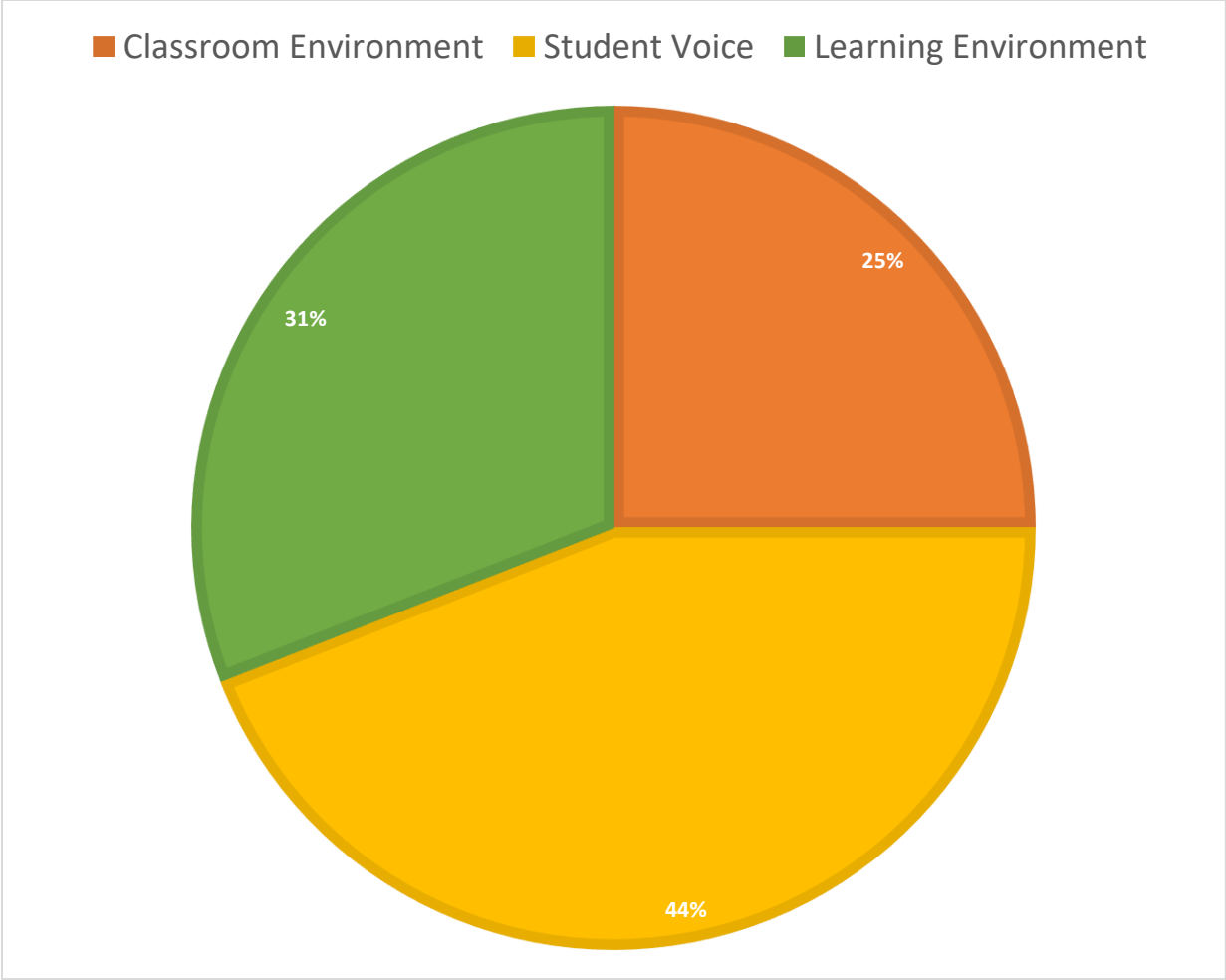
Figure 18. Safe environments allow for belonging.
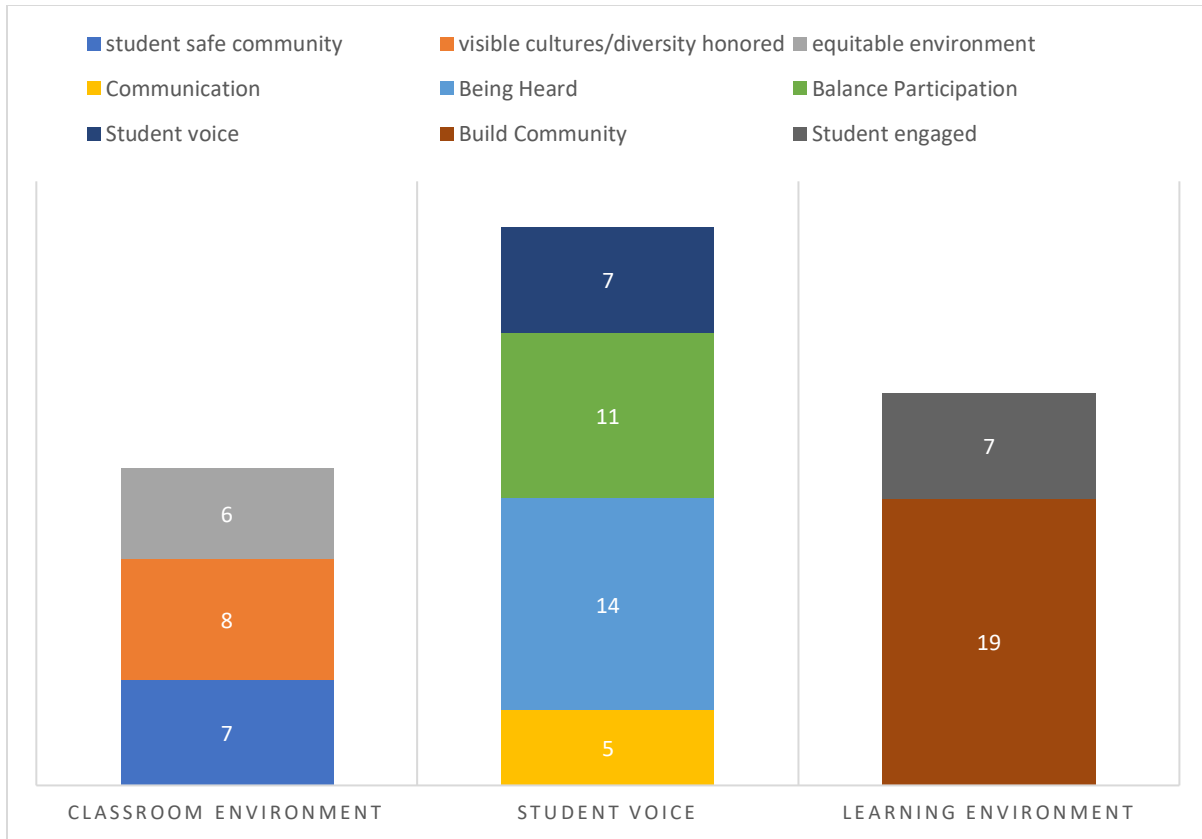
Figure 19. Frequency of codes for safe environment allow for belonging.

environment also includes ensures that students visually see themselves and that their culture is honored. One mentor stated "I use a culture tree to talk about what is visible and what is not seen, which gives us identity" (CLE, August 2022).

Balanced Voices

"I give space for all feelings and voices to be heard" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). Mentors elevate their interaction with BTs as they hear their voice. This was evident in the coaching conversations mentors conducted with their BTs. The importance of this knowledge was notable when observing the classrooms of both mentors and their BTs. During PAR Cycle Two, as the mentors' voices were quiet, each BT was able to articulate thoughts and ideas around equity and pedagogy during the coaching. During those obsrvations in both mentor and BT classes, the students' voice meant the teacher stepped aside to allow students to take ownership of the learning. Beyond just regurgitating information, student voice provides access to the learning material based on how they internalized information. And in equitable classrooms, all voices are to be heard through balance participation. Data from both post-observations revealed that each beginning teacher called on every student using an equitable teaching strategy (see Table 11). Hearing the voice BTs is a means of communication that is both oral and personal. It establishes a connection between the adult and becomes peer-to-peer, which is two-way dialogue.

Learning Environment

The way both mentors and the teacher engage builds community (*n*=19). It fosters a sense of being a part of the whole. The community establishes a sense of belonging, giving everyone space to be authentic. Community shows up in how mentors engage as well as how beginning teachers interact. A BT articulated the impact of what she learned from her mentor as it relates to

Table 11

Demographics of BT Calling-On Data

	Called On Males	Called On Females	Called On SOC	Called On White	Hand Raised	Cold Call	Other Strategy
Ms. Song 15 students	15 63%	9 38%	11 73%	4 27%	5 33%	2 13%	Task Cards M (8) 53% F (7) 47%
Ms. Fred 16 students	15 65%	8 35%	15 94%	1 6%	5 31%	4 25%	E. Sticks M (5) 46% F (6) 54%

building a learning environment. "When students do not share the correct information, instead of correcting them, I ask other students to help them" (BT, Post Observation Coaching, Spring 2023). Instruction that uses equitable practices is a learning environment that provides safety and belonging. Mentors demonstrate and model this knowledge when they meet and engage with their BTs through coaching and during the monthly meeting.

Conclusion

I discussed the PAR Cycle Two process in this chapter and included data collection, analysis, and findings from the study. Data collection from the CPR group, mentors, and beginning teachers revealed three things necessary for mentors to support equitable practices in beginning teacher classrooms through coaching conversations. It begins with the mentor's disposition that behaviors impact positive relationships with one another. While both mentors and BTs initially defined how equitable practices may vary from classroom to classroom, they both acknowledged that the positive behavior was greatly influenced by the mentor's behaviors (Collins, Reflective Memo, March 2021). The initial skill and disposition mentors need to demonstrate is positive interaction and modeling expectations. As mentors respond positively, it builds awareness of who the BT is and their ability. This also support how the mentor engage the BT in gaining craftsmanship. When both the mentors and BT build positive relationships with students, discipline becomes part of the learning. During the observations of both mentors and BTs, their discipline was part of instruction and not punitive. Secondly, mentors are to share instructional practices that support learning. This includes inclusion strategies and helping BTs complete student-centered lessons that require preparation. In addition to knowing the content, BTs have to know their students and how they learn best to be impactful and equitable. Equitable practices allow for balance and instruction that is meaning. Mentors are tasked with supporting

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Beginning Teachers to establish a respectful environment for a diverse population. "Holding equitable spaces that permit students to see themselves in print and participate in academic discourse that involves their own ideas honors their culture" (Mentor, CLE, April 2022). Lastly, classrooms must provide a safe environment that allows for belonging by listening to student voices and honoring students' cultures so they may feel seen and valued. The mentors and beginning teachers did not often mention the word equity when describing spaces that provide inclusion. Instead, they shared the value of building safe spaces where students are visible to the teacher. "It is important to me as a teacher, that I use tools that keep kids on task, make time valuable, and balance how they work together" (BT, Post Observation, Fall 2022). This is accomplished by providing opportunities for academic discourse with balance among every student. This valuable relationship between the mentor and BT is critical to the development of the BT as a thoughtful and effective teacher. Moreove, if this type of relationship building is equally important between the BT and their students.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Colleges of Education have seen a significant decrease in traditional enrollment over the past decade. In a report to the General Assembly, the North Carolina Department of Instruction reports the attrition rate of teachers as 8.2%, which is higher than it was in the past several years. Teachers do not leave education because of student behaviors, salary, or community involvement; lack of support from colleagues and administrators is the most often cited reason for leaving (Kaniuka & Kaniuka, 2019; Schmidt, 2017). Teachers leaving the profession within the first few years continuously add to the burden of teacher shortages, resulting in teachers who lack experience in classrooms filled with students who demonstrate academic opportunity gaps. Increasingly, educational settings are turning to the idea of mentorship to deal with the interrelated issues of helping novice teachers settle into their new role as teacher/colleague and retaining teachers once they have been exposed to the grind of the profession. The mentor is expected to help build the novice teacher's efficacy and craftmanship as they embark upon a new career. Mentors who are teacher-leaders work to build relationships and support Beginning Teachers while leading in their classrooms, as well as leadership throughout the school. Mentors assist with building the beginning teacher's skills and knowledge, often with little to no training in working with adults. BTs who remain in teaching contribute part of the reason for staying to the support of a mentor who helped them grow by listening and supporting them (Collins, Field Notes, Spring 2023).

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) study examined what happens when mentors shift from basic check-ins with beginning teachers to meaningful coaching conversations about equitable practices. For this to occur, the mentor mindset was transposed or required a mentoring mind reposition to consider what mentoring looks like in practice. In this study, I explored what

knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to support Beginning Teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices beyond the one-day training offered by North Carolina. The theory of action was *IF mentors develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions, THEN mentors will coach beginning teachers to use equitable classroom practices.*

The PAR study occurred over 21 months beginning in the Spring of 2022 and consisted of three PAR cycles. The context of the study involved two elementary schools in eastern North Carolina. Two school-based lead mentors joined me to form a Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group. As the Beginning Teacher (BT) Coordinator, I was the lead researcher and member of the CPR group. Both lead mentors worked with other BT mentors and beginning teachers at their specific schools. A BT mentor and the beginning teacher they directly supported from each school participated in PAR Cycle Two.

For mentoring minds to be impactful, there was a focus on engaging and assisting mentors in finding their voice to share, explore, and co-create equitable practices was essential in building relational trust. The participants of this PAR, which included mentors and beginning teachers, engaged in full conversation and meaningful dialogue. In order to build the foundation of an inviting setting, I implemented activities over the course of three PAR cycles (see Table 12) allowing mindsets to develop beyond the traditional mindset of mentoring based on structures of heirachy where the mentor is at the top because of the experience. Based on the axioms found in the work of Guajardo et al. (2016) Community Learning Exchange (CLE) activities were implemented for the CRP group and other mentors (n=11). The first axiom, *Conversations, and Dialogue Are Critical For Relationships,* means building a safe environment to engage participants through various activities and contributed to how mentoring minds occurred durin this PAR study.

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Table 12

Key Activities: Three PAR Cycles of Inquiry

Activities	PAR Pre-Cycle Spring 2022 Jan-May 2022	Pre-Cycle One Fall 2022 Aug-Nov 2022	PAR-Cycle Two Spring 2023 Dec 2022- May 2023
CPR (Mentors) CLE (*n*=6)	**	**	**
Mentor CLE (*n*=5)	**	***	*
Observations (*n*=5)		**	****
Mentor Coaching (*n*=4)		**	**
Meta-Coaching (*n*=2)		**	**
Conversations with ECU Professors (*n*=18)	******	******	******

Note. Asterisks (*) indicate how many times the activity took place during each cycle.

Each CLE allowed the mentors to reveal their thinking through dialogue while reflecting on classroom and instructional practices. During the final CLE, mentors reflected on their experience of participating in the PAR study and how the protocols impacted them individually to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations.

> Since I no longer have a 'regular' classroom every day now, this [the CLE protocols] still allows me to use equitable strategy even though I may only be in a class for 30-45 minutes. I have even had BTs say to me after my lesson that they like certain methods and strategies I used to get and keep their students' interest and that they will try that strategy. (East, Reflective Memo, May 2023).

Keeping community at the center, the second axiom, *Local Knowledge and Actions*, was useful in holding CPR meetings with the mentors. Based on the assumption that the people closest to the issue are those who are best positioned to answer local concerns, this axiom allowed us to hear what mentors felt were their assets and greatest needs. Being a part of their local school community enabled the mentors to share first-hand accounts of issues and their impact. After the CLE, mentors returned to their schools and diverged from previous actions, ready to employ new strategies and ideas with the hope of sustainable change. Their consciousness awakened to a mindset that allowed them to design and nurture the work from the CLE into practice. I conducted a member's check at the end of the PAR Pre-cycle to triangulate the data (see Table 2). The data revealed what eventually became an emerging theme around behavior

> Most of what I see BTs struggling with/asking for support with come down to how to develop the skills we discussed in our meeting (CLE): active listening, differentiation,

building empathy, and modeling/teaching advocacy skills. These are essential to building

a healthy classroom community and culture centered around learning and growing

(Patton, CLE, 2022).

How mentors are supported builds agency for them as leaders and then helps the mentor to

develop the craftsmanship and efficacy of beginning teachers through coaching conversations.

In this chapter, I answer the research questions with three findings from this PAR study

and make connections to existing literature mentioned in Chapter 2 as well as new literature.

Next, I discuss the framework for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to

support Beginning Teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching

conversations. I conclude with implications for practice, policy, and research. The chapter ends

with revisiting the original research questions and reflecting on my leadership development.

Discussion of Findings

During this PAR study, I met with mentors during the CLEs and built relational trust and

psychological safety by using inclusive protocols and personal narratives. After agreeing on a

strategy, I modeled and conducted coaching conversations with the mentors. Mentors were then

able to replicate this with the beginning teachers they directly supported. In both the mentor and

the beginning teaching classrooms, equitable practices that included balanced participation and

all voices being heard were demonstrated through the learning process.

For this PAR study, I methodically analyzed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of

mentors needed to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable practices through

coaching conversations. During this study that the same knowledge, skills, and dispositions

needful for equitable classrooms for students align with what beginning teachers need from

mentors to contribute to an equitable environment that provides a sense of belonging for the BT

among colleagues. This study contributes to the extant research on beginning teachers, the role of mentorships, and equitable classroom practices.

Academic studies are profuse on teaching equitable practices and the importance of mentorship; there is, however, limited research on how the two operate in concert together for beginning teachers who may not be skillful in their teaching practices, hence the need for a mentor. This PAR connects the research about teaching equitable practices and mentorship. This PAR study adds to the research by naming the knowledge of building a safe environment that allows a sense of belonging for beginning teachers, the skill of implementing instructional practices that support beginning teachers implementing equitable practices, and the dispositions that demonstrate behaviors that impact positive relationships with beginning teachers. This research has implications for mentors, policymakers, district and school leaders.

Activities in this PAR study address the overarching question: *What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations?* Initially, I realized mentors did not adequately articulate the difference between skills and dispositions. After the first CLE, I clarified the meaning of knowledge (understanding of content, skills, and practices acquired through experience or education), skills (how knowledge is applied), disposition (the belief about skills that impact behavior), and educational equity (providing every child what he, she, they need to be academically successful and thrive).

When coding and analyzing the data from the PAR research in regard to existing literature, I revisited the original literature review in Chapter 2, along with other sources. In this section, I share the intersectionality of the three findings, their elements of support (see Figure 20), along with the literature for this PAR study. In turn, each finding has three or four elements
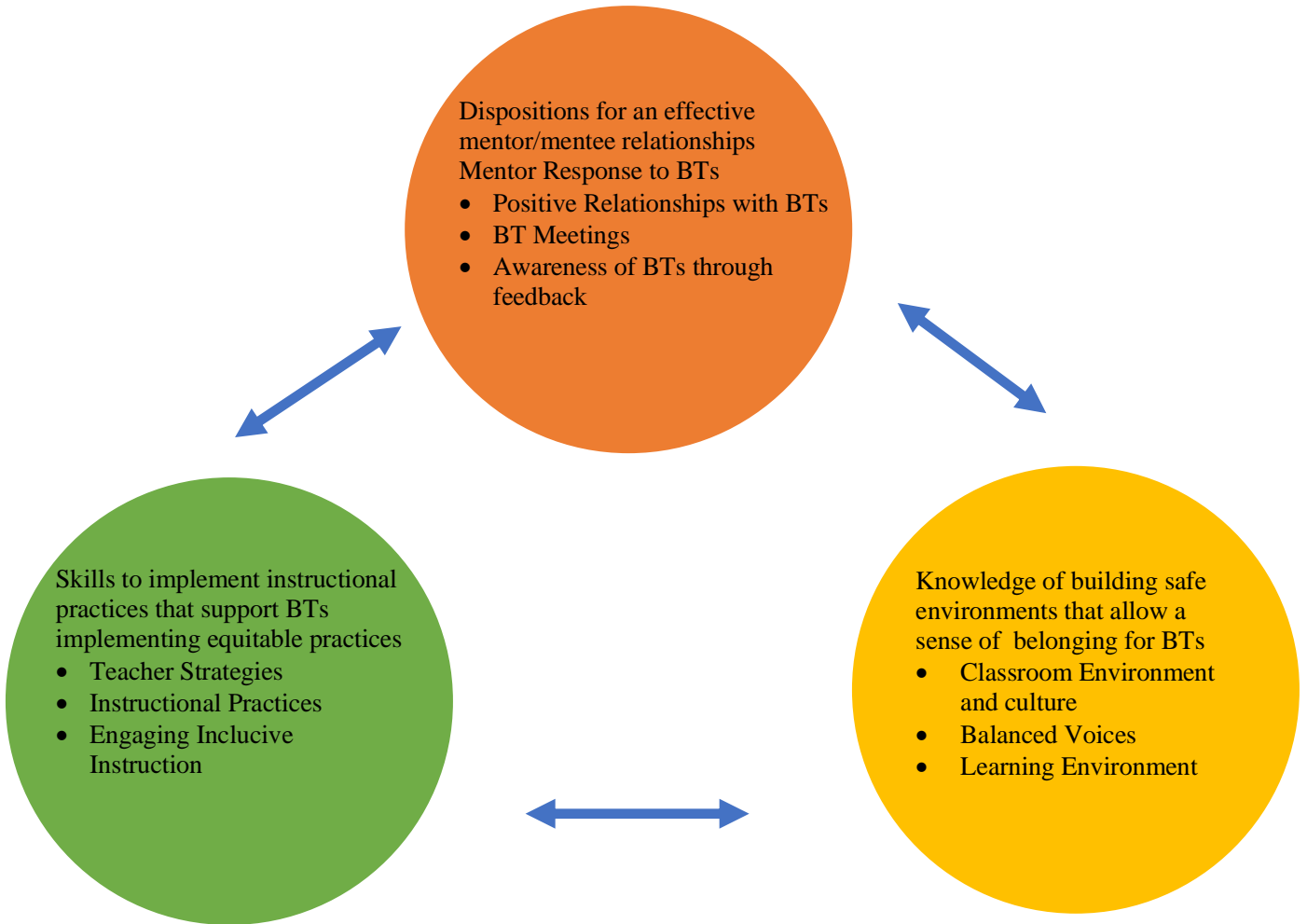
Figure 20. Knowledge, skills, and disposition of mentors.

The three circles contain the following text:

Orange circle (top):
Dispositions for an effective mentor/mentee relationships
Mentor Response to BTs
- Positive Relationships with BTs
- BT Meetings
- Awareness of BTs through feedback

Green circle (lower left):
Skills to implement instructional practices that support BTs implementing equitable practices
- Teacher Strategies
- Instructional Practices
- Engaging Inclucive Instruction

Yellow circle (lower right):
Knowledge of building safe environments that allow a sense of belonging for BTs
- Classroom Environment and culture
- Balanced Voices
- Learning Environment

that support the finding. The elements support the findings for knowledge, skills, and dispositions that promote mentoring minds and building support.

The figure represents the three major findings in the large circle with corresponding supporting elements beneath. The shape of the figure is triangular like that of delta to represent the change for mentors in how they support beginning teachers. In this PAR study, the findings show that a change in mentors' knowledge, skills, and disposition support equitable practices in the classroom of beginning teachers. As indicated in the figure, the findings and their elements interact in free-flow fashion or unrestrained from each other. Each finding is a compliment to the other as demonstrated by the arrow flowing in both directions. The arrows also represent that the process is cyclic and works in concert. In this section, I discuss the three PAR findings and their supporting elements, including:

- Mentor behaviors impact positive relationships.

  o mentor response to BTs behaviors

  o positive relationships with BTs

  o hosting BT meetings

  o awareness of BTs through feedback

- Instructional practices support learning

  o strategies that honor diversity

  o instructional practices

  o engaging inclucive instruction

- Safe environments allow for belonging

  o classroom environment and culture

- balanced voices

- learning environment

Mentor Behaviors Impact Positive Relationships
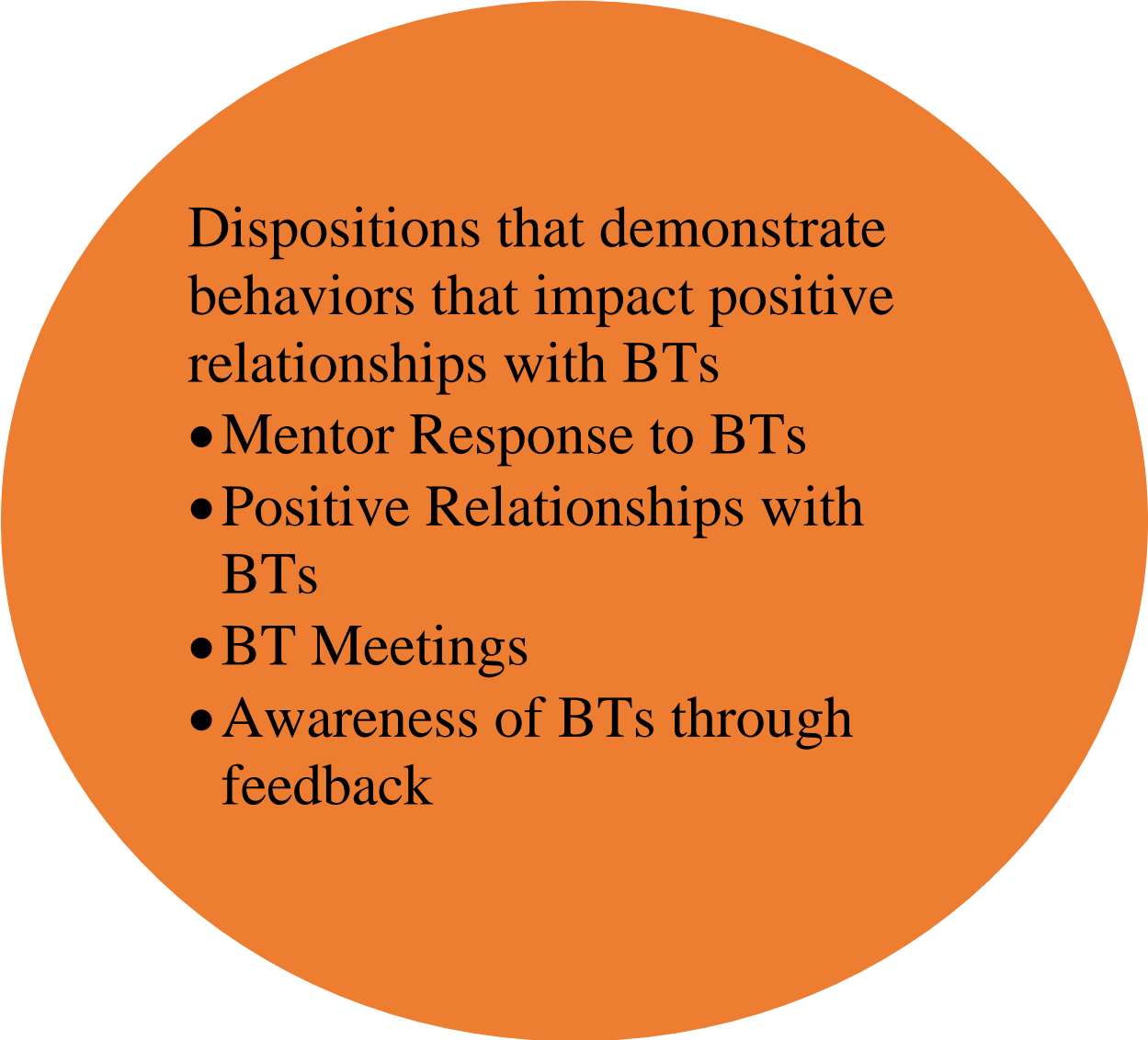
A positive relationship is essential to setting the tone for positive interaction and establishing equitable practices in the classroom. Elementary school students who believe that they are good at interacting with their teachers are more likely to report a positive relationship, turn to their teacher when they need emotional or academic support, and model themselves after their teacher (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). During each observation, mentors positively interacted with students and called their names individually. During Ms. Willlie's observation of her Kindergarten class, she verbally praised each child at least once. When redirection was necessary, she followed it by acknowledging something positive (Collins, Field Note, Fall 2022). This coincides with and supports existing research from Shepherd and Linn (2014) that teachers are to start by acknowledging the student's value and establish a relationship without leaning into cultural sterotypes. During the Spring semester, Ms. Willie observed her BT, who also used the Calling-on tool to cold-called students individually by name. In a post-observation coaching conversation, the BT stated, "As far as the cold calling [students name], …..it is really based on anything students like to share or to help engage them to be on task" (Coaching Conversation, Spring 2023). The mentor's disposition sets the tone to create inviting, safe, and welcoming spaces that allow for learning. Based on the behaviors and engagement I saw during the observations and BT meetings mentors helds space for BTs to have a sense of belonging because they were seen, heard, and valued. This was also model during the observation of both Ms. Willie and Ms. Ringer observation student–teacher relationships were a "mechanism for guiding

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and supporting social-emotional, behavioral, and academic growth" (Mihalas et al., 2009, p. 110).

I learned from the data collected in each observation and the classroom culture that when mentors' dispositions are demonstrated through positive behavior (see Figure 21), then the following elements are present (1) responding to the BTs' behavior; (2) knowledge of the mentor through positive interaction, (3) hosting BT Meetings is important for mentors to model what research calls the "mechanism" for guidance and support, and (4) awareness of the BT through feedback means mentors know them as individuals (Shepherd & Linn, 2014). In this PAR study both mentors and BTs demonstrated knowing students as an essential part of an equitable classroom.

Responding To BT's Behavior

During Ms. Willie's coaching conversation after her observation, she noted how the BT responded to off-task behavior. For her, cold call for discipline was integrated into assuring students were cognitive of the lesson or task at hand. "Now, in regard to the discipline, I believe that is part of learning too. It ensures that everybody is given the same information at the same time, without distraction by staying on task" (BT, Coaching Conversation, Spring 2023). The mentors and BT using positive discipline reinforcement in each classroom observed in this PAR study confirms extant research; positive relationships impact student development and classroom management (Stronge et al., 2011). Mentors need the disposition that demonstrate behaviors that impact positive relationships with beginning teachers. This was then replicated within the classroom of beginning teachers.

Dispositions that demonstrate behaviors that impact positive relationships with BTs
- Mentor Response to BTs
- Positive Relationships with BTs
- BT Meetings
- Awareness of BTs through feedback

Figure 21. Mentor dispositions impact BT relationships.

Know BTs Through Positive Interaction

I observed two different classrooms and based on the grade of the students, each mentor interacted and varied according to the student's learning styles and cognition. The teaching style was appropriate in each classroom and shaped a positive relationship with the teacher and influenced academic performance (Becker & Luthar, 2002).

Mentors in this study agreed with existing research that student academic performance is enhanced when teachers know students and demonstrate positive teaching behaviors, provide supportive teaching practices, and offer patient guidance for high-quality teacher-student relationships (Liu et al., 2022). When defining what it means to know students, one BT at FES stated, "Knowing my students means knowing ALL about them- their family, interests, dislikes, behaviors, strengths, insecurities, and health!" (BT, CLE, March 2022). During another CLE held at FES one mentor shared, "Knowing your students is understanding the why of the action and show you care" (Mentor, CLE, April 2022).

Other evidence of a mentors modeling knowings students occurred when I observed Ms. Ringer's class and how she opened her class by learning more about students' experiences. She allowed them to share a personal narrative before engaging in the lesson content. This allowed her to build a relationship with them and get to know them personally, not based on academic performance. Her students are not a data point; they are children with experiences impacting their learning (Collins, Reflective memo, Fall 2022). Given that Ms. Ringer did not start with academics, I inquired about her decision to have students share a personal experience:

> Every day we start with SEL [Social Emotion Learning] activity and it is like our theme
> for the day. Sometimes it's: What would you do Wednesday? or Thoughtful Thursday. It
> lets them start the day by sharing something not necessarily school-related. It sets the

tone for the day. And honestly, I like to hear about them. (Ringer, Coaching

Conversation, Fall 2022)

When a mentor, demonstates ways of getting to know students for the BT, it goes beyond

cumulative records, data collected before entering the class for the first time, or testimonials

from the previous teacher. And the mentor learns more about the BT by spending time with them

at lunch, on during common planning time, or by both attending after school extracurricular

activities.

In the observations of both the BT mentors and the beginning teachers, positive

interactions were made by calling each student by name. Comments encouraged students

positively through affirmation, praise, or redirecting. Both BT mentors and BTs acknowledged

that discipline is a part of the classroom. The discipline I observed was in the form of appropriate

conduct for learning. In this PAR study, mentors demonstrated a disposition of knowing students

and then behaved accordingly. I observed both mentors and BTs display understanding students'

educational needs such as being an English Language Learner or being physically differently

abled and learning the content.

Host BT Meetings

BT Meetings are hosted by the lead mentor on a regular cadence as required under the

district's beginning teacher support plan guidelines. For the context of this study, the meetings

occurred each month and used the same CLE protocols as the CPR meeting. The purpose of the

meetings is to establish a psychologically safe place for the beginning teachers and mentors to

build professional relationships, share and model best practices, and engage in conversations

about pedagogy. The BT Meetings allowed lead mentors to support the beginning teachers and

build their agency as school leaders. During this study, the BT Meetings mirrored strategies from

the CPR meetings and supported the beginning teachers. During the August 2022 CLE with just the mentors attending, one mentor described the BT Teacher talk as "super helpful [for BTs] and it showed I valued their time when allowed them to pick the topic" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). BT Teacher talks afforded mentors the opportunity to connect with BTs and establish a foundation of relational trust while expanding capacity and gaining more efficacy in teaching. The activities from the January Teacher Talk at RES started with an opening that allowed BTs to share a personal narrative around a rose, thorn, or bud. The meeting continued by relating the topic of how personality traits relate to behaviors. Learning about behaviors associated with personality types assisted the beginning teachers in understanding their students better and responding in a positive manner. The meeting concluded with an opportunity to reflect just as the CPR meetings.

Existing research shows that beginning teachers who are supported by trained mentors earlier in the year show increased evidence of developing and sustaining more workable classroom routines, managing instruction more smoothly, and gaining student cooperation in academic tasks more effectively. Students also demonstrated fewer inappropriate or disruptive behaviors and seemed to have initial success in schoolwork. The research concluded that not only the presence of the mentor but the training of the mentor contributed to the growth and development of the novice teacher (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). I found that the beginning teachers observed in this study at both schools attended Teacher Talks. Both BTs consistently engaged in check-ins with their mentors outside the monthly Teacher Talks and shared conversations about how to best serve students. Effective mentoring relationships involve open communication, decrease isolation, and build interdependent relationships, which help BTs manage change while supporting their growth. This requires a significant amount of time and

energy on the part of the mentor. Ongoing training is important so that mentors become skilled at providing instructional support through observations, using data to inform team planning and delivery of instruction, and using instructional strategies through collegial dialogue to enhance student and teacher performance (Drago-Severson, 2009) Overall, by structuring my work on Drago-Severson's (2009), I am not too surprised with the results on how BT meetings supported the overarching theme of how mentors behaviors impact relationships.

Awareness Through Feedback

When describing equitable classrooms, mentors and BTs agreed that awareness is important in building positive relationships. In this study, awareness is defined as new or experienced learning that is shared between the mentor and beginning teachers. A mentor might share their awareness with a beginning teacher through feedback during a coaching conversation based on classroom observations and data, interactions during the beginning teacher talk meetings, or engagement of relationships in the classroom.

In this PAR study, mentors followed their observations with coaching conversations using data from their observations. Conversations that are effective between the mentor and BT are dialogues based on evidence. Data from the observation disseminated as a third point of communication that is neutral and visually represented shifts the rational cognition and emotions away from the relationship of the mentor/mentee into the attention of the items or artifacts according to Lipton and Wellman (2018). When the data is held to the side and not by anyone, a psychologically safe place is provided to share information, concerns, and possible problems. Being that the mentor is the expert, advice may be shared along with reasoning and inquiries about implementation (Edwards-Groves, 2014). When observing Ms. Ringer have a coaching conversation about the data collected in her observation of her BT, their relationship allowed Ms.

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Ringer to feel safe to share a strategy about hearing the quiet voices in the classroom. The BT understood why the strategy may be helpful in every student's learning and agreed to try it next time. This parallels with prior data that when employing dialogical conversations in a safe place, strengths and weaknesses may be shared along with underlying assumptions about the teaching practices. In the classroom, teachers demonstrate awareness for students by modeling and sharing expectations each time they engage in dialogue (Mentor, CLE, April 2022).

Instructional Practices Support Student Learning

The second finding from this PAR study is instructional practices support learning. The data from the study shows three important skills that are the elements of this finding (see Figure 22) in order to create equitable classrooms: (1) strategies that honor diversity, (2) instructional practices, , and (3) engaging in inclusive instruction allows for academic discourse. Below, I discuss how previous research supports each category.

Children's initial understanding of the world is based on the environment and systems within their culture. Once they begin schooling, that learning is influenced by the culture of cognitive demand. The process of discovery through problem-solving contributes to intellect, leading to cognitive growth. Research suggest that a student's culture determines how information is personalized or how students make sense of lessons, "Intelligence is to a great extent the internalization of "tools" provided by a given culture" (Bruner, 1986, p. 67). So mentors tools or skills useful to support BTs in internalizing or learning instructional practices that require preparation to use inclusive strategies that are student-centered and pedagogy that includes actively listening and compassion for students. When discovering what mentors considered as equitable practices during a CLE, a mentor shared no skill is a one size fits all. As one mentor stated, "you need lots of skills in the classroom," (Mentor, CLE, Spring 2022)

Skills to implement instructional practices that support BTs implementing equitable practices
- Strategies That Honor Diversity
- Instructional Practices
- Engaging Inclucive Instruction

Figure 22. Instructional practices support BTs implementing equitable practices.

because of the uniquness of various cultures, the members of any particular society may make meaning in different ways. The way in which they choose to negotiate knowledge or use tools is based on their previous learning or how they make meaning. Learning that occurs in a communal setting helps students identify with those of similar cultures while helping them to make meaning for themselves and the community. Ms. Willie provided a culture that allowed Kindergartens to learn in collaborative pairs while working on letter recognition of sight words and remain engaged without her giving direct instruction. Her tools of establishing a respectful classroom culture gave students autonomy in deciding how to articulate side words with a partner.The same respectful culture existed in the classroom of the BT she supported. This was examplifed during the carpet time and students demonstrated respect for each other and the BT asked students to help their peers while using the Call-On Tool.

Strategies That Honor Diversity

In both Ms. Willie's classroom and the classroom of her BT, they were teaching around the concept of reading and word meaning. FES is predominately composed of Black and Hispanic students, groups that have traditionally been marginalized. Traditionally, the skill of implementing literacy was a means to understand, navigate, and improve society. Based on the proficiency to articulate reading, writing, and communication abilities, identities and the ability to be critical thinkers were developed. Historically, for people of color and those who have been marginalized, the idea of making sense of text became their identity. When skills for the marginalized are based on developing proficiency in their learning, it becomes increasingly important for mentors to adjust the skill of implementing strategies that honor diversity by allowing students to see themselves and relate to text. Becoming smart(er) about what they know or how they gain new knowledge is criticality, intellect, and the ability to understand power,

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authority, and oppression (Muhammad, 2018). Due to the white centering in public education, it becomes a necessary facet of pedagogy to include criticality as a means of seeing, naming, and questioning injustice and working toward social transformation. These four terms – identity, intellect, skill, and criticality, as identified by Muhammad (2018), are the foundation for four-layered approaches to educational equity. Educational equity allows for a better understanding when you are able to connect with content where you can see yourself, as one mentor expressed, "it is important to visually see yourself and relate to the context based on your own culture" (Mentor, CLE, Spring 2023). Mentors also shared that it was important to share with beginning teachers who they are and to consider the culture tree. Sometimes you cannot see the cultural experiences of students that are hidden beneath the root or part of their deep structure, "Using the Like Me strategy helps to see that we have commonalities that may not always be visible" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022).

Instructional Practices

During my observation of Ms. Willie, a BT mentor, within a 30-minute session, she used whole-group instruction through circle time, collaborative pairs, and began small-group instruction. Ms. Willie's class is composed of 100% students of color, the majority of whom are female. The only female Hispanic student was called on twice as many times as her peers (n=5) and mostly for positive reinforcement. Ms. Willie was intentional about how she interacted with the student, stating, "She receives ESL services; I want her to feel part of the classroom. So that was why she received a lot of positives throughout my lesson" (Willie, Coaching Conversation, Fall 2022). It was important for Ms. Willie to not make the student feel left out because she goes out of the classroom community to occasionally receive English Second Language (ESL) services. Mentors need the skill to implement instructional practices that support BTs

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implementing equitable practices because when teachers engage in the culture and beliefs of the students, the students gain academic success, cultural competency, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Classrooms where instructional practices demonstrate equitable practices it assist students in making connections. The lessons are relevant and students engage in discourse around their experiences or knowledge. Mentors with the skill of using pedagogy that allows students to see life application helps the student add meaning to their learning.

When Ms. Willie observed her BT's classroom, the students formed a community and held each other accountable for their actions and behaviors during whole group instruction. This was a multi-meaning lesson for vocabulary, and during the post-observation coaching conversation, when Ms. Willie was asked about some of her instructional methods, she stated, "Sometimes they can't really hear even though I can be standing right in front of them if they're all sitting down together….. they're gonna hear each other first" (BT, Coaching Conversation, Spring 2023). This is an example of the mentor supporting the BT to use common language to the student's culture to create an opportunity for knowledge to be transmitted and reflection to take place. Allowing for the metacognition of information goes beyond creating and acquiring knowledge. It leads to learning for the BT to implement practices where students see both themselves and others (Bruner, 1986).

Engaging In Inclusive Instruction

During the observation of both mentors and their BTs, all used an equity strategy such as task activity cards or equity sticks. Giving students tasks or asking whole group questions followed by peer discussion moves away from banking education to developing critical thinkers (Freire, 2000). Inclusive teacher strategies can be incorporated throughout a lesson from start to finish. Inclusion practices bring all the voices in the room and balance the participation of all

students. Lesson preparation considers student-centered practices that allow students to connect to the content. This requires teachers to prepare lessons that intentionally recognize quiet students or students who may be demographically the minority. It extends beyond a check-in for understanding to help students process the information to building student confidence and helping them make meaning of the content. Not all classrooms look the same when it comes to equity but all children do need to feel heard, included, and have access (Mentor, CLE, Spring 2022).

Information processing involves cognitive routines that students experience in their daily lives. While observing Ms. Ringer's classes, she completed an SEL activity called Say or Pass. Every child was offered the opportunity to "Say" (share an experience) or" Pass" (not take their turn to speak). They could say something or tell a story about a past experience or pass if they did not want to share. As the class continued to the Math lesson, Ms. Ringer recalled what students shared during "Say or Pass" and then allowed the student to engage in academic discourse around math problems from the previous evening. Culturally and linguistically responsive information processing comes from oral traditions such as storytelling, songs, repetitious chants, or dialogue. Dialogue or tasks that involve collaboration embedded into the learning helps the brain process information (Hammond, 2015). It is also important to make sure the information is scaffolded, so that processing occurs in small chunks, allowing time for the information to settle in students' brains. Students are given the opportunity to construct meaning of the new learning through practice, life application, or taking a call to action. Cognitive challenge through cycles provides the brain an opportunity to stretch and expand while providing an opportunity to engage in more complex thinking and learning. Ms. Ringer demonstrated this in the PAR study as she allowed the students to break down the math content in small chunks

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and then connect the meaning with the experiences from their opening activity. When Ms. Ringer observed her BT, the BT used task cards to break down information so every student had an opportunity to participate:

> Using task cards was definitely a positive experience. It allows each student to be in charge of their education, and it is also a good collaboration activity. I have two students with a disability. And one is a hearing disability. Sometimes he doesn't wear his hearing aid, because I guess, the other kids…thinking about being embarrassed or something like that. So, the one-on-one conversation allows him to hear his partner better. (BT, Coaching Conversation, Fall 2022)

Tasks are instructional or assessment-related assignments that intellectually engage students. They are designed to allot class time devoted to developing and assessing disciplinary ideas and/or practice. As students learn and process information, they need time to think about the learning through assigned tasks. This also allows students to make meaning and problem-solve using background knowledge and lived experiences from their culture. Tasks are not only assessments that measure proficiency; they are meaningful ways to capture students' understanding of curriculum and instruction. Therefore, mentors need the skill to support BTs in implementing engaging equitable practices such as task cards to provide a balance between the teacher's direct instruction and learning. Students' thinking is revealed through tasks and provides data on what types of support are needed to address misconceptions or lack of understanding (Tekkumru-Kisa et al., 2020).

Safe Environments Allow for Belonging

Mentors work to provide a sense of inclusivity and belonging for new beginning teachers. They describe their time together and their interactions as holding space for them to reflect. BT

meetings are spaces for personal reflection between both the mentors and beginning teacher, "It dedicates time to connect individually and give space for all feelings and voices to be heard" (Mentor, CLE, August 2022). Both BTs and mentors used the word safe or safe community interchangeably with equitable environment. The description of the meeting space aligns with the idea of equity allowing a sense of beloing. Being both mentors and BTs in this PAR study worked with elementary students this term seemed to capture the same idea when a mentor described student relationships and the feeling of belonging is an equitable classroom environment (Mentor, CLE, April 2022).

Once mentors know their BTs and share the skill of implement teaching strategies by preparing inclusive and engaging lessons, the third finding is that they provide a safe environment for belonging. The elements of a safe environment consists of the classroom environment and culture, balanced voices, and learning environment (see Figure 23).

Classroom Environment and Culture

Classsroom culture shows up as community and how students engage as well as how teachers interact. This makes the knowledge of building safe environments important for mentors. During the observation of Ms. Willie and her BT, both used equity sticks; both described this as a means to make students more aware that they will be called to speak in front of peers and to invite the quiet voices to the learning (Collins, Reflective Memo, Spring 2023). Classroom community establishes a culture that provides a sense of belonging, giving everyone space to be authentic. During my observation, Ms. Willie's kindergarten classes worked in collaborative pairs and remained on task. Students made errors and respectfully corrected each other without getting off task or socializing. This models Gina DiTullio's (2014) recipe "*The*

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Knowledge of building safe environments that allow a sense of belonging for BTs
- Classroom Environment and culture
- Balanced Voices
- Learning Environment

Figure 23. Safe environments allow for belonging.

recipe: A classroom culture safe for exploring and experimenting; mix in collaboration skills;

add "just right" challenges; bake in academic resiliency.

Ms. Willie stated at the beginning of the school year that she got to know her students

and how they might get along with each other, "If someone [a peer] sees a child not getting it

[the lesson], they help" (Willie, Coaching Conversation, Fall 2022). It is important to build that

type of relationship throughout the classroom environment and culture so if someone needs extra

support, they get it from a partner and not just the teacher. Allowing them to work together and

support each other also builds student confidence and resiliency. Resilient students tend to be

optimistic and aren't easily discouraged by failure when they learn a new skill. They seem to

understand intuitively that learning requires a certain degree of failure before mastering a new

skill (DiTullio, 2014).

Balanced Voices

Since instructional tasks and classroom discourse relate to the relationship between

teaching and learning (Hiebert & Wearne, 1993), mentors need the knowledge of building

environments where there is a balance of voice between teachers and diverse students. By

supporting BTs to implement strategies that increase academic discourse, the language and

thinking of the students become visible as they respond to questions from both the teacher and

peers. Research is clear that the use of equitable academic discourse assist in closing the

opportunity gap for acheivment (McKenzie & Scheurich , 2004). Academic discourse allows

students to bring their experiences, cultural identity, and social identity into conversations about

content without a deficit perspective (Paris, 2012) and elevates their voice in the classroom.

As mentors share knowledge that builds a sense of belonging with BTs, then students in

the classroom's of those BTs can engage in meaningful discourse, problem-solve and create

alternate solutions or strategies as part of the community where they belong. When students

engage in this cognitive process, it allows for reflection and both group and individual creativity.

Mentors knowledge lends to BTs being able to design academic tasks that require both thinking

and language patterns that reflect the nature of communication based on students' cultural

understanding. This was evident in Ms. Song, a BT, classroom and her use of task cards and

students using academic discourse. The presence of student voice through academic tasks is a

form of personal communication and evidence of a respectful community. When the classroom is

filled with student voices, the teacher has stepped aside to allow the learning to be collaborative

and internalized by students.

Learning Environment

When considering how to establish an environment for diverse students, inclusive

activities "Provide students with opportunities to share their own strength" (Mentor, CLE,

August 2022), which helps the BT determine which practices might better serve each student.

Learning environments are based on student engagement or interaction with the content and

balanced participation of every child in the classroom. Often this is also related to the child's

motivation to learn and behaviors within the classroom. Mentors agreed that this can be done by

sharing with the beginning teacher inclusive strategies that allow for every child to participate

and allow them to share. Mentors implement and support BTs to implement inclusive strategies

like small groups, collaborative pairing, and/or randomizers such as equity sticks or digital

devices. An example of this was visible in both Ms. Willie's class and the BT she supports as

they used equity sticks to not only call each child but to ensure every student was heard. These

strategies can be used anytime in the lesson from beginning to end to help students become part

of the learning environment and to solidify the learning. I also modeled for the mentors during

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the CLE as established a gracious space for our learning environment and inclusive stratgeies such as the personal narrative.

<div align="center">**Revisiting Research Questions**</div>

Using the research questions provided the necessary guidepost that provided direction for activities that generated data for this PAR study. The questions were generated based on my experience with having a great mentor who contributed to my remaining in education and my passion for supporting beginning teachers similarly. Activities were anchored in exploring the answers to the questions and guided discussions with mentors who participated in the CPR group. In this section, I reconsider the overarching research question: *What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversation* and the first two sub-questions including what I learned as a response. The final sub-question relates to my reflection on leadership and is discussed in the Leadership Development section later in this chapter. During the course of three PAR cycles, I collected and analyzed data from both mentors and beginning teachers to answer the research question and sub-questions. Data included artifacts of agendas from mentor meetings, CLE posters generated by mentors and beginning teachers, reflective memos, and documentation such as field notes. Table 13 shows the data sources during each of the PAR cycles.

Research Question 1: Mentors Support BTs

The first sub-question: *To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying and using equitable practices?* The current study supports previous work as evidenced by a mentor at FES, who stated, "Relationships are an underlying theme to an equitable classroom" (CLE, April 2022).

Table 13

Artifacts Collected During Each PAR Cycle

Research Questions	Data Sources	Par Pre-Cycle	PAR Cycle One	PAR Cycle Two
To what extent do mentors develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to support beginning teachers in identifying and using equitable practices??	CLE Artifacts	************	**	**
	Documents	****	****	**
	Reflective Memos	********	****	******
	Member Checks	***	****	**
	CLE Artifacts		**********	****
To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?	Reflective Memos		*********	****
	Documentation		****	**
	Observations		****	****
	Coaching		****	****
	Member Checks		***	****
How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?	Reflective Memos			****
	Documents			**
	Member Check			**

Note. Asterisks (*) indicate how many times the given activity took place during each cycle.

Additionally, when considering identifying and implementing equitable practices, teachers have to build communities of respect within the classroom that require them to respond positively to student behaviors that may be socially acceptable in their culture but not a norm for public schools. When the teacher's response is proactive rather than reactive, it builds a better rapport. "It comes down to your relationships with your students and how you model and manage behaviors." (BT, CLE, April 2022). Hunter et al. (2023) remarks that classroom management for beginning teachers is commonly rooted in a struggle to effectively engage students and a failure to form authentic relationships with students. Based on my observation of Ms. Willie and the BT she directly supports, I found that as a BT mentor models and coaches how to respond to student behaviors, the impacts on positive classroom management increases and that then builds better student-teacher relationships. Ms. Willie modeled how to respond to behaviors by being aware and acknowledging positive choices with re-direction. Her BT also re-directed students' off-task behavior by asking them to add to the discussion without negatively commenting on the behavior. In both instances, behaviors did not impede the learning of others, nor did students miss instruction time due to negative discipline.

While observing Ms. Willie, she offered a student the opportunity to go to the cool-down corner. I did not notice any off-task behavior from the student. He relocated himself and later rejoined the whole group without being sent out or missing instruction. When asked about her decision to make the offer, she stated, "I could see in his facial expression that he needed time to readjust" (Willie, Coaching Conversation, Fall 2022). This aligns with extant research that states positive relationships help students feel that they are an authentic part of the classroom, which is linked to improved student outcomes (Beaty-O'Ferrall et al., 2010; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). When responding to student behaviors, the teacher should respond positively by knowing

students individually and understanding their needs based on physical, verbal, and nonverbal interactions. One mentor emphasized this link, "Classroom management may not work if you don't have relationships" (Patton, CPR Meeting, March 2022). Mentors are also to develop skills to the extent of being able to use instructional practices that support student learning in a manner that is student-centered, using teacher strategies that honor diversity and allow students to engage in academic discourse in a safe, equitable environment. From this PAR, I learned mentors' development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the extent it includes building respectful communities where they respond positively to student behaviors, modeling coaching conversations with beginning teachers on building positive student-teacher relationships, and using equitable instructional practices that support student learning in a safe environment.

Research Question 2 – Coaching Conversations and Equitable Practices

The second sub-question in this research study asks: *To what extent do mentors implement coaching conversations with beginning teachers to support equitable classroom practices?* During this PAR study mentors coached their beginning teacher to the extent of using student data that served as a third point of reference using an equitable practice such as the Calling-On tool. I knew this question was answered when, during our final CLE, I asked about the impact of coaching conversations and BT mentors reflected that coaching the beginning teacher helped them focus on one aspect in a short amount of time and using the strategy minimized behaviors while providing students equitatable opportunity to share. Data collected during the coaching conversation reflected what happened in the classroom, "Reading through the transcripts of our [coaching] conversation….. it was very impactful to see how important balanced voices truly are in all settings" (Ringer, Member Check, Spring 2023). This statement further confirms that coaching conversations support the interactions of beginning

teachers and mentors. Mentors need a way to communicate succinctly and be impactful with beginning teachers. Coaching conversations with the mentor using data confirmed some things the BT already knew about students and helped them decide on the next best steps. During Ms. Ringer's observation, she noticed that not all voices were heard during the review lesson. At the follow-up coaching conversation, she referenced the data showing that female students (white and Latinx) were not heard as often. She made the beginning teacher aware and then followed up with a suggestion. During the meta-coaching, I asked her about her decision to move from the coaching stance to the consulting and she noted all the BT needed was an awareness to move forward and provide a more equitable practice during review time so she could make sure the quiet voices understand the material (Collins, Field Notes, December 2022). Coaching conversations based on data about equitable practices allows the mentor to reflect and make teaching decisions without emotional interference. The coaching is about which students are demonstrating knowledge and actively engaged, which supports learning for every child, not just those who are vocal.

New Implementation Framework: The Sweet Spot

This study examined what happens when mentors shift from basic check-ins with beginning teachers to meaningful coaching conversations around equitable practices. The PAR research revolved around the overarching question: *What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations?* Previous research is clear on the value of mentors supporting novices entering a new profession (Cole, 2015; Newby & Heide, 1992). This study set out to specifically look at what knowledge, skills, and dispositions do mentors need to support beginning teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching

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conversations. The goal of each PAR cycle employed methodologies from community learning exchanges to engage the Co-Practitioner Research (CPR) group in a plan of action to improve what is currently taking place in schools. Administrators expect BT mentors to build the capacity and efficacy of beginning teachers without specific training. After defining knowledge, skills, and dispositions for equitable practices within the classroom, mentors articulated what they looked like in practice. By conducting CPR Meetings and Mentor CLEs, making several observations, holding coaching conversations, and collecting reflective memos, I learned the same knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors used to describe equitable classrooms for students is also what mentors describe as needful to support Beginning Teachers to implement equitable practices through coaching conversations. This PAR study identified the following:

- Mentors need dispositions that demonstrates behaviors that impact positive relationships.

- Mentors need skills to implement instructional practices that support the learning of beginning teachers implementing equitable practices.

- Mentors need the knowledge of building safe environments that allow a sense of belonging for beginning teachers

When combined or working in concert, it creates a sweet spot for the mentor to support the beginning teacher to feel a sense of belonging by being seen, heard, and valued in an equitable environment (see Figure 24). This is a new framework to guide how mentors interact with beginning teachers daily based on the findings of this PAR and aligns with previous research and literature. A sweet spot in music happens at the focal point of hearing the audio mix the way the mixer or composer intended for it to sound. For mentors, the sweet spot is the concurance of

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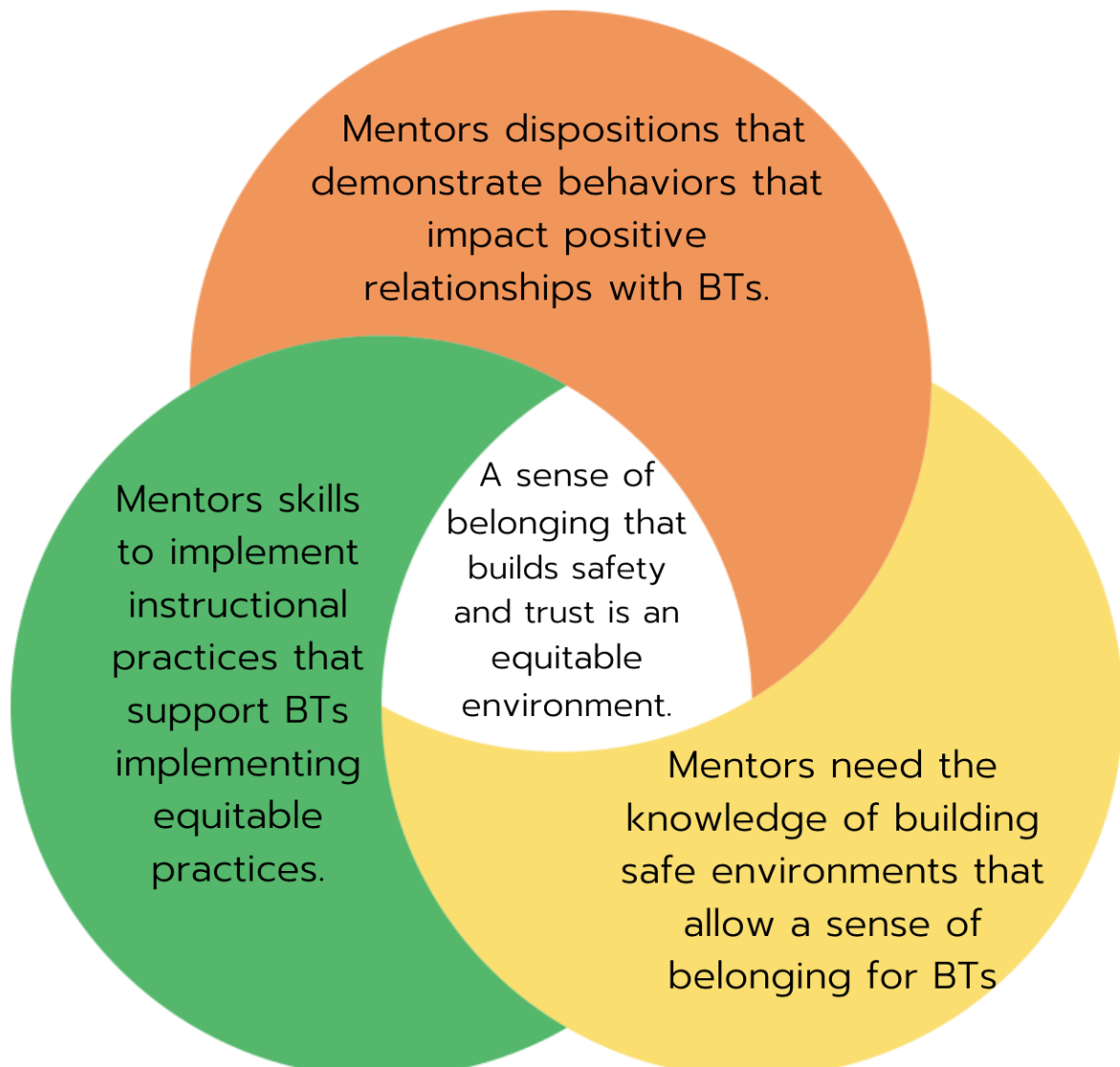
Figure 24. Sweet spot.

applying the knowledge, skills, and dispositons of mentoring and the BT responding in a purposeful way that aligns with what the mentor intends. The mentor's behavior impacts the relationship between them and the beginning teacher. As done in this PAR study, relational trust should be developed by creating a gracious space that invites strangers (beginning teachers) to learn in public (like teacher talk meetings or during a CLE) as they embark upon a journey around understanding content and pedagogy. In this PAR study, that was accomplished through each CLE meeting that included dynamic mindfulness, the opportunity to share personal narratives, and collaboration with others around issues of concern or interest which necessitates refocus of the mentoring mind. When reflecting on this PAR study, Ms. East shared the following:

> The facilitator always sets a positive tone/mood during our meetings. The tone is always relaxing to do our Dynamic Mindfulness (breathing techniques) and our inclusion activity; which gets our juices flowing to go into the next part of the agenda. In my opinion, everyone seemed comfortable and was able to express themselves, and felt safe enough to participate through the entire meeting. Ideas were bouncing from one person to the next which kept us engaged and on task. I appreciated that we were able to collaborate during our Carousel Brainstorming Activity which allowed me to come up with other answers and ideas for the questions that were posed differently than if I had to do it on my own. (East, CLE, Spring 2023)

Next, one side connected to a positive relationship between the mentor and beginning teacher is instructional practices that support learning. As the mentor models behaviors and shares expectations with the beginning teacher, they serve as a growth agent (Lipton & Wellman, 2018). Inclusive practices during their interaction or meetings helps the beginning teacher's

voice to be heard by balancing participation between the mentor and novice teacher. The beginning teacher can then go into their classroom and execute the same pedagogy with their students and allow them to be heard.

Finally, associated with positive relationships and instructional practices is safe environments that allow for belonging. When beginning teachers have a sense of belonging, they continue to work in their district (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Zavelevsky et al, 2022). Ms. Paton realized the importance of the environment she establishes with her beginning teachers and shared:

> The value of the little things we do shape the environment through collaboration and lifting each other up, participating in positive yet realistic talk about the joys and struggles of teaching, and spending time reflecting on our teaching, learning about new things in teaching and helping each other reach our goal as a team. This was especially true this year as so many struggled to complete LETRS [elementary reading instruction training required by the state]. In our discussion of coaching conversations, I was forced to reflect on how some mentors might need more of a "push" to understand the value of giving mentees [beginning teachers] more of their time. I spent so much of my time focusing on coaching support for LETRS this past year and on new teachers themselves, I may have missed out on more coaching conversations with mentors on how their brilliance could better benefit their mentees. (Patton, CLE, Spring 2023)

Given an equitable environment where beginning teachers feel seen, heard, and valued, coaching conversations are a reflection of best practices based on data. We learn by reflecting on the process and not just doing something.

<center>**Implications**</center>

The findings in this PAR study share the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need to support Beginning Teachers in implementing equitable classroom practices through coaching conversations. The PAR study bridges the gap between what research describes as the importance of mentors to support novices and what beginning teachers attribute to the working conditions that retain them in the teaching profession (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). Next, I detail how the PAR study findings relate to practice, policy, and research.

Practice

The research findings in this PAR study support the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a mentor to support a beginning teacher in providing an equitable classroom environment. Specifically, this PAR study found that a sweet spot exists when mentors can build relationships with beginning teachers they produce an equitable environment for the beginning teacher to be heard, seen, and valued. The implications are that the practices of the mentor (1) presents a disposition that models positive behaviors, (2) shares knowledge of instructional practices that support learning and inclusion, and (3) simultaneously employ the skill of building a safe environment that allows for belonging. As mentors implement this, the new plan would follow non-evaluative observations with coaching conversations around data about equitable practices within the beginning teachers' classroom.

Mentors begin with building positive relationships with beginning teachers by modeling best practices and using equitable practices in their classrooms. In turn, BTs develop and have a model for the relationship building they shuld employ in the classrooms with their students. As demonstrated in this PAR study, mentors demonstrate awareness by providing feedback through non-evaluative observations around data followed by coaching conversations. Mentors also build

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psychological safety and a sense of belonging at teacher talk monthly meetings by creating agendas that include dynamic mindfulness and opportunities to share personal narratives, as in the CPR meetings conducted in this study. The positive response of mentoring minds is a disposition that supports beginning teachers.

Exhibited in this PAR study, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described as promoting equitable environments for student learning also support beginning teachers when employed by mentors. Beginning teachers want a sense of belonging in new schools. Mentors provide this by building relational trust and psychological safety. Structural protocols, such as those used in this study, allow all voices to be heard and valued. Mentors have the opportunity to hold space for beginning teachers to grow and become reflective practitioners through coaching conversations. As mentors take on the identity of leaders and model equitable and inclusive practices, the beginning teacher can then replicate this in their classroom with students.

Policy

Teachers with three or more years of experience in NC are offered a one-day training to qualify as a mentor. The state offered training is based on how the mentor supports the beginning teacher to demonstrate the teaching standards. Any other training is at the discretion of the individual district or as a result of the mentor being self-directed. This PAR study challenges the standard of mentorship by suggesting a framework that builds mentor efficacy and craftsmanship to become a growth agent for beginning teachers. There are implications in this study for national, state, and local policy regarding mentorship of beginning teachers.

State and National Policy (Macro)

Policies regarding teacher support at the federal and state levels should ensure that mentors have access to high-quality professional learning that builds their capacity before being

required to support beginning teachers. Ninety-two percent of teachers who have a mentor the first year choose to return for the second year; research is clear that mentoring beginning teachers is important for retention (Bowman, 2014; Portner, 2008; Schwan et al., 2020). Every child should have access to high-quality teachers who provide access and opportunity to an equitable education regardless of years of experience. However, in many educational settings, veteran teachers who serve as mentors to beginning teachers lack the professional development to ensure this is happening.

National and state policies may be amended to include Regional Educator Facilitators that offer training on non-evaluative skills such as coaching, cultural and linguistic responsive teaching practices into instructional practices for best teaching outcomes, and orientations for mentors that coincide with teacher induction programs. Incentives could be made at the federal level to create high-quality mentorship programs, including preference for how local districts prioritize Federal Title II funds through their Human Resources departments. This may connect with how both districts and schools offer continuous improvement of professional learning for mentors to improve their craftsmanship through coursework or partnerships with Educational Preparedness Programs (EPP) or universities.

Local Policy (Micro and Meso)

At the district level (meso), similar to the national and state policy levels, I noticed that there is little support or guidance for what mentors are expected to do to complete their obligation to serve beginning teachers. This study reinforces the importance of mentors to support beginning teachers, which often leads to retention. Veteran teachers need the opportunity to learn and develop the skills, knowledge, and disposition to become a mentor while embracing the identity of a mentor. Districts can create professional learning opportunities that promote a

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culture of mentorship as an advanced teaching role, given the duties they are expected to complete beyond managing their classrooms. This can be further incentivized through financial compensation as an advanced teaching role. Providing the CPR group meetings in this study as an opportunity for professional learning was essential in understanding inclusivity and equitable practices having rich meaning for teachers and students. Districts need to be mindful that as mentors learn, grow, and develop, they are more likely to transfer that knowledge into practices they share or model for beginning teachers; therefore, district professional learning should be offered throughout the school year with the target audience being mentors. Specifically, training should be offered in the area of building inclusivity and coaching.

At the school (micro) level, mentors who participated in this study shared that they were able to use strategies from CLEs in their classrooms. Participating allowed them to examine their own practices in the classroom and with the BT they supported. The knowledge gained through this PAR study will modify how mentors serve BTs in the future, "Through participating I was encouraged to collaborate which leads to school-wide growth. We held ourselves to a higher standard – practice what you preach! Mentoring has become a part of my identity" (Ringer, CLE, May 2023). From the findings of this study, there are two policy implications for schools: honor the time assigned for mentors to collaborate in an inclusive learning space and allot time for mentors to observe in a non-punitive, non-evaluative manner and then offer feedback through coaching conversation.

Research

During my PAR study, there were several points within the data that were interesting but not adequate enough to become a theme or finding. Particularly there were three things that captured my attention that sanction further research: expanding the training of mentors, the

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relationship between equitable practices including discourse and discipline, and exploring the retention of beginning teachers in equitable environments. Initially, in this PAR, I modeled coaching conversations for the mentors and then meta-coached them on giving feedback to their beginning teacher. Exploring how training mentors to collaborate through coaching conversations could add to the body of research on mentorships and effective practices of the mentor. A second area of research could link classroom management or discipline with how teachers implement equitable practices. During my PAR study, I observed that teachers who used equitable practices had well-managed classes and students who were on task and using academic discourse. Lastly, teachers in the study, both mentors and beginning teachers, echoed the sense of being seen, heard, and valued gave them and their students a sense of belonging. At the end of the academic school year, both mentors and their BTs had plans to return to the same school. Next, a few inquiry questions that may build upon this research.

- How does building the efficacy of mentors improve school culture and climate?

- How does implementing equitable practices improve student academic achievement? Classroom management?

- How do coaching conversations impact BT retention?

- How do coaching conversations build capacity and efficacy in both mentors and beginning teachers?

- How might inclusive protocols (such as those used in this study) improve teacher/student sense of belonging in an equitable environment?

These inquires could use multiple research methodologies such as surveys, personal interviews, and systemic reviews of data.

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Limitations

As with all research studies, there are limitations that are present throughout the process. In this section, I discuss the limitations I encountered based on my role as lead researcher, the size of the study, and potential issues with validation. As the primary researcher, I worked alongside lead mentors from two different schools within the district. Each school had a different culture and context as did the two lead mentors. I currently serve as a district employee and have no ties specific to either school. We came together with differing viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences to carry out each inquiry cycle. I am aware of my role as a district employee who oversees the Beginning Teacher Program and the perceived influence over lead mentors in the CPR group. I also know that positionality can potentially influence the outcome of research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Due to the power of perception, I took extra measures to ensure that participation was not out of a sense of obligation or coercion. All participants gave informed consent after accepting the invitation to participate. I am also aware that I bring potential bias to this research as a former teacher who entered the classroom on a non-traditional path with a mentor that supported me during my beginning years. Throughout this research, I constantly reflected through personal memos and set aside my own values and beliefs about mentors to remain neutral. Although this study occurred in two different school settings, it was still limited by the small sample size because only one BT mentor and one BT participated from each school. The CPR group contained one lead mentor from each school, thus limiting replication across larger settings in different contexts.

Leadership Development

"The courageous person is someone who is excellent at taking those risks. That is why courage counts as a virtue." *Radical Hope* by Johnathan Lear

This PAR study brought great joy and hope while working alongside mentors who value education and leaving a legacy through the beginning teachers they touch. I grew both personally and professionally as an outcome of this PAR study. In this section, I address the last sub-question in the PAR study: *How does working with mentors support my growth and development as an educational leader?* I began this doctoral program simply because I had two passions – a love for learning and mentoring those who share the same love. As a child, my father instilled in me and my siblings that you are to learn something new every day. Sometimes that learning comes with taking risks and demonstrating courage to ask the question why. I learned so much in this PAR study, sometimes being afraid to ask why yet being courageous enough to do it anyway and create productive struggle. This program helped me to become scholarly in my cognition process and, through practice, I have become a better learner and leader.

Over the past six years, I have worked with beginning teachers and mentors through compliance with state and district mandates. Through the work of this PAR, I have gained the ability to be a researcher who operates out of a sense of obligation to those whom I serve and the children they impact each day. This study allowed me to take risks by doing something that is not in a manual to embrace another passion – access to educational opportunities. Often both mentors and beginning teachers lack both and it be connected to their years of experience. I learned that given access and opportunities, mentors will share their experience with beginning teachers and beginning teachers will implement those strategies in classrooms, which ultimately give students access and opportunity to learn in an environment where they feel a sense of belonging. Unexpectedly I learned that children as young as kindergarten age can participate in academic discourse when they see themselves and the teacher believes in them and their ability.

Each mentor and beginning teacher who participated in this study was impacted by the work. At the final CLE, mentors' closing activity was a reflection on participating in the PAR study in twenty or fewer words. I chose this protocol to drill down on how mentors who participated processed the experience. Ms. East shared, "Everybody needs to be mentored to be a mentor and to grow another mentor" (East, CLE, May 2023). Often, because teachers have at least three years of experience and demonstrate leadership in their classroom, they are asked to work with another adult (BT) in the capacity of a mentor; working with an adult, although it can be similar, is not the same as working with children. This study caused mentors to shift in their perspective of leading beginning teachers through coaching conversations based on data and not just telling them what to do or evaluating what they see during observations. The study caused me to be intentional when building professional learning for mentors to ensure, I honor their expertise, provide a space where I model inclusion, and demonstrate that they are seen, heard, and valued.

At the end of PAR Cycle Two, the district transitioned my role into providing resources to access and opportunities for students and staff. Part of my leadership responsibility is to look at potential inequities across the district and provide support to ensure access and opportunities are available. From the findings of this PAR study, I aim to continue demonstrating dispositions that build equitable environments. I am mindful that the research findings are to be practiced to see improvement. Using CLE Axioms and being a reflective practitioner helps to sustain the work in my new role.

The work of this PAR has connected me with wonderful instructors, mentors, and colleagues associated with East Carolina University (ECU), particularly Dr. Sandra "Garbo" David, Dr. Matthew Militello, and Ms. Lynda Tredway, who all pushed and supported me to

demonstrate excellence while holding space for me to grow through processes and reflection. Over the past three years, I connected with a network that was committed to educational equity and understood that each person is calibrated by experience. Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) describes experience as "almost like a measuring instrument for difference, so discomfort is informative and offers a starting point for new understanding" (p. 17).

Conclusion

"Positive interactions with all students and teachers is necessary when in the mentor role. Modeling those practices and maintaining that genuine disposition is a key element to being an influential mentor" (Ringer, Spring 2023).

The job and expectations of new teachers are demanding; mentorships make the task less daunting by building relationships and modeling. Research is clear that student achievement is directly associated with teacher relationships (Marzano, 2003; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). It therefore becomes imperative to build the capacity of mentors by increasing their efficacy and craftsmanship to support the beginning teacher in implementing equitable practices. Creating spaces where mentors are able to conduct coaching conversations around data related to equitable practices gives both the mentor and beginning teacher insight into how to create equitable learning environments where students and teachers feel seen, heard, and valued.

To move mentorships from a task assignment to genuinely doing the work of supporting beginning teachers to embark upon a career in education, districts have to provide training that makes the work feasible and meaningful. This occurs when veteran teachers lead in a way that beginning teachers develop craftsmanship and efficacy through coaching and equitable practices, they operate in the sweet spot of mentoring minds and building support. Then mentors model learning after creating a gracious space that includes relational trust and psychological safety for the beginning teacher that demonstrate a mentoring mind. When deciding on how the learning

from this PAR study will impact their class for next year, Ms. Patton shared, "It is important for us to practice the same equitable practices we learned in the research for ourselves as mentors and for new teachers" (Patton, CLE, May 2023). Furthermore, as mentors leaders in a way that connect beginning teachers to both the school culture and student learning they demonstrate the sweet spot of mentoring minds and building support.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/**

Notification of Exempt Certification

From:	Social/Behavioral IRB
To:	Lori Collins
CC:	Matthew Militello
Date:	12/13/2021
Re:	UMCIRB 21-002595
	Mentoring Minds, Building Support

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 12/13/2021. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1 & 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Calling On(0.01)	Additional Items
CONSENT FORM(0.03)	Consent Forms
Mentoring Minds, Building Support(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Recruitment(0.02)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Sample CLE(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.
The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: CITI TRAINING CERTIFICATE

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 02-Jan-2021
Expiration Date 02-Jan-2024
Record ID 40124075

This is to certify that:

Lori Collins

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

East Carolina University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

PITT COUNTY
— SCHOOLS —

October 15, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Pitt County Schools recognizes the benefits of participating in relevant, well-designed research studies proposed by qualified individuals. Approval for conducting such studies is based primarily on the extent to which substantial benefits can be shown for Pitt County Schools and its mission of educating students. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the **approval** to conduct your dissertation study titled, "Mentoring Minds, Building Support" with participants in our schools. We also give permission to utilize the following spaces: Kathy Taft Center, Lake Forest School, and WH Robinson within Pitt County Schools to collect data and conduct coaching conversations for her dissertation project.

This project meets all of our school/district guidelines, procedures, and safeguards for conducting research. Moreover, there is ample space for Lori Collins to conduct her study and her project will not interfere with any functions of Pitt County Schools. Finally, the following conditions must be met, as agreed upon by the researchers and Pitt County Schools:

> ➤ Participant data only includes information captured from the data collection strategies.
> ➤ Participation is voluntary.
> ➤ Participants can choose to leave the study without penalty at any time.
> ➤ Any issues with participation in the study are reported to the school administration in a timely manner.
> ➤ An executive summary of your findings is shared with the school administration once the study is complete.

In addition to these conditions, the study must follow all of the East Carolina University IRB guidelines.

We are excited to support this important work.

Respectfully,

Dr. Steve M. Lassiter Jr.
Assistant Superintendent of Educational Programs and Services, Pitt County Schools

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: *Mentoring Minds, Building Support*

Principal Investigator: Lori Collins
Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University, Department of Educational Leadership
Address: 787 Third Street, Ayden, NC 28513
Telephone #: 252-450-5303
Study Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Militello
Telephone #: 252-328-6131

_____

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems, and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?
The purpose of the participatory action research (PAR) study is to support mentors in the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide equable classroom practices. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a veteran teacher who has been 21st Century Mentor trained and currently support beginning teacher(s). The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn how to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of mentors to provide equitable classroom practices.
If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 20 - 30 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?
You should not participate in this study if you are under 18 years of age.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?
You can choose not to participate

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?
The research will be conducted in Pitt County School District at the Kathy Taft Center including Lake Forest Elementary and WH Robinson Elementary. You will need to meet *approximately ten* times during the study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately fifteen-hours over the approximately eighteen months.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to participate in meetings, community learning exchanges, asked to have an observer in your classroom and engage in reflections and conversations about identifying and implementing equitable classroom practices.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
We do not know of any risks (or the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you, but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?
ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:
- The sponsors of this study.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?
The information in the project will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Consent forms and data will be maintained in a secure, locked location and will be stored for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?
You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop, and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 252-450-5303 (weekdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) or email collinsl03@students.ecu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2941 (days, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC at 252-744-1971.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)　　　　**Signature**　　　　　　　**Date**

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)　　**Signature**　　　　　　**Date**

APPENDIX E: REFLECTIVE MEMOS

The format below will be input to a Google Form that CPR group members will use to complete reflective memos.

Reflective Memo (Kolb, 1984)

Name:

Position:

1. **Engage in Experience** - Fully participate and document the experience.

2. **Reflect on Experience –** What happened?

3. **Contextualize the Experience –** Relate to current knowledge and research.

4. **Plan for the Future –** Based on the experience, what will you do differently in the future?

Essential Question:
How might mentoring impact beginning teachers' capacity for equitable classroom access?

Outcomes	Norms
- Breathe joy and justice into the work of mentoring - Work in a gracious space for learning - Identify how mentors and BTs work together - Understand the impact of academic discourse with student learning	- Stay engaged - Assume the best intentions of all - Seek to understand and honor all voices - Engage in the work as co-practioners

Time	Guiding Question / Activity	Protocol	Facilitator Notes
15 min	Opening: Welcome and Inclusion Outcomes and Agreements	Grounding and small fire	
5 min	Dynamic Mindfulness	Whole group	Volunteer / Collins
20 min	Who in your life has been an impactful mentor or support?	Personal Narrative	Whole Group
25 min	What might be some strategies from mentoring that have impacted your classroom / teaching decisions?	Brain Dump Learning Walk	Whole Group

	Brain Dump and Organize		
15 min	Why might equitable practices impact student learning?	4 Corners	Collins
5 min	What might be something from this CLE that captures your attention? What might be something that makes you more curious from the CLE?	Closing Circle	Whole Group

APPENDIX G: CODE BOOK

PAR- PreCycle

THEME	TEACHER EMPATHY / RELATIONSHIP		CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING		DIVERSE COMMUNITY	
Categories	TEACHER RESPONSE (BEHAVIOR)	RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS	INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES TO STUDENT LEARNING		CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	
Code	character	Emotion / Relationship		Teaching		Culture
Level 3	BEHAVIOR	ADVOCATE		CLASSROOM MANGEMENT		HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
	MODEL BEHAVIOR	PATIENCE		COLLABORATION		CLASSROOM DIVERSTITY
		COMPASSION		DIFFERENTIATION		PRINT RICH TEXT
		BEHAVIOR		REFLECTION		
		MODEL BEHAVIOR		CLARITY		
		ACTIVELY LISTENING				
LEVEL 2		Stuudent voice		student task		student centered
		psychological safety		Pedagogy		visiible cultures
		Relatiional trust				diversity honored
RAW DATA - LEVEL 1		being heard		more time for instruction		safe environment
		having students best interest		hands on directions		safe space
		students needs known and met		learning to work together		safe space
		(students) know they have a voice		interact		courteous to their peers
		knowing the root of their problems		learning in a a way that fits them		Students able to express themselves mannerly
		validate their feelings		small groups		being more compassionate to others feelings
		receiving love from geniune people		better understandiing of diirections and concepts		partnering with parents
		builds longer relationships		understanding other backgrounds and culture		gives way for model behavior
		response to reinforcement		balance between all students		see similiar successes
		compassiion to other cultures		knowing when to change directions		community
		potential in the future		introduction to new ideas		no limitations
		represented in leadership roles				ventures off on things they want to learn about
		expectations				read to enjoy insteawd of always reading to learn
		leading by example				visuals in books instead of all words, i.e, textbooks
		triggers others behaviors				
		EC studetns display behaviors because of disability				
		how students are raised				

Disposition		LEVEL 2	CODE	CATEGORY	THEME
All students need Compassion & empathy					
Each Student has their own experience they are dealing with.		home life	personal experience	emotion	relationship
Students need to know their feelings are validated.		feelings			
These things are often missing at home. We have to show our students in these areas.		validation			
Feel a sense of belonging ("love" /all humans need love)		belonging			
All students can see themselves, when I differentiate					
Students are more focused on the task than what is happening around them.		task	life applicatiion	achievement	teaching stratgies
Differentiation is necessary in a classroom for learning.		differentiation			
Modification helps students discover their own capabilities.		modification			
They can see progress in their personal educational growth. AM, TB, AW, ims		growth			
When I know my students I become a better advocate for them.					
When I Know my students. I know their needs.		student needs	relationship building	student centered	relationship
The more I know my students, the better I can meet their needs!		student needs			
Knowing my students means Knowing ALL about them- their family, interests, dislikes, behaviors, strengths, insecurities, and health! D.P		knowing all			
knowing your students is understanding the why of the action and shows you care.		caring			
(every student gets what he/shal they need to thrive the successful)					
Equity in my environment means students hear me, have access, and feel belonging.					
Even if Students are in an equitables environment, they may not always feel these things. but that does not its not there		environment	environment	environment	environment
Some students require more/ less Support and peer collaboration.		support			
Having a relationship with students should be the baseline you need to provide equity to all students individually		relationship			
People's equitable environments may look different.		environment			

APPENDIX H: CONVERSATION GUIDE

The guide is a work in progress and based on research and tools from:

- Glickman, C. (2003). *Leadership for learning.* ASCD
- Bloom, G., Castagna, C., Moir, E., & Warren, B. (2005) *Blended coaching: Skills and strategies to support principals.* Corwin Press.
- Saphier, J. (1993). *How to make supervision and evaluation really work.* Research for Better Teaching

Special thanks to Jim Warnock of Research for Better Teaching for input. Note on pronouns: We have not fully converted to pronoun use for persons who identify they and their as pronouns of choice.
NOTE: See hyperlinks in the text for deeper explanations.

OVERVIEW

A conversation (formal or informal) that follows an observation (also formal or informal) has several components: preparation for observation, using an observation with tool that collects objective and usable evidence, data analysis and preparation for post-observation conversation, the conversation, and then follow-up observations/conversations.

Think about the parts of the conversation as we think about parts of a lesson and "task analyze" the approach. Obviously, the conversation following an observation is premised on **establishing trust between the teacher and the observer**. Trust is enhanced by the observer's ability to have a substantive reflective conversation about practice and provide useful **data and coaching questions** that support the teacher's reflection.

The conversation following a relatively short observation (10-20 minutes) may be different than the actual formal post-conference for evaluation purposes. Because the formal process of evaluation in a state or district process requires written evaluation using a prescribed format, that conversation may require a different process than a conversation following an informal observation. However, an administrator can use the informal observations to build a set of evidence that can serve both teacher and administrator for the formal evaluation process.

Through observations and conversations that occur throughout a school year, sustaining trust in the total process can deepen through frequent observations and conversations about practice. A key guideline: **quick turnaround** on the evidence, the analysis, and the conversation. That means that the observer needs to analyze the evidence, send the analysis to the teacher, and schedule a conversation of approximately 15 minutes within 2-3 days.

There is no one right way to have a conversation. However, the formats we introduce are useful for **most** conversations. Some conversations require **coaching moves,** as the teacher may have not made changes in practice after several attempts to observe and provide feedback. Or, in some cases, a teacher has done something that is egregious which requires administrator intervention. As one administrator said: *Every principal has to analyze the staff and decide how you can have a coach role and when you have to be clear about your administrator-evaluator role and have someone else on staff take on the coaching role.*

<u>The suggestions offer guidance, but not "rules".</u> Every teacher is different, and knowing how each teacher learns/thinks is vital to setting up the trusting relationship necessary for any conversation.

GENERAL PREPARATION FOR CONVERSATION AFTER OBSERVATION

The primary objective of the conversation is to **support the teacher to (1) analyze the data from the observation; (2) make decisions about what s/he proposes to change; and (3) make a clear plan to improve instructional practice**. We, as administrators and coaches, have been schooled to give "feedback", and teachers often say they want feedback. However, Project I[4] posits that what teachers want is more consistent and deeper attention to their teaching so that the conversation uses the evidence from the observation to provide a "tailor-made" observation and conversation process (Paryani, 2019).

Thus, the administrator's objective <u>is not</u> to give feedback about what the administrator thinks should change. In having the conversation, the principal should be **transparent about how the analysis of the evidence and the conversation are different.** The main objective is to support the teacher to talk about his/her practice so that s/he can make decisions about what to change. Typically, with veteran teachers, the observer can proceed with a **collaborative coaching stance** and engage in cognitive coaching, supporting the veteran to draw on his/her knowledge and skill base to make decisions. For novice teachers that may be different; they are new to instructional practices. Thus, supporting their analyses and decisions about changing practice(s) is often necessary as they do not yet have a repertoire of knowledge and skills to fully make decisions. That may require what Glickman calls a **direct informational coaching stance.** In any case, the observer needs to make decisions about the coaching stance before entering the conversation.

If the observation and conversation are used for the formal observation required for the evaluation process, there is considerable value in a substantive pre-observation or planning conference. A fruitful planning conference supports the teacher to have a more thoughtful, well-planned lesson and a more productive post-observation conversation.

The following are steps **after the observation**:
STEP ONE: **Analyze the data/evidence and use it to guide the conversation;** depending on the situation, **give data to teacher ahead of the conversation**.
STEP TWO: Decide on an **approach/coaching stance** and a location for post-observation conversation
STEP THREE: Prepare an **opening question** that relates to the evidence
STEP FOUR: Ask **coaching questions (**acknowledging, paraphrasing, clarifying, shifting, restating); summarize throughout the conversation as you move through the evidence and conversation
STEP FIVE: **Summarize next steps** that teacher has chosen and set date for another observation

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Any analysis is premised on an observer collecting observable, **objective**, non-judgmental data to analyze in preparation for the conversation. Analyzing the data helps the observer decide on an objective/purpose for the conversation. Even if the district evaluation tool does not require evidence, effective administrators should use evidence-based observation tools (and not checklists or other judgmental tools).

To prepare for the conversation with the teacher, the administrator can make choices about analyzing the data: send teacher the data before the conversation, analyze for the first time when you meet together, or share what you, as observer, have analyzed. There is no one right way to present the data, but this question is critical: What factual evidence does the observation yield?. The important part is that you **use objective data** and **share that data/evidence with the teacher**. The data should not include any notes to yourself or questions that may indicate pre-judgment.

Step Two: APPROACH (also termed coaching stance) for conversation (based on Glickman.) The approach informs the kinds of questions you ask and how you ensure that the teacher makes decisions about what to do. Two of the four approaches apply to most teachers.

- **Direct-informational**: Teacher who needs more information in order to make decisions about an improvement choice. In other words, the knowledge base of the teacher may not include what s/he needs to know to make improvement. Typically, a novice teacher or a veteran who does not know current thinking can benefit from coaching. If the conversation requires that you provide specific instructional direction, ask permission to be instructional -- *Is it all right if I provide instructional options?*
- **Collaborative**: Teacher who is knowledgeable about practice and for whom the evidence is supportive. The conversation is **two-way with an emphasis on teacher talk.** The **ratio** of teacher talk: observer talk is important. The responsibility of the observer (now coach) is to ask the kinds of coaching questions that elicit teacher talk and teacher decisions. The collaborative approach includes attention to **non-verbal behaviors** like nodding, smiling, and looking at the teacher.

Think about the range of coaching stances from instructional to facilitative coaching, remembering that **transfer to teacher practice** is the objective. As you discuss what might be helpful and the teacher decides next steps, keep a list as you talk and summarize the materials you can provide to the teacher.

Secondly, think about **where and how this post-observation conversation occurs**. If this is in your office, do not sit behind your desk; move to a table a **sit side by side or face to face.**
Perhaps meet the teacher in a classroom or a conference room in the school (neutral space). In any case, set the tone as supportive, collegial, and welcoming. You want a **nonthreatening, safe, and positive** environment that continues to nurture relational trust between you and the teacher.

Preparing a **thoughtful opening question** for the conversations can alleviate the tension that an administrator sometimes feels at the beginning of the post-observation conversation. The question depends on the type of post-conference approach that you use: (1) direct-control (2) directive-informational (3) collaborative or (4) nondirective (Glickman, 2002). Most conversations fall in category 2 or 3 of Glickman and correspond to the instructional to facilitative range of coaching in the *Blended Coaching* (Bloom et al., 2005).

Depending upon the type of approach you use (See Glickman chart), start with a **warm greeting**, **introduction to the process, and a focus on the use of evidence to guide the conversations**:

"Welcome. Thanks We had decided before the observation that I would look at _____(or use ____tool to observe your class). What I would like to do is look at the data together and see what we observe."
Reiterate the importance of the use of the tool to gather factual information.

Note: Feel free to say (especially in early conversations while you are getting used to the format) the following: *This is a new process for me and I will want your response to the process when we finish. We want to use the evidence to guide our conversation, and I want to listen better to your ideas.*

Step Four: Ask **follow-up coaching questions** during conversation. As much as possible, do not put your 2 cents worth in the conversation (aka feedback); rely on coaching through paraphrasing moves/questions.

In this section, you are listening with great care, summarizing as you go. **Focus on assets** the teacher can bring to addressing any changes. As you move through the conversation, **redirect** as necessary to ensure that (a) the **focus is on the evidence to guide discussion**, (b) the **teacher is then making decisions** about what to do next, and (c) insert any instructional ideas only as a part of talking about the evidence. In this kind of conversation, do not switch into "feedback" or telling mode (which is only necessary for direct control approach): **See coaching questions below in Coaching for Equity: Paraphrasing**

Step Five: Summarize and Debrief (optional) Summarize

End the conversation with a decision about what is next in terms of teacher practice and a possible follow-up observation. Often, the observer can use the summarizing and organizing function to summarize what has been said (see **Coaching for Equity: Paraphrasing).** If the conversation is a part of a formal evaluation process, the administrator must translate the objective observation and conversation to the district or state forms.

Discretion is advised at this step of the process. The collaborative process in which you have engaged has potential to drift toward hierarchical (due to bureaucratic requirements or reverting to feedback and telling). Depending on teacher need and assessment, you may engage in a direct-control conversation with a teacher who needs improvement.

Use summarizing statements/questions:
- Let's review the key points of the discussion.
- What next steps are you taking? OR The steps I heard you talk about are_____
- What evidence will you look at to ascertain if those next steps are working? OR The evidence I need to collect next time I come is ____
- How does this connect to student learning/equity? I heard you say ____and that clearly connects to student learning/equity in these ways: _____

Debrief

Debriefing may or may not feel like the right thing to do. As an administrator, you are model reflection. Thus, depending on the situation, ask for feedback on the structure, tone, and usefulness of conference, using the + and △ (delta=change) format or use a written feedback form for the teacher to reflect on and complete if s/he wishes. However, In some cases, debriefing would not be an appropriate choice.

CONSIDERATIONS and FINAL "TIPS"

While we might have mentioned these previously, we are reiterating.

- **Set the tone:** Of course, you want the conversation to go as well as possible, so make the teacher feel comfortable. Many administrators recommend having the conference in the teacher's room. If it is in your office, the administrator sits by the teacher or sits around a table with the teacher. Unless it is a direct control conversation (Glickman) in which you have to set a distinct hierarchical tone, do not sit behind your desk. Assume best intentions and assume that if the teacher knew to do anything else, s/he would do it. Refrain from making judgments; instead seek reasons behind problems or stated explanations. Probe,
  but do not prejudge. Use coaching questions. Indeed, if you are practicing having a different type of conversation for the first time, then be transparent and share that with the teacher.

> For example: *I am practicing having a different kind of conversation with you about the observation. One that relies on the evidence I collected and analyzed and where you decide your next steps. I have ideas, of course, but what I am most interested in is your decisions about what you want to do as a result of analyzing the evidence from the observation. As always, I only observed a slice of your teaching practice, so, if there are particular classroom circumstances*

- **General rule of thumb: Teacher should do most of the talking.** Acknowledge ideas, even if you do not totally agree. Typically, do not start conversations with WHY questions. Think time or silence is OK as it allows time for collecting thoughts and thinking about what happened. Use paraphrasing to encourage teacher talk.

- **Language**. In general, avoid "you" statements. Convert to "we" or "I" statements. Use open- ended questions that produce explanations and ideas, not short answers. See advice on question stems that can help to clarify, paraphrase or probe.

- **Body Language**: The process should be viewed as a **conversation between professionals.** Be aware of the ways you position yourself as the administrator. Again, for the "hard" conversations, you have to think carefully about what you want to communicate and that may require a different stance, format (directive-control) or positioning (behind your desk).

- **Procedural Advance Organizer** (AO): Explain the purpose and the parts of the post conference and ask for concurrence. You want to be open, but purposeful. Think carefully about the <u>objective of the conversation</u>. You are creating a mini-lesson plan for conducting the conference. Be open to the student input and changing direction, but do not just drift from one question to another, getting surface responses. Note: *This seems like a lot of planning, but as you gain experience, planning lessens and parts become more automatic.*

- Use **teaching and learning language** – frequently name practices to help the teachers build structures and develops a common language for teaching and learning in school.

- **Remember to put equity at the forefront of the conversation and push the teacher to think about equitable access and even if the observation was not specifically**

about this. How does the evidence demonstrate equitable or inequitable practice? How can you direct every part of the conversation toward equity?

Glickman Coaching Stances

You need to consider the teacher with whom you are conferring. Most teachers fall into the direct informational or collaborative approach.

Conversation Approach	Conversation Opening Question Stems
Direct Control (Glickman) Very clear data and presentation of what to do. Highly instructional and direct. This type of conversation is to deliver a message. This is not used in most conversations, but is necessary at times.	● *Based on the analysis of the data, there are some clear patterns in the classroom that require immediate attention if we are to support you to teach this year. In terms of classroom management, I want you to try _____* ● *Based on the analysis of the evidence, I am concerned about _____, and I need to sit with you and plan a lesson so that we can perhaps assist you more in _____.* ● *I observed that 15 of 20 students were off task each time I did the at task data collection in the 45 minute period. Therefore, I want to work with you on engagement strategies and checking or understanding.*
Directive Informational (Glickman) Instructional (Bloom) When choosing an instructional approach, Bloom says it is a good idea to get permission. It is often useful for new teachers, who often do not have a way to think through the options. This is often an effective approach with novice teachers or veteran teachers who need particular attention	To start any conversation of this type, use some version of this start: *"I observed _____. I would like to give you some options for what I think might be helpful. Is that all right?"* ● *Three students on the left back and two students on right rear were talking or off task the entire period. These are three options I can think of to try: (1)_____ (2)_____(3) _____Do you have another option you think might work better* ● *I observed that you primarily used hand-raising to call on students. You asked ___questions; typically in those questions you did not use think time, and you called on ___students. One way I think we agreed to in our professional learning was to use equity sticks. In this particular lesson, when could you have used those?* ● *What are some other ways you know to call on students so we have more equitable access to the classroom discourse?*

Collaborative (Glickman) Aka Facilitative (Bloom) Cognitive Coaching (Garmstrom et al.) Teacher who is knowledgeable about practice and for whom the evidence will be supportive.	The purpose of this CONVERSATION is to get the teacher to talk about practice. ● *"I observed that _____ occurred. Can we talk about that or does something else in the data stand out as important to talk about?* ● *The data indicate that _____. Do they correspond to your perception of _____?* ● *What was happening when _____?* ● *I'm curious about this part of the observation (state factual evidence). What were you thinking about when you _____?* ● *I noticed these two things about student responses: _____ and _____ What can you tell me about those students and their learning?* ● *I noticed that you spent most of your time with _____ and _____. I am wondering about that choice…was it purposeful or did it just happen?*
Nondirective (Glickman) Collaborative (Bloom) Cognitive coaching Works at all times toward teacher's self-plan for improvement and relies on teacher input to have conference.	The most important part of this type of conversation is not in the opening question, but in the paraphrasing and mediational questioning that occurs in the conversation to help the teacher develop a self-plan for improvement, relying almost totally on the teacher as lead. This is usually done with sophisticated, strong and often veteran teachers who know teaching practice and language. This relies on listening empathetically and effectively and requires an observer/evaluator who has acquired strength in tools of constructivist listening.

FACILITATIONAL OR INSTRUCTIONAL QUESTIONS
See Coaching for Equity Paraphrasing at end of this document.

Blended coaching requires a dance between three positions to take as a coach: **Consultative, Collaborative and Transformational** using two types of coaching questions: **instructional and facilitative.**

You will need to decide about whether the conference needs to be instructional (probably Glickman direct control or direct informational) or facilitative (collaborative or nondirective). In all cases, we do hope that the teachers can come to their own ideas and decisions about changing practice – mainly by the use of facilitative coaching moves of **paraphrasing, clarifying, and mediational questions + summarizing statements**. In general, new teachers need more instruction, but even then, get them to talk about practice. Even when they ask (or nearly plead), be very careful about lots of advice and direction. Remember that, even when something in the classroom has made you upset – most of the time, the teacher is alone in the classroom and has to solve his/her own problems. Thus, it is important, if possible, that the teacher solve his or her own problems by thinking through them with you. If this requires more instruction on your part because the teacher does not really know what to do, get permission to be instructional. As much as possible navigate the conversation back to facilitating the thinking of the teacher.

Instructional to Facilitative Coaching

Bloom, G., Castagna, C., Moir, E., & Warren, B. (2005). *Blended coaching: Skills and strategies to support principal development.* Corwin Press

Although the book is useful for those coaching principals, the coaching philosophy applies to coaching any adult.

The image is a mobius strip chosen to exemplify the ways that effective conversations rely on the coach's ability to move easily among the approaches to support the person who is coached. At times, like Glickman, the principal has to be more instructional and less facilitative (or using cognitive coaching). The goal is always to ensure the coachee starts to think for herself or himself about how to transform his or her practice.

Adapted from Blended Coaching

Willie Observation Tool: Selective Verbatim / Post-Coaching Conversation

Time Stamp	Evidence from observation	Code
0:00	C - Ms. Willie, thank you for allowing me to observe your class. So I enjoyed the 30 minutes that we spent together, and I noticed a lot of positive things that you did in your classroom. So, the purpose of our time together is to look at the data that was collected to get some feedback on some of your thoughts or ideas as to what went well. And what you're noticing about the colonizer strategy in your classroom. Okay. One of the things I noticed is that I was with your class for 30 minutes, and within that 30-minute span, you were able to do whole group, partner collaboration, whole group, and then small group instruction. So, it was a wide variety of opportunities for students to get individualized attention, collaborate with their peers, as well as to have some direct instruction from you. Your student makeup on the day that I visit, there were 18 students present. Of those 18 students, 13 were female, and five were male. And of those 18 students, you called on, you called on all of them at least twice. And there were 57 opportunities for you to do a call on strategy. Your equity strategy I noticed was the equity sticks. **So, what might have been some of your motivation that guided you to use equity sticks?** W- Well, in the past, not having students raise their hand, so trying to get students involved with lessons, because you know, sometimes, you know, the certain students that's always raising their hand. So, my goal was to get everybody to, you know, work with me normally, listen, and participate in my lesson.	• Include all student voices
1:44	C - **What are some of your noticings about the data? If you want, to take a few minutes and look at the data.** W - Yes, I'm noticing with the cold-called discipline that there are positives throughout with each student. And that's a good thing, you know, to know that, you know, some, you know, each child was something positive, not negative. As far as my teaching lessons, the raised hand (method), I'm noticing that just a few of them are raising their hand. I guess because they knew that, my call response method was going to be used. So, they knew not to raise their hand, but they knew that you know, I would call on them eventually.	• Students need to hear positive feedback

	With the data, yep, that's what I see as far as what you show me the data.	
2:30	C - So I like to point out that, 100% of your students were called by their first name. You've mentioned the cold call, which is calling them by their names. And for every call on that, if you did have to do a redirect, there was also a positive affirmation, like, good job, or you're getting a dojo point. So, every child that was called on even if they were redirected, you also paired the redirect with the positive. So, each child was able to hear something positive from their experience in the 30 minutes that I was with you. Looking at your kids, your class is still heavily female. W - Right - this year it is. Normally, it's the opposite. C - So what are some of your motivations? You mentioned the raised hand, and you tend to stay away from that because you do the equity strategy of the equity sticks. **So, what have been some of the ways that you made connections with students through the equity sticks?** W - You know, I'm noticing with students they are more engaged because they know that their name may be called. So, it kind of keeps them focused, during my lessons because they know that I may, you know, call their name. So, they're more focused, they're more n, and basically wanting to know what to respond to, just in case there, you know, name is called.	• Balance participation with boys and girls • Equity builds relations
4:08	C - And you also, when I look at your demographics, you only have one student who is of mixed race and one student who's Hispanic, but your percentages are very balanced. Your Hispanic students had a lot more positives. **So what connections are you finding to make with her since she was the only Hispanic child but she also was very well represented in the strategy? What connections are you making with her specifically?** W - With her, because she receives ESL services, I want her to feel part of the classroom. So that was why she received a lot of positives throughout my lesson. Not wanting to leave her out. Because she is you know, an English second language student.	• Know your student / Relationship
4:55	C - What about your boys you only have five boys but again, they were well represented In the data and we're going to talk about what their data looks like. **So, what about you, your boys?**	• Balance participation with gender

W - As far as the data? So, it looks they, let me look down - they receive some positives.

C - Of the other 57 call-outs, the boys were called 16 times. So, 16 callouts of the 57 callouts you did equal to about 28% Okay, so about a fourth of your call out was the boys.

W - Right? Right. Okay.

C - Which is pretty representative because about a third of the class is your boys right? five boys to 13 girls Right.

W - Pretty good amount as far as being called on. So, it's the proportion that is a balance right? I'm looking at it to make a note of it.

6:18   C - And if we look at just your girls, it looks like 41 of the 57 are girl responses

W - Okay. Like you said I called on Celine more. She has 16% So I'm noticing that 16 responses, total responses.

C - 72% all together are girls, with Celine response (16 out of 41) being 39%.

7:01   C - **Could you share a little bit about your decision to do collaborative pairs with your students?**

- Grouping builds relationships

W - To me, they work well doing pairing. I try to pair a low student with a high student so they can work together. And that seems to work well. To me, they work more comfortably together. If something's wrong, one can correct the other. And it just seems to work best, especially sight words with spelling out words. They work just well together with my low students. getting help from my high students; they work well together.

7:59   C - So one of the strategies, when talking with other mentors, we discussed using the Calling-On Tool was a way to build relationships, So thinking about the beginning of the school year to now because every child was called on at least twice, even if it was a redirect, there was a positive that went with it. **So, thinking about the beginning of the year, and the relationship with your students now, how has being able to call on students impacted relationships?**

W - To me, it carries on throughout station time and through my small groups. Because they really work well together as far as making sure that one person gets it. lf someone sees a child not getting it, they help. So that's kind of building that relationship throughout the classroom, throughout their environment. Some say that they know which child may need the extra support, and they really make sure that that child gets that support as far as that relationship. So, the partners helps them to build that positive relationship together.

C - So it builds community and helps the classroom to be a safe space to learn.

W - Yes, ma'am. Yes, it does.

C - So moving forward because you are a mentor how comfortable would you be with sharing this with your BTs? Or do you feel that this is something your BTS could implement in their classrooms?

W - They definitely could use the call-on response in the classroom. I think that they would definitely benefit from it. It's something that will not only benefit their classroom practices but their students' learning as well.

C - Well, thank you for your time and the opportunity to observe your classroom. Let's plan to implement this strategy in your BT classroom.

Ringer Observation Tool: Selective Verbatim / Post Coaching Conversation

Time Stamp	Evidence from observation	Code
00:00	C - **What made you decide to start with a personal narrative**?	• Build relationship
	R: Every day we start with SEL activity and it is like our theme for the day. Sometimes it's "What would you do Wednesday?" or Thoughtful Thursday. You came on Thoughtful Thursday so it was about memory, something about their family. It lets them start the day with sharing something not necessarily school related. It sets the tone for the day. And honestly, I like to hear about them. There is so much rushing through our day so sometimes it is nice to start with the SEL focus but also so I can get insight.	

C - So it is a way for you to build relationships and get to know your students and it is a way for your students to have an emotional outlet of being who they are and share who they are with you as a teacher.

R- Absolutely

1:10   C- **I shared the data with you earlier so you had an opportunity to look at it. What are some things you are noticing?**

- Knowing individual students' personalities

R - As I looked at it I know I have one student in mind who loves to share, he definitely likes to share out and raise his hands. And honestly, I am working with him on how not to get upset when he doesn't get called on cause his hands will be raised all the time. It just kind of you know it made me chuckle a little bit but also knowing like yep that is how I'm going with him this year.

C- P It solidified your thought about his personality and how he engages and interacts in class

R- Yes - he wants to be the person Ms. Ringer calls on

2:15   C- **What might be some other things that stood out for you in the data?**

- Who's paying attention (engaged)

R - I thought it was interesting - the breakdown of like the percentages. I like having the demographics. They really showed me the breakdown. You know who's paying attention, who's raising their hands. Even the group blurred out but you know I accepted it because it was on task it was the correct answer and we moved on. So yeah just the number of times that I did call students. So, the breakdown of the demographics and then of course the re-directions and the percentages.

2:55   C- One of the things I noticed is even when you look at your girls, and the race demographics, it was balanced. You had 2 white 3 black 2 Hispanic. And when you look at your girls there is a lot of balance there. **How did you achieve balance with all of your subgroups?**

- Know students

- Students feel successful

R- Honestly, part of it is getting to know your students. You came in during a time during a task they wanted to participate in because we were going over morning work and homework. It was a task they felt successful in so it was a good way to balance them all.

	C- Paraphrase The students felt a sense of success because it was something they had worked on and it built their confidence. I called it cold call because it was random but they were prepared, you had checked the homework and they were able to share with their classmates.	
4:25	C- One of the things I notice, you called all children by name. You did not use any of the other methods like group work or turn and talk. **What was behind your decision of calling individual students?**	• Student understanding • Student success
	R - Just going over the homework and some of the other things they were doing like checking from the previous day. It was easier to see where they were and what they learned. And give them a level of success but when we are in our whole group I do give them opportunity to turn and talk. I will be sure to incorporate those more as they go over work.	
5:08	C- Given what you know about your students, I've noticed that even coming back in your room today, you've said you change your seating. **So how did you make the decision to do that? So that gives them more opportunity to talk or have small groups?**	• Student collaboration • Student grouping
	R - Yeah, as I look at the data, and I also look at this individually calling out, I think it's important to have them collaborate, and maybe with their larger set of partners. They were in groups of well, rows of two to three students each. But now having them in a group, like a table group of four, I think it'll lend itself to more targeted talks and some collaborative sharing.	
5:44	C- Thinking about the Calling-On Tool, and we talked about that in August. I came to see you in September and you implement it, **how did having the Calling-On Tool help with the beginning of the school year?**	• Awareness • Equity in student voice
	R - It definitely made me more aware of how I'm going to balance between all my subgroups, between my boys versus girls, and just making sure that all students are recognized in the classroom throughout the day, and they're able to be called on. And the different strategies, the different types of calling on strategies.	
6:15	C- So you are a mentor to a beginning teacher. **How might you share this information or this strategy with your beginning teachers to support them?**	• Student collaboration

R- I love this strategy. I would like to do something like this. Maybe conducted in a similar manner with my BT and show her some different ways that we can call on students. The different strategies to implement and how to make your classroom lend itself better to calling on students in letting them have some collaborative share time.

6:43 C - So moving forward, do you think you could have an opportunity to actually go in your mentor's classroom if we provided?

R- Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

C - Well, thank you for sharing with me and allowing me to observe your classroom and I look forward to our next steps when you get to go do this with your BT.

- Equity in sharing